

Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate



Volume 3 (1993/94) Number 2
Waxmann Münster/New York



Editors' Note

To our regret, Professor S. K. Heninger, Jr., has informed us that he has decided to retire from the editorial board of *Connotations* as from his other editorial commitments. We cannot thank him enough for having given us his support even when we were only just planning the journal. But with us, as with Goethe in his poem, welcome and farewell go together. Professor Eleanor Cook has most kindly consented to join the editorial board of *Connotations*. We are greatly looking forward to working with her and thank her for accepting our invitation.

Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate

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Connotations wants to encourage scholarly communication in the field of English Literature (from the Middle English period to the present), as well as American and Commonwealth Literature. It focuses on the semantic and stylistic energy of the language of literature in a historical perspective and aims to represent different approaches.

Each issue consists of articles and a forum for discussion. The forum presents, for instance, research in progress, critical hypotheses, responses to articles published in *Connotations* and elsewhere, as well as comments on recent books (instead of the traditional reviews), and authors' answers to reviews. Contributions will be published between one and five months after submission so that a true exchange of ideas and knowledge can be effected.

Contributions should be forwarded to the editors. As a rule, articles should not exceed 12,000 words and follow the MLA Handbook (2nd or 3rd edition, with notes at the end of the text). Contributions to the forum should be limited to 4,000 words. If possible, all contributions should be submitted on a 3.5" or 5.25" disk in WordPerfect or any other DOS word processing program, accompanied by a hard copy. All articles should be in English and must be proof-read before submission. Manuscripts and disks will not be returned unless accompanied by international reply coupons.

Connotations is published three times a year. Subscriptions are in Europe DM 60/year, in the U.S. and all other countries \$ 50/year, including postage. A disk version in WordPerfect (DOS) is also available at DM 35 or \$ 30/year. Single copies: DM 20/\$ 18, plus postage.

Orders for subscriptions should be sent to:

Waxmann Verlag GmbH

Steinfurter Str. 555, 48159 Münster, Germany

in America to:

Waxmann Publishing Co.

P.O. Box 1318, New York, NY 10028, U.S.A.

© Waxmann Verlag GmbH, Münster/New York 1994

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Printed in Germany

ISSN 0939-5482

Connotations is sponsored by the Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung
Nordrhein-Westfalen.

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Inventional Mnemonics, Reading and Prayer: A Reply to Mary Carruthers*

SYLVIA HUOT

In *Connotations* 2.2, Mary Carruthers offered a useful commentary concerning the nature of medieval mnemonics as a technique not only for memorization, but also for invention. The focus of Carruthers' essay is the important mnemonic role played by the medieval cultivation of creative etymologies. In the course of arguing her case, however, Carruthers also touches on the complex interrelationship of memory, reading, and prayer in medieval culture. As she argues both here and in her larger study *The Book of Memory*, medieval habits of reading—indeed, the very concept of reading itself—are intimately bound up with mnemonic practices.¹ Central to the medieval practice of reading is the notion that what one reads is incorporated into one's very self, to be worked on by the memory. This fundamental idea is confirmed in medieval devotional literature, one of our best available guides to medieval pedagogy, concepts of reading, and ways of using texts and images. In this essay I wish to comment a little further on the close relationship of reading and memory, and on the role that they jointly play in medieval devotional practices.

That the book is a mirror for the reader is a medieval commonplace, reflected in the many texts whose titles contain the word *mirror* (*speculum*, *mirouer*, *spiegel*, etc.). As is stated in the dedicatory prologue of one typical devotional treatise entitled *Le Mirouer de l'ame*:² "Je vous envoie ce mirouer ouquel vous poéz en mirant les taches de pechié veoir et orner l'ame et le cors de bones vertuz" [I am sending you this mirror in which you can gaze in order to see the blemishes of sin and to

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

ornament body and soul with good virtues (Paris, Bibl. Nat. fr. 1802, fol. 60r-v)]. As this text reminds us, writing is the ideal means of transmitting material to the memory so that the process of introspection and meditation can continue:

Et par ce que toutes les choses ne peuvent pas estre retenues par oïr, si les met l'en en escripture. Car quant l'en a oublié aucune chose que l'en a oïe, l'en revient tout jors a memoire et a remembrance par escrit de la chose que l'en a oïe et oubliee. (fol. 59v-60r)

[And since not all things can be retained through hearing, they are put into writing. For when one has forgotten something that one has heard, one always recovers the memory through a written copy of the thing that one heard and forgot.]

The book, in other words, is like an external memory bank. Its purpose is to make material available to the memory of the individual, where it can be used for instruction, for self-scrutiny, and for meditation.

Another text in the same anthology, *Li Livres des enfans Israël*, stresses that reading, meditation, and prayer are inextricably linked, essentially different facets of one and the same experience:

Trois manieres sont d'esperituel exercite. C'est leçons, meditations, et oroisons. Ces trois sont si conjointes que l'une ne puet valoir sans l'autre. (Bibl. Nat. fr. 1802, fol. 201v)

[There are three manners of spiritual exercise. These are reading, meditation, and prayer. These three are so interconnected that one cannot be worth anything without the others.]

Clearly, as implied in the *Mirouer de l'ame*, reading is not an end in itself; it is a means to improved prayer and meditation. Again, this is because reading feeds the memory, making possible the creative and ethical work of the mind. Once reading is understood as a process of supplying the memory with images, concepts, and moral and spiritual *exempla*, there is no reason why it must be an activity limited to texts. And indeed the *Livre des enfans Israël* expands gradually on the notion of reading to include not only books, but also the natural world and all of sacred history:

Et sachiez que leçons n'appartient pas tant seulement aus clers, mais autressi aus lais. Car diex a fait .i. livre commun ou tout puent lire. C'est l'espece des creatures. [. . .] Encor sont autre livre commun . . . Et uns autres livres est ouvers qui est livres de vie. C'est la vie des sains et la vie Jhesucrust, qui nos sont moustrees pour exemple prendre. (fol. 202r-v)

[And know that reading belongs not only to clerks, but also to the laity. For God has made a common book where all can read. This is the created world. [. . .] Still other books are common . . . And another book is open which is the book of life. That is the life of the saints and the life of Jesus Christ, which are shown to us as an example to follow.]

Reading—the processing of material by the faculty of memory—is thus a quintessential human activity, and takes place both with and without the supportive prop of an actual book.

Indeed, the topos of memory and meditation as metaphoric acts of reading is widespread in medieval literature, appearing in texts too numerous to list. For Dante, in the famous opening passage of the *Vita Nuova*, the memory of one's own life is a book.³ The texts in a devotional anthology compiled for the Count and Countess of St.-Pol identify three books to be “read” through daily prayer and meditation: the book of the conscience, the book of knowledge, and the book of holy wisdom.⁴ For the anonymous author of a devotional treatise preserved in the Vatican ms. Reg. Lat. 1682,⁵ the Passion—or at least, its manifestation in the individual memory—is a book:

Li livres especialment en quoy nous devons lire senz nule entrelaisse si est la douce remembrance de la mort et de la passion Jhesucrist . . . Li parchemins de cest livre si est la pure char et la sainte qui nasqui et morut sanz pechié. Li fueil de cest livre sont li torment que il doucement et amoreusement souffrit por noz pechiez. Ausi comme nous tornons les fueillez dou livre, tornons et retornons toute la vie a nostre vray ami Jhesucrist. (fol. 26v)

[The book where we should especially read without pause is the sweet remembrance of the death and the Passion of Jesus Christ . . . The parchment of this book is the pure and holy flesh that was born and died without sin. The leaves of this book are the torments that he sweetly and amorously suffered for our sins. Just as we turn the pages of a book, so we turn and return all life long to our true friend Jesus Christ.]

Just as a book is an external memory bank, so the faculty of memory itself is an internal book, containing the record of everything that one

has heard, seen, read, and experienced. If the memory is properly trained, one can in effect reread a book without having to see it again. Once material has been processed and stored in the book of memory, it is available to be used in much the same way that an actual book is: for ethical guidance, self knowledge, spiritual advancement; for entertainment, relaxation, pleasure; for creative inspiration, invention, the generation of new texts and images.

To illustrate just how efficacious this kind of reading and remembering is, I have chosen a group of thirteenth-century texts dealing with the Joys of the Virgin. The Joys, presented in many texts and in varying numbers—typically five, nine, or fifteen—figure in an interesting set of instructions for devotional meditation. This text is transmitted in several manuscripts in rather varied form, and can be addressed to either a male or a female reader.⁶ In its most complete form (Paris, Bibl. Nat. fr. 24429, fol. 58v-63r), this text—rubricated as *Meditacions*—comprises a prologue in which a male narrator addresses a woman in the capacity of spiritual advisor, proposing to share with her his technique for meditative prayer based on the fifteen Joys of the Virgin; a main body enumerating each of the Joys in turn; a prayer to the Virgin inserted between the eleventh and twelfth Joys; an explanation of how to use the Joys as a basis for prayer; and a concluding section on virtue, vice, and penance. The Joys are explicitly presented as a mnemonic device for meditation on the Gospel story:

Acoustumez me sui toz les jors que je i puis entendre a recorder et a retraire .xv. joies que ele ot de dameldieu son pere et son filz, si com l'estoire de l'evangile le nos ensaingne pres de totes. Par ces .xv. joies ai en continuel memoire pres de tot le cours de l'evangile. (Bibl. Nat. fr. 24429, fol. 58v)

[I am accustomed, every day that I can attend to it, to recall and to go through fifteen joys that she had from the Lord God her father and her son, almost all of which the Gospel teaches us. By these fifteen joys I have in continual memory nearly the entire course of the Gospel.]

The process of actively remembering the Joys of the Virgin constitutes the basis for prayer: “Voirement de ces joies ne remambre je nulle que je n’aie maniere et forme d’oraison” [Truly I do not remember any one of these Joys without thereby having a technique and form of prayer

(fol. 61v)]. As an example, the narrator demonstrates how one can implore the Virgin for help on the Day of Judgment by invoking each of her Joys in turn:

O très beneuree virge Marie . . . par icele corel joie que te fist li archanges Gabriel quant il te salua de par dieu, et te nonça que tu concevroies du .s. esprit et enfanterois le filz dieu, te pri et te requier que tu me porchaces vers lui pardon de mes pechiez . . . (fol. 62r)

[Oh very fortunate Virgin Mary . . . by that heartfelt joy that the archangel Gabriel gave you when he greeted you in the name of God and announced to you that you would conceive by the Holy Spirit and give birth to the son of God, I pray you and implore you that you secure for me from him forgiveness for my sins . . .]

In ms. Bibl. Nat. fr. 24429, each of the Joys is illustrated, providing an added dimension: the reader can commit to memory not only the verbal enumeration of the Joys but their visual representation as well. In both this manuscript (fol. 60v) and ms. Egerton 745 of the British Library (fol. 33r), an accompanying prayer to the Virgin is illustrated with an image of the manuscript's owner kneeling before the Virgin and Child.⁷ This combination of text and image gives concrete expression to the notion that reading the text of the Joys—whether in the actual book or in the “book” of one's memory—will facilitate access to the Virgin herself.

The fertile power of the memory, when thus exercised in the service of devotional meditation, is illustrated in ms. Bibl. Nat. fr. 25462, where an abridged version of the treatise on the Fifteen Joys is followed by one on the Virgin's Five Celestial Joys. The initial rubric clearly identifies the Fifteen Joys as a mnemonic aid to prayer devised by a holy man:

Chi commenche la maniere d'ourer ensi com uns sains abbés ouroit en devotion a nostre dame en ramembrance des .xv. joies que ele eut de son glorieus fils Jhesuchrist. (fol. 135r)

[Here begins the technique of prayer, as a saintly abbot used to pray in devotion to Our Lady in remembrance of the fifteen joys that she had from her glorious son Jesus Christ.]

Following this text, the treatise on the Five Celestial Joys is presented as a direct outgrowth of practicing the techniques outlined therein:

Frere Arnouls de Viler en Braibant, convers de l'ordene de Chistiaus, avoit cascun jour en ramembrance les joies que la beneoite virge Marie ot en terre, et mout si delitoit. Et la dame de misericorde s'aparut a lui en l'enfermerie pour chou qu'ele voloit la devotion de son sergant accroistre de ses plus hautes joies et plus bienheureuses et se li dist: "Pour coi biaux amis penses tu toute jour as joies tant seulement esqueles je me sui esjoïe boneureusement en chest monde? Recorde autresi cheles joies des queles jou use orendroit et userai dore en avant es chieus sans fin." (fol. 142v)

[Brother Arnoul of Villers in Brabant, member of the Order of Cîteaux, had every day in his memory the joys that the blessed Virgin Mary had on earth, and he greatly delighted in it. And the Lady of Mercy appeared to him in the infirmary because she wanted to increase the devotion of her servant through her highest and most blessed joys, and thus she said to him: "Why, fair friend, do you think every day only of the joys that I enjoyed happily in this world? Recall as well those joys that I experience now and will experience from here on out in Heaven, without end."]

The text that follows, an enumeration of the Five Celestial Joys, represents Arnoul's obedient fulfilment of the Virgin's request.

This sequence of texts shows, first of all, how an active memory can analyse the Gospel narrative into a series of fifteen key moments, which are then used as the basis for devout meditation; then, how this very process of memory and meditation leads to a direct encounter with the Virgin, as implied in the illustrations of mss. fr. 24429 and Egerton 745; and finally, how the commemorative processing of this encounter leads to a new text. And there is no reason for the cycle to end there. Presented in the manuscript at hand, the two texts are available for incorporation into the reader's memory, where they will provide the raw material for new meditations and, ideally, for new texts. As Carruthers has stressed, memory is an active process, an "inventional faculty." The cognitive processes subsumed under such terms as *avoir en ramembrance* and *recorder* include the reception, processing, storing, retrieval, and recombination of material gleaned from reading in its largest sense: attention to the texts, images, and teachings offered by the world at large.⁸

NOTES

¹*The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990).

²I cite the text from ms. fr. 1802 in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, a fourteenth-century anthology of devotional texts in French and Latin. The manuscript bears the *ex libris* of Charles d'Orleans.

³"In quella parte del libro de la mia memoria dinanzi a la quale poco si potrebbe leggere, si trova una rubrica la quale dice: *Incipit vita nova*" [In that part of the book of my memory where little can be read, is found a rubric that says: *Here begins the new life*]. *Vita Nuova*, ed. Fredi Chiappelli (Milan: Mursia, 1978), p. 19.

⁴The anthology survives complete in three manuscripts, all dating from the fourteenth century: Paris, Bibl. Nat. mss. fr. 1136 and nouv. ac. fr. 4338, and Chantilly, Musée Condé ms. 137. The prose texts alone are found in the fifteenth-century ms. Musée Condé 684. The ms. nouv. ac. fr. 4338 is briefly described, and dated as 1330-40, by François Avril and Jean Lafaurie, *La Librairie de Charles V* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1968) 73-74. The manuscript was originally connected to Charles V by Léopold Delisle, "Notice sur un recueil de traités de dévotion ayant appartenu à Charles V," *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes* 30 (1869): 532-42. Delisle's identification of Gui de Luxembourg and Mahaut de Châtillon as the Count and Countess of St.-Pol mentioned in the anthology can no longer be accepted, since it would require a much later date for the manuscript.

⁵For a detailed description of ms. Vat. Reg. Lat. 1682, see Ernest Langlois, "Notices des manuscrits français et provençaux de Rome antérieurs au XVI^e siècle," *Notices et extraits* 33.1 (1889): 195-208.

⁶Thus far, I have located the text in question in the mss. Paris, Bibl. Nat. fr. 24429, Vatican Reg. Lat. 1682, and British Library Egerton 745, in all of which it retains an address to a female reader ["fille"]; and in Bibl. Nat. fr. 25462, where it is addressed to a male reader ["biaus fils"]. For discussion of this text and its variant versions, see my "A Book Made for a Queen: The Shaping of a Late Medieval Anthology Manuscript (B. N. fr. 24429)," in *The Whole Book: Order and Miscellany in Medieval Manuscripts*, ed. Siegfried Wenzel and Stephen Nichols (forthcoming).

⁷See Paul Meyer, "Notice du ms. Egerton 745 du Musée Britannique," *Romania* 39 (1910): 532-69. On the basis of heraldic emblems Meyer concludes that the manuscript was made for either Jean or Gui de Châtillon, Count of St.-Pol; he reproduces the miniature of the patron before the Virgin, facing p. 537. I have included a reproduction of the illustration from ms. Bibl. Nat. fr. 24429 in "A Book Made for a Queen" (see note 6).

⁸My study of medieval devotional anthologies has been supported by summer research grants from the Graduate School, Northern Illinois University, which I gratefully acknowledge.

*The Hous of Fame Revisited**

R. J. SCHOECK

It is a pleasure to rejoin scholarly discussion of Chaucer's celebrated incomplete poem, one upon which I stumbled while in graduate school at Princeton with John M. Steadman many years ago and on which he has recently cast his erudite and perspicacious eye. There are two points on which I should like to comment: the first on the performance of the poem, and the second on the sense of play that the poem manifests so richly.

Unlike my own earlier contribution in 1953, which speculated on a possible occasion for a 'reading' of the poem—for "one of the ritualistic functions of the Inner Temple," quite possibly the Christmas Revels, "which by the end of the fifteenth century were the most elaborate of the revels at the Inns"¹—I wish here to concentrate on Steadman's emphasis upon the 'performance' of the poem. He observes very shrewdly that the "conscious mystifications in the earlier books . . . 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," very likely for "three successive days" (7). We lack definitive verification of the occasion, although the sixteenth-century testimony, which declared the *Hous of Fame*² was written for an Inn of Court revel is surely persuasive, even if by the nature of the evidence it cannot be absolutely certain.

What can be established with conviction is the consequence of such a performance over three successive evenings, "occasional poetry of a very high order indeed" (7). For those elements which have been

*Reference: John M. Steadman, "The House of Fame: Tripartite Structure and Occasion," *Connotations* 3.1 (1993): 1-12.

deplored as artistic flaws—"the apparent lack of coherence in Chaucer's plot, its tripartite structure, and the seeming lack of continuity between one episode and the next" (7)—may well have been deliberate, a conscious response to the conditions of the 'performance.' It is time to remove the quotation marks around the term performance and to eliminate any note of the apologetic, and time to recognize that this poem has the special qualities of a piece written for a special occasion, whether or not it is one that can be definitely established six centuries later. This done, the principles for reading and interpreting a performance poem ought to be established and, one hopes, agreed upon.

At least provisionally I would put forward the theory of Emilio Betti, who called for three types of interpretation according to types of texts being studied:

re-cognitive	historical and literary texts
presentational	dramatic and musical texts
normative	legal and sacred texts

Ignoring the first and the third (which occupy considerable space in Betti's hermeneutical system) I address the presentational.³ If we follow Betti's formulation (even without regard to the massive theoretical structure on which it is based), we perceive that a performance text—whether accompanied by music, or dance, or visual arts—is directed at an audience, and a modern 'reading' of the performance poem requires surrender on the part of the interpreter to this completed act, one that fulfills the intended meaning of the composition. A corollary of this view is that a presentational text is not complete *until* it has been performed (or presented). Therefore, a linguistic or philological interpretation cannot be complete without the fuller historical understanding of the occasion and the audience for which the script was written. To echo Betti (in the formulation of Josef Bleicher⁴),

In the translation of a text, the dramatization of a play and the performance of a piece of music, the 'interpreter' is engaged in the activity of transposing one context of meaning into another and in this sense re-creates the work in question. The principal guideline in this process, which can so easily fall prey to subjectivism and arbitrariness, is the demand to try and fulfill the intention of the author, and all energy has to be put into the task of making it apparent.

The first step, I urge, is to recognize the presentational quality of *The Hous of Fame*. What follows is that our theory and kind of interpretation must be faithful to the intention of the author. I would then agree completely with Steadman's emphasis on the deliberate nature of the apparent lack of coherence in the plot, and the seeming lack of continuity between one episode and the next: these qualities are indeed deliberate and a conscious response to the conditions of the performance.

Farther, we miss a great deal in our reading of Chaucer if we fail to celebrate his sense of play. Writing in an as yet unpublished contribution, "Chaucer and Huizinga: The Spirit of *Homo Ludens*," I put it that "with Chaucer we are given a poetics of play, and Huizinga can provide a rich sense of playing as a civilizing function for our reading of Chaucer."⁵ Further, in Chaucer's range of genres we find three kinds (at least) of play in his world of church and court and country: the games about hunting and warfare, the games about love (courtly love especially), and the sense of life itself as a game. Yet another kind of play is that of interaction between *auctor* and readers or listening audience. One has only to consider the rigidifying structures of *lectura* in the university, monastic, and legal worlds during Chaucer's time, and to consider how tempting the rules of *lectura* would be to one with a sense of irony.⁶

It is clear that the *Hous of Fame* is some kind of play, a game for which we have lost the rules (and are not even certain of the occasion for the play). We stand helplessly outside the game: helplessly (as the range of critical opinions about the poem illustrates), like listening to jokes being exchanged in a language we do not fully comprehend. What is evident, I would be prepared to argue (in the traditions of civility that *Connotations* is rapidly establishing), is that the poem itself takes the game for granted, and the structure of the poem (that is to say, its deliberately truncated ending) is a kind of playfulness, and one that the original audience would immediately understand.⁷

There are differences between the systems of relationships of *Troilus and Criseyde* (on which I have touched in the essay cited) and the *Hous of Fame*. It is self-evident that the Trojan poem is presented to a court audience, that is, to an audience largely filled with aristocratic women (as in the celebrated miniature in Ms. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge,

Ms. 61). We cannot yet be certain of the audience for the *Hous of Fame*, but we can express our conviction that it is different from that of the *Troilus*; and we may also declare that it is an audience uniquely at home in the preparation or performance that takes place—most likely, as it seems to me, in the Inner Temple, with its already highly developed sense of ritual and (in the nature of the revels) a willingness not to take itself too seriously, at least for the time being.

There are many today who would nod in agreement with Goethe's dictum that "grau . . . ist alle Theorie," especially when it diminishes the fundamental character of any text. One may suppose, to conclude, that Chaucer himself would be—or is (if we accept him like the figure of Troilus in *Troilus and Criseyde* high in the Empyrean)—amused no doubt at the seriousness with which modern scholars have approached his poem, and perhaps amused still more at their failure to comprehend its special nature.⁸ Might he not think that a "gotcha" (that American slang signal for a successful trick played on a listener to a joke) was appropriate, and might he also reflect that the very distance of scholars from his poem's performance was itself ironic?

Lawrence, Kansas

NOTES

¹R. J. Schoeck, "A Legal Reading of Chaucer's *Hous of Fame*," *UTQ* 23 (1954): 185-92: "What I am suggesting, then, is that Chaucer wrote his *Hous of Fame* for one of the ritualistic functions of the Inner Temple; the date of December 10 in the poem's first lines might suggest the Christmas Revels, which by the end of the fifteenth century were the most elaborate of the revels at the Inns" (189-90). I further suggested on p. 190 that the "man of gret auctorite" might be the Constable-Marshal of the Christmas revels, and I called attention to other references or allusions in the poem which would support a performance in the Great Hall of the Inner Temple. The kind of reading that I suggested in 1954 for the poem was necessarily provisional—and "necessity here mothers the invented dictum that perhaps all readings of poems are ultimately provisional" (192)—but it reinforces, and is reinforced by, the atmosphere of ritual and the air of parody of ritual.

²See Gerard Legh, *Accedence of Armorie*, first published in 1562 and reprinted a half-dozen times: see *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland & Ireland*, ed. A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, 2nd ed. revised by W. A. Jackson

and completed by Katherine F. Pantzer (London: Bibliographical Society, 1976) nos. 15388-15393. The *Accedence* was also reprinted in the *Workes of Armorie* (1572), collected by John Bossewell and printed by Richard Tottel. The reference to Chaucer and the *Hous of Fame* is to be found on folio 118, where Legh pictures Pegasus (part of the coat-of-arms of the Inner Temple); and he writes: "And therefore S. Geffreye Chaucer buylte unto him (after of his owne nature & condition, a house called Fame"

³See Emilio Betti, *Allgemeine Auslegungslehre als Methodik der Geisteswissenschaften* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967)—the 2 vols. of the original *Teoria Generale della Interpretazione* (1955) have been abridged to one volume.

⁴Josef Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as method, philosophy and critique* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980) 46.

⁵Forthcoming in *Tales Within Tales: Apuleius Through Time*, ed. Constance S. Wright and Julia Bolton Holloway (New York: AMS Press, 1994) 97-106. In this essay, I have also observed that "Huizinga gave us an anthropology of play in his seminal work on *Homo Ludens* (1944), which is a study of the play element in culture. With Erasmus we are given a rhetoric of play in such works as the *Colloquies*, the *Adagia* and the *Praise of Folly*, that supreme turning and twisting of the mock encomium, itself a playing with the strategies and forms of rhetoric" (96).

⁶In "Chaucerian Irony Revisited: A Rhetorical Perspective," in *Florilegium*, ed. Douglas J. Wurtele (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1992) 124-40, I have offered a view of the rhetorical resources for irony that were available to Chaucer, as well as a rhetorical reading of *Troilus and Criseyde*. On *lectura*, see M. D. Chenu's admirably compact and lucid introduction in *Towards Understanding St. Thomas*, trans. A.-M. Landry and Dominic Hughes (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964) 80-85. It must be added that in the English Inns of Court there were several kinds of *lectio*, with the semi-annual 'Readings' commanding considerable attention and doubtless an excess of seriousness—which would provide a ready (and readily identifiable) target for the play of a poem such as *The Hous of Fame*.

⁷The accessibility of the poem in three manuscripts and the editions of Caxton and Thynne would suggest that there was some continuity of reading: perhaps at least among members of the Inns of Court who, like Legh, knew the key.

⁸Jokes played on listener or audience have been familiar enough in world literature, as the studies of Jung and Kerenyi have revealed, see William J. Hynes and William G. Doty, eds., *Mythical Trickster Figures* (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1994); and the trickster continues to play his devices in Shakespeare, as Richard Hillman has recently made clear in *Shakespearean Subversions: The Trickster of the Play-text* (London: Routledge, 1992). Jokes played on listener or audience are familiar enough in frontier or emerging cultures. Thus in American literature we find Herman Melville's *The Confidence Man* (1857); Mark Twain's pessimistic late story, *The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg* (1900), or his posthumous story *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916); and in the trickeries of the saga of the Snopes told by William Faulkner in several of the novels of his fictitious Yoknapatawpha County. The twentieth-century musical *The Music Man* operates along these lines to the continuing delight of audiences in several countries. Tricks upon readers are now conventional everywhere in post-modern literature.

A Response to Judith Dundas, "Paronomasia in the Quip Modest"

DEBRA FRIED

If "Herbert has deliberately chosen to put his wit in the service of his faith" (Dundas, 225), he has done so in the full awareness of wit's potential ties with the devil's party. Paronomasia is less "admirably suited" to Herbert's staging of wrestling matches between "the claims of the world and the claims of the spirit," as Dundas asserts, than it has been made to suit such a purpose, as she notes a bit further on: "He has deliberately chosen to put his wit in the service of his faith." Paronomasia and its looser forms (ambiguity, pun, verbal slippage, phonetic odd bedfellows, errant ear-events) are not inherently good for enforcing faith; Herbert fights sophistry with sophistry. He chooses his weapons well but not because his weapons of wit were forged expressly to defend faith. In Eleanor Cook's terms, this is Herbert's way of 'troping the scheme' of *paronomasia*.

Herbert gives this device a further twist. As Dundas points out, "It is a regular feature of Herbert's style to correct one word by another, similar in sound, but more exact from the religious point of view" (227). It is an equally regular feature of his style to represent this correction as a slip of the tongue: "Or if such deceits there be, / Such delights, I meant to say." To Dundas' observation that here Herbert "proceeds to substitute the word 'deceits' for the word 'delights'" (230), one needs only to add that he "proceeds" to do so through the fiction of a speaker's unpremeditated slip, as though in verbal gaffes we staged a debate between the godly and the worldly. By leaving both the mis-spoken word and the corrected one on the page, the poem suggests an alternative to the silent erasures of written revision. If the poet "often blotted what

*Reference: Judith Dundas, "Paronomasia in the Quip Modest: From Sidney to Herbert," *Connotations* 2.3 (1992): 223-33.

I had begun" ("Jordan [II]"), the talker has to let both blot and correction stand witness to what he "meant to say." If we only listened to ourselves mis-speak, we would learn the deceit lurking in delight. Perhaps this is one way of resolving the paradox of wit being put at the service of what Dundas calls Herbert's characteristic "devotional simplicity." If a simple, everyday slip of the tongue can be enough of a text on which to meditate the claims of two worlds, who needs a sermon to set text against text? Paronomasia is its own patristics. One can battle with belief in the simplest offhand utterance. The very fact of speaking a non-utopian language, where the same sounds do double duty for often very different meanings, itself becomes an arena for testing faith. As Dundas notes in concluding, Puttenham's "ornament" has in Herbert "the appearance of everyday speech": in part for that reason ornament becomes argument bearing "the force of revelation" (231).

In one paronomasiac scheme, "delights" slips into "deceits" ("The Rose"). In another, "delight" leaves an echoic residue of "light" ("Heaven"). This kind of revelation through reverberation can be difficult to tell from truth through truncation (as in Herbert's "Paradise" with its tercets generated by pruning). How does the retort Word B offers to its paronomasiac pair Word A become modulated through the phonetic changes whereby A may generate, occasion, or lapse into B? The lame tactic of dismissing a claim by a belittling stutter or lisping iteration of one of its words is probably as old as language and is still with us (word, schmerd). To figure such bullying by babbling as pregnant with divine truth is Herbert's achievement.

Dundas also notes that a poem like "The Rose" is to some degree generated from the paronomasiac pairs whose implications it mines, "so important to the very invention of the poem is the pair 'op-pose'/'rose'" that it "appear[s] almost to set aside the logic of rebuttal" (230). From the most illogical seeds grows the tree of faith—the point is that paronomasia isn't logical, it defies logic, it might well be taken to argue for the vanity of logic itself. How can one reason in a world where "raise" sounds just like "raze"? One cannot reason, perhaps, but one can write poems—these punning pairs almost write the poem for you. Well, actually, they do nothing of the kind; Herbert makes it seem that way, which is what we mean when we say the paired words are the core of the poem's "invention." There's something of the schoolboy

exercise about Herbert's poetry (Write a poem that shows how God can "raise" men by "razing" them).

Dundas' provocative article implies that a fuller taxonomy of the ways in which tongue-tinkerings and letter-shufflings enable word to rebut word will help us understand why Herbert had such faith in what paronomasia knew.

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Half a Miracle: A Response to William Harmon*

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Although William Harmon's article is ingenious and stimulating on the whole, I should like to take issue with his most spectacular example, the (admittedly tentative) suggestion that the translation of Psalm 46 in the Authorized Version was written or at least revised by William Shakespeare. It is, indeed, a remarkable coincidence that in this forty-sixth Psalm the forty-sixth word from the beginning should be "shake," the forty-sixth word from the end "speare"; and that it is at least plausible that the Authorized Version may have been in the process of revision when Shakespeare was either in his forty-sixth year or forty-six years old. But does that prove, or at least make it likely, that Shakespeare as it were left his signature in the text of the Psalm as it now stands? At first sight, the coincidence is indeed so miraculous that we must assume that Shakespeare really did have a hand in it. As I will show, however, it really is a coincidence, and only half a miracle.

Before we come to that, however, there is another striking coincidence to be got out of the way: the fact that, long before Harmon, almost the identical theory about Psalm 46 had been proposed not just once, but twice, by Anthony Burgess, who first put forward his theory in his Shakespeare biography.¹ Like Harmon, Burgess notes the appearance of the words "shake" and "speare" at numerologically significant positions in the text, as well as the fact that Shakespeare was forty-six in 1610, the year before the "King James" Bible came out. Like Harmon, Burgess presents Shakespearean authorship or revision of the Psalm as a possibility, though not as an established fact, and again, like Harmon,

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

he refers to Kipling's story about Jonson and Shakespeare contributing their poetic expertise to the Authorized Version.

Later, Burgess used his theory as the basis of a story patently inspired by Kipling's portrayal of Jonson and Shakespeare revising the Bible. The story is part of Burgess' novel, *Enderby's Dark Lady*,² and it is presented as one of two comic tales about Shakespeare written by the hero of the book, the poet Enderby. Shakespeare is offered a share in the revision of the poetic parts of the new Bible translation by his friend Ben Jonson. Initially reluctant, Shakespeare travels home to Stratford, where his shrewish and puritanical wife Anne begins to scold him for his ungodly profession. In defiance of her and the rest of his bigoted family, Shakespeare asserts the dignity of poetry by leaving his mark on the galley proofs of the Psalms that Jonson has entrusted to him for revision. He picks the forty-sixth Psalm (corresponding with his age) and replaces the forty-sixth word, "tremble," by "shake," and the forty-sixth word counting from the end, "sword," by "speare." Thus he gives the psalm its present form, with his name enshrined in the enduring monument of the Authorized Version.

The resemblance between Burgess' theory and Harmon's is indeed striking, and one might be forgiven for regarding Harmon as a victim of the sort of subliminal influence that we may all find hard to escape from time to time, when some idea we once overheard in a conversation or read about in a half-forgotten book pops into our head and presents itself as the fruit of our own brain. Still, it may have been a mere coincidence; in fact, that seems more plausible than it may appear at first sight. After all, the miraculous appearance of Shakespeare's name in Psalm 46 exists independently of Burgess and Harmon; it has, in fact, been around since 1611, waiting for someone interested in word-games to discover it.

The resemblance in their theories, therefore, is only half a miracle: the other half had already taken place, the coincidence of the Psalm's wording. In probability theory, the likelihood of each individual occurrence in a series is independent of preceding occurrences: for example, if we go to the casino to play roulette it is rather unlikely that the same colour will come up ten times in a row, but that does not affect the outcome of each individual spinning of the wheel. Once the ball has

lighted on the black nine times in a row, the chances of black coming up again, completing the unlikely total of 10, is no smaller or bigger than that of red coming up: half the miracle has already happened. So it is with the similarity between the theories of Burgess and Harmon; there, too, it is really the facts as such that are so unlikely that their discovery by two independent observers is not so astounding any more.

Unfortunately for Harmon and for Burgess, the very same principle can be applied to their theory itself. Unlikely as the coincidence of all these forty-sixes may be, half the miracle had already taken place before the scholars who composed the Authorized Version set about their work of translating. Their work simply completed the miracle rather than creating it. Burgess' account of Shakespeare changing two words in the text of the Psalm to embroider his name into it may make for an amusing story, but it is highly implausible. So far as we can determine, the words "shake" and "speare" were already present in the text from which the translators started out. Whereas the Vulgate and versions based on it, such as the Catholic Rheims/Douai Bible, spoke of the mountains being "trubled," and of "weapons" in general being broken by God rather than spears in particular,³ already in Coverdale's translation we find the corresponding words to be "shoke" and "speare."⁴ More significantly, in the Bishops' Bible the forms are identical with those of the Authorized Version: "shake" and "speare."⁵ The Bishops' Bible is particularly relevant in this context: as Charles C. Butterworth has shown in his painstaking study of the genesis of the Authorized Version, the King's translators had been specifically instructed to treat the Bishops' Bible as a sort of working model which they had to revise. As the instructions had it,

The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the *Bishops Bible*, [is] to be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit.⁶

Admittedly, as far as Psalm 46 is concerned, the "King James" text does differ somewhat from this model, in which the word "shake" is in forty-seventh position and the word "speare" in forty-eighth counting from the end; so there is some coincidence in both these words ending up in precisely the forty-sixth position in the Authorized Version. Yet that

coincidence seems less than miraculous when we realize that all it took for this to happen was a shift of one position for "shake," of two for "speare." A similar picture emerges when we investigate the Geneva Bible, which according to the instructions issued to the translators of the Authorized Version was one of the earlier "translations to be used when they agree better with the Text than the Bishops Bible" (Butterworth 212): the forty-seventh word is "shake," the forty-fourth word from the end is "speare."⁷ Half the miracle had already happened long before the Authorized Version was commissioned. In the absence of the least shred of corroborative evidence, Shakespeare's involvement in or authorship of part of the Authorized Version seems extremely unlikely.

And thereby hangs a methodical tale. Coincidences will happen; as with all ambiguities, the yardstick in telling the intentional from the purely coincidental must be whether there are other more plausible explanations, and whether there is any corroborative evidence: a series of two coincidences may carry more conviction than just a single case. For instance, in the example from *Doktor Faustus* quoted by Harmon, the appearance of the word "Mann" all by itself might very well be fortuitous; but the intentionality is made more plausible by the juxtaposition with what seems like a play on the name of the narrator, Zeitblom: "gebrochen von den Schrecknissen der Zeit . . ." Here an interpretation of the narrator's name seems to be suggested: a flower ("Blom" for "Blume") broken by Time.

Also an author's known tendency to play such word-games may be seen as circumstantial evidence: Anthony Burgess, e.g., is known to be fond of playing with language, and for that reason it may not be too fanciful to read the title of one of his novels, *Abba Abba*, as at least in part (though by no means exclusively) a fourfold allusion to the author's initials. When Burgess ascribes a similar tendency to Shakespeare, we must remember that Burgess often tends to project himself and his own concerns and preferences onto other writers, particularly Shakespeare. In Shakespeare's own works, as far as I know, such onomastic games seem to be limited to puns on "will" in the sonnets; unless, of course, we follow the over-ingenuous theories of the Anti-Stratfordians, who find puns and anagrams scattered throughout the Shakespeare canon.

Only, from their perspective, the Psalm should not have spoken of "shake" and "speare," but of "bacon"; that, in the Old Testament, would have been remarkable indeed!

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NOTES

¹Anthony Burgess, *Shakespeare* (New York: Knopf, 1970) 233-34.

²Anthony Burgess, *Enderby's Dark Lady: Or No End to Enderby* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984), in particular 24-34.

³*The Holie Bible Faithfully Translated into English, out of the Avthenticall Latin . . . by the English College of Doway* (Douai, 1610), s.v. Psalm 45.

⁴*The Holie Scriptures, Faithfully and truly translated by Myles Coverdale, Bishop of Exeter* (1535; rpt. London, 1838), s.v. Psalm 45.

⁵*The Holie Byble, Containing the Olde Testament and the Newe. Authorized and appointed to be read in Churches* (London, 1585).

⁶Charles C. Butterworth, *The Literary Lineage of the King James Bible: 1340-1611* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1941) 212.

⁷*The Bible, That Is, the holy Scriptures contained in the Old and New Testament* (London: Robert Barker, 1602).

Single Natures—Double Name: A Reply to Peter Milward and James H. Sims*

CHRISTIANE GILLHAM

First of all, I would like to thank Professor Milward and Professor Sims for their most stimulating responses to my article. It is extremely gratifying not only to have both scholars' support for my thesis that the Song of Solomon is a possible source for *The Phoenix and Turtle* but also that both provide further evidence and pursue the subject in their own way. Regarding *P&T* against the background of the "Song of Solomon" Professor Milward is struck by the "Trinitarian" number symbolism of the poem while Professor Sims (more than once in the Shakespeare canon) finds corroboration for the idea that "bird and tree are vitally connected through the ashes/seed-dust imagery" (67).

Before accepting the challenge contained in both responses, I want to signal complete agreement with Professor Sims that "neutralization of opposites" is a misleading description of the perfect union of Phoenix and Turtle. I beg to disagree, however, with Sims' identification of the Phoenix with "the bird of lowdest lay" (65).¹ It seems unlikely that the Phoenix celebrates his own and the Turtle's funeral rites, after both have "fled / In a mutuall flame from hence. . . . Leaving no posteritie" (23-24, 59).²

I also find I cannot but treat Milward's scepticism concerning Shakespeare's awareness of the homonymic nature of the word *Phoenix* in a sceptical vein. Surely that *Phoenix* means the bird as well as the palm-tree was not a detail of classical learning but common knowledge. Shake-

*Reference: Peter Milward, "'Double Nature's Single Name': A Response to Christiane Gillham," *Connotations* 3.1 (1993): 60-63; James H. Sims, "Shakespeare's 'The Phoenix and the Turtle': A Reconsideration of 'Single Natures Double Name,'" *Connotations* 3.1 (1993): 64-71.

speare might have got it, to name only two popular sources, from Gerard's *Herbal*³ or Holland's *Pliny*:

The bird Phoenix, which is supposed to haue taken that name of the Date tree (called in Greeke Foinix) for it was assur'd to me, that the said bird died with that tree and reuiued of itself as the said tree sprung againe.⁴

And this brings me to the main point of both responses, i.e. the meaning of "Single natures double name" and whether (according to Professor Milward) I would not have done better to use "Double natures single name" as a title. The "single name . . . has reference to two different beings or natures" (60) writes Milward, while Sims argues that "the line in its context refers not to the bird and the tree but to the two birds, the phoenix and the dove" (69). I could not be more grateful to both scholars for making me aware of what really is the understander's first concern: the immediate context defined by grammatical correlations. When I chose the line for a title I did so because it defines so clearly the relationship between "natures" and "name" (or *res* and *verba*) as a theme permeating the poem as a whole. This meaning seems valid to me still. Therefore, what remains to be done now is bridging the gap between the overall, prototypical meaning of the line and the semantically and grammatically precise one of the immediate context. So I begin (thanks to Milward and Sims) to do my homework.

First there are the textual variants "nature's" or "natures." Since the subject-predicate relationship of "name" and "was called" does not seem convincing to me (which perhaps means disagreement with Professor Sims) I would like to vote, after all, for the reading "natures." Thus, the first of the two lines now in question contains two contrasting nominal statements, "single natures"—"double name," which are put into relation and interpreted in the second: "Neither" (meaning *neither of whom*, or *neither of the two single natures*) "two nor one was called."

Secondly there are the denotations of the words. Professor Milward as well as Professor Sims seems to understand "single" as an indicator of the one-ness of the two birds (Sims 68; Milward 61) and "double" as an indicator of their two names, Phoenix and Turtle (Sims 68-69; Milward 61). But the line does not read "one nature two names." Instead Shakespeare qualifies the plural "natures" by the epithet "single," i.e.

not yet unified but separate and solitary,⁵ while in "double name" a noun in the singular is qualified by an adjective denoting duality. The singular thus refers to one name which is, however, "double." This reading is corroborated by the semantic value of "double," which, apart from its first denotation "consisting of two members, things, sets combined; twofold,"⁶ means "having a twofold relation or application; occurring or existing in two ways or respects; sometimes = ambiguous."⁷ The *OED* reference to Chaucer's *Troilus* is well suited to shed a new light on the meaning of "double" in *P&T*:

And but if Calkas lede us with ambages—
That is to seyn, with double wordes slye,
Swiche as men clepen a word with two visages—⁸

Chaucer defines what he calls "ambages," i.e. ambiguities,⁹ as "double wordes" and paraphrases his definition again in explaining a double word as "a word with two visages." Accordingly, "double" is used by Chaucer as a synonym of "ambiguous." If this holds true for "word" it also holds true for "name" (both meaning *nomen*), so that "double name" in *P&T* does not indicate "two names"—which would moreover contradict the syntactic logic—but one ambiguous name, or, in Chaucer's words—a name "with two visages." Thus "double name" does not point to two names (Phoenix and Turtle) for one and the same thing (Phoenix and Turtle united in married chastity), as both Milward and Sims seem to imply when they read it as a "pair of names" (Sims 68) or "the two birds" (Milward 61), but to one ambiguous name for two things.¹⁰

It now appears that the meaning in the immediate context is in harmony with the overall meaning of the line "Single natures double name." The ambiguity of the name *Phoenix*, signifying both bird and palm-tree, points to the manifold and multi-levelled language of the poem, *Phoenix* being itself a most telling example of a "double name."¹¹

We are agreed, then, that the lines "Single natures double name / Neither two nor one was called" refer to the two birds. Each of their single natures bears one ambiguous name and this is why neither of them was called either "one" or "two." The ambiguity of the *verba* denotes the ambiguity of the *res*. And this is where the ambiguous allocation of sexes in the Song of Solomon and what I now would like

to call *coincidentia oppositorum*¹² of male and female in *P&T* comes in. Although in the poem the Phoenix is the bride and the Turtle the bridegroom, seen against the background of the Song of Solomon¹³ the poem speaks of the unity of the sexes. Apart from the Phoenix and the Turtle's final union this is manifested in the nature of each single bird, since both are at the same time male and female.¹⁴ Both these words are implied by way of paranomasia in the word "flame," which is granted a central position in the poem. In the "flame" in which Phoenix and Turtle are fled "from hence," both *male* and *female* are mysteriously united.¹⁵

Thus the natural ambiguity indicated by verbal ambiguity at last assumes a mystical meaning. Phoenix and Turtle figure in their singleness as well as in union as a paradigm of "married chastity,"¹⁶ Shakespeare's ideal of love.

In the *Threnos* the verbal and natural or rather sexual double-oneness is transposed (as Milward has convincingly shown) into a triple-oneness:

Beauty, Truth, and Rarity
Grace in all simplicities,
Here enclosde, in cinders lie. (53-55)

"Grace" is the one name in which the Platonic triad¹⁷ of line 53 is contained "in all simplicities" and therefore also in all singularity, as "single" and "simple" are etymologically related.¹⁸ This, again, shows that the concept of ambiguity permeates or even rules the thematical and verbal structure of the poem. Trying to understand the mysteries of the poem one is left with a mystery: the double-oneness of Phoenix and Turtle is finally transformed into a triple-oneness, but not as one might be inclined to suppose in the way of a love-poem like Shakespeare's eighth Sonnet. This union is not one "Resembling sire, and child and happy mother, / Who all in one, one pleasing note do sing." Being a kind of "married Chastitie" which leaves "no Posteritie,"¹⁹ it reminds the reader of the Holy Trinity, with its three individual ("single") natures comprised in one name. There, too, the one name has three different meanings, each of which at the same time implies the other two, all being coexistent.

NOTES

¹G. Wilson Knight was the first to identify the "bird of lowdest lay" with the Phoenix, but he himself admits that "it weakens the point and pathos" in this case. See *The Mutual Flame* (London: Methuen, 1955) 202-04, esp. 204.

²Cf. F. T. Prince, ed., Shakespeare, *The Poems* (1960; London: Methuen, 1985) 179n1.

³John Gerard, *The Herbal or General History of Plants*, rpt. of 1633 ed. (New York: Dover, 1975) 1517-18, "Of the Date tree," esp. 1518: "The Names: The tree is called in Greeke, Foinix: in Latin, Palma: in English, Date tree."

⁴Holland's Pliny XII.iv.387, quoted in the OED, entry "phoenix² Bot.," where more information about the nominal identity of bird and tree may be found: "Various speculations connecting the date-tree with the mythical bird, Phoenix, were current from the time of Pliny." The OED also refers to the Latin *Carmen de Phoenice*. One of the references is Trevisa, *De proprietatibus rerum*, tr. 1398.

⁵OED, "single" a. 1.1.; 3. In this meaning also in Shakespeare, see *Timon of Athens* 5.1.107, *Sonnets* 3.14; 8.14; 9.2; 39.6.

⁶OED, "double" a. 1.a.

⁷OED, "double" a. 2. The word "Doubler" in Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* 201-02, ed. G. D. Willcock and A. Walker (Cambridge: CUP, 1936, rpt. 1970) stands for the repetition of one and the same word.

⁸Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde* V.897-899, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (1987; Oxford: OUP, 1992) 572.

⁹OED, "ambage."

¹⁰Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* VII.9.2. See also Cicero, *De oratore* II.lxi.250 and *Ad Herennium* IV.67.

¹¹"Turtle," also, should be seen in this light, as it is not only a symbol of "truth" but its very name is (by way of paronomasia) signalling truth. This is corroborated by the topical relationship of "true" or "truth" with "turtle"; see, for example, Lydgate, *Balade Commend. Our Lady* 78: "O trusty turtle, trewest of all trewe" (quoted in the OED under the entry "turtle" sb.¹ 2.); Spenser, *Faerie Queene* III.xi.2.8-9: "And of faire Britomart ensample take, / That was as trew in love, as Turtle to her make"; VI.viii.33.6: "Yet never Turtle truer to his make." The palm referring of course not only to the palm-tree but also to the hand, is often seen in its relationship to truth, especially in emblem books. The palm of the hand either indicates truth or perversion of truth in Shakespeare. See Inge Leimberg, "'Give me thy hand': Some Notes on the Phrase in Shakespeare's Comedies and Tragedies," *Shakespeare: Text, Language, Criticism. Essays in Honour of Marvin Spevack*, ed. Bernhard Fabian and Kurt Tetzeli von Rosador (Hildesheim: Olms-Weidmann, 1987) 118-46. Thus the two "single natures" turtle and palm both connote truth, which in turn proves a "double name."

¹²I here take up the term Nicolas of Cusa coined for the mysterious and transrational unity of God. See especially his *De docta ignorantia* I.4 and *De visione Dei* X-XI; cf. also G. von Bredow, "Coincidentia oppositorum," *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter, vol. 1 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971) 1022-23.

¹³Another background is provided by Plato. See his myth of the circular and androgynous human beings in the speech of Aristophanes, *Symposium* 189a-193d.

¹⁴The Phoenix is often described as a hermaphrodite; see, for example, Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (revised ed., Oxford: OUP, 1980) 213n. See also below n16. "Turtle-dove" as a term of endearment is used in classical antiquity for both men and women alike; see Steier, "Tauben," *Paulys Realenzyklopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 2nd series, vol. 4 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1932) 2479-2500, esp. 2495-96. This also holds true for Shakespeare. In *P&T* the turtle-dove is male, in *Hamlet* (5.1.286) it is female.

¹⁵This is corroborated by the fact that "mutuall" also refers to sexual intercourse (see OED, "mutual" 3.) and is used by Shakespeare in this sense in *Measure for Measure* 1.2.143: "our most mutual entertainment."

¹⁶Again the Bible provides an explanation for "neither two nor one": "A man . . . shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh" (Mt 19:5; Gen 2:24). In the emblem-book tradition one finds this well-known biblical phrase symbolized by the hermaphrodite, who is not only regarded as a type of ideal marriage but also of "married chastity." Barptolemaeus Anulus' *Picta Poesis* (1565), for example, shows the *pictura* of a hermaphrodite on a tree with birds, of which two are also present in *P&T*, the crow and the turtle. Interestingly the "double-oneness" of the hermaphrodite is characterized by having "two visages": "Corpore sit duplicis formae Hermaphroditus in vno / Vnaque sit facies foeminae, et vna viri." Sexuality, moreover, has been transcended and replaced by virtue: "Et notam sexus non sinat esse notam / Nempe maritalis, nodusque vxorius: ambo / Dum coeunt: tecto membra pudore ligant"; quoted in A. Henkel and A. Schöne, *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1967) 1631. Sims writes "compounded elements cannot create a simple" (69). But this holds true only for the physical or cosmological theory of compounds and elements, not for the metaphysics of ideal unity in "married chastity."

¹⁷For the association of Plato with the three Graces in Renaissance philosophy see Wind 36-52, esp. 39n13.

¹⁸See "single" and "simple" in the *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. C. T. Onions (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966). Cf. A. Walde and J. B. Hofmann, *Lateinisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 2, 5th ed. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1972) 540, 544, *singulus* and *simplex*. See also Spenser, *Colin Clout* 727: "Single Truth and simple honesty."

¹⁹There is an interesting parallel in the metamorphosis of Coronis in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Coronis, a nymph loved by Phoebus Apollo, commits adultery and is therefore killed by Phoebus. Since she is pregnant of Phoebus, her unborn child is to die with her: "duo nunc moriemur in una" (II.609). But Apollo decides to rescue the child even from the flames of the funeral pyre. Accordingly, the child is flame-born like the Phoenix: "non tulit in cineres labi sua Phoebus eosdem / semina, sed natum flammis uteroque parentis / eripuit . . ." (II.628-630).

Notations on *Connotations* 3.1

PETER MILWARD

First, I note that all notations (or notes, or replies, or responses) hitherto published in *Connotations* have to do with specific contributions. Maybe that is quite enough, for the sake of concentration. But now I feel inspired by the excellence of the various contributions to 3.1 to contribute this pot-pourri of my own, not just on their variety but as they achieve a certain unity round the name of Shakespeare.

1. The fascinating article of John Steadman deals indeed with Chaucer's *House of Fame* (1-12); but in his suggestion of a "burlesque treatment of . . . mediaeval allegoresis" (4)—while Chaucer himself remains committed to the method of allegoresis in principle—I find an analogy with Shakespeare's burlesque treatment of the tendency to see "figures in all things" in the comic character of Fluellen in *Henry V* 4.7. This instance of burlesque has been interpreted (notably by Richard Levin in *PMLA*)¹ as a blanket criticism of all allegorical interpretation of Shakespeare's plays. But, as we see in Chaucer's case, *abusus non tollit usum*; or rather, may we not see in such burlesque a typical form of humour at one's own expense in each author?

2. Then, descending as it were from the sublime to the ridiculous, may I add one more item of interest to Robert Collmer's "Collection of Toothpicks" (13-25)? It is not only Shakespeare's witty beggar Autolycus or Cervantes' Moor who ridicules the affectation "of the fallen well-born" in "making his toothpicker an hypocrite" (18); but also here in distant Japan we have the similar saying "*Bushi wa kuwanedo takayoji*"—The samurai uses his toothpick even when he has had no meal. Only here the connotation is one not of ridicule but of admiration for one who keeps up appearances even in poverty.

3. A propos of William Harmon's "discussion of Shakespeare's potential involvement in the shaping of Psalm 46 for the so-called 'King James'

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translation," W. F. H. Nicolaisen (44-47) challenges him to strengthen his case by showing "the Bard's hand . . . elsewhere in the psalter" (44-45). I don't know why he has to restrict his challenge to the psalter when it is a question of the Authorized translation of the Bible as such. For I myself have found quite a number of Biblical echoes in the "four great tragedies" (to speak of them alone) that seem to correspond with the language not of any existing Tudor translation but only of the Authorized version.

To give some examples: from *Hamlet* 3.1, "a weary life" (Job 10:1: "My soul is weary of my life"), 4.6 "words to speak . . . will make thee dumb" (Dan. 10:15: "spoken such words . . . I became dumb"), 5.2 "heaven ordinant" (Job 38:33: "ordinances of heaven"); from *Othello* 4.2, "hell gnaw his bones," (Zeph. 3:3: "they gnaw not the bones").

Some of these verbal similarities may, I admit, be no more than that; but I find them interesting and calling for further investigation—especially considering that Shakespeare was presenting his great tragedies in London during the years the Authorized Version was actually in progress, leading up to its publication in 1611 (when the Bard was for a time precisely 46 years of age). I might add that I came across these similarities by accident as I was working on my survey of *Biblical Influences in Shakespeare's Great Tragedies* (Indiana UP 1987).

As for "the temptation to pun on one's own name" (45), it must have been very strong in one for whom the pun was notoriously his "fatal Cleopatra." Yet apart from the famous "Will" sonnets, we hardly find puns on the more obvious surname, not even in the form of shaking a spear. Only on an examination of the 150 occurrences of "shake," we find the verb followed twice by "sword" (*All's Well* 2.5, *Timon of Athens* 5.1) and once each by "weapon" (2 *Henry VI* 4.8) and "blade" (*Lucrece* 505), not to mention "beard" (*King Lear* 3.7) recalling the variant form of Shakespeare's name as "Shaxberd." These are not so convincing, though a case might be made out for them on closer examination; but I would like to propose the more obvious name of Falstaff, which breaks up into the two parts of "false+staff" on a very rough analogy with "shake+speare."

4. I really must take issue with Robert Crosman's reference (48-51) to the Tudors as "the last native dynasty" in contrast to the succeeding

Stuarts (49). By my computation the last native dynasty of England was the Saxon line of kings that ended with the death of Edward the Confessor. Since that time the poor English have been ruled by a succession of foreign rulers: Normans, French (Angevins), Welsh, Scots, Dutch and Germans. I see it as a sign of Shakespeare's patriotic attitude to the Welsh Tudors, who naturally aimed at replacing the designation of "England" with "Britain," that in the whole of *King Lear*, though we learn from the *Dramatis Personae* that the scene is "Britain," there is no mention of his kingdom by name—in striking contrast to the frequency of its mention (some 30 times) in *Cymbeline*. No doubt, as an Englishman, like his Falstaff, he had a patriotic dislike for the Welsh Tudors, who would, among other defects, have made "fritters of English" (*Merry Wives* 5.5). 5. Again, I must take issue with Robert Crosman in his other Reply (52-55), where he refers to the long speech of the Archbishop in *Henry V* 1.2 as an ideological justification of Henry's invasion of France, in which both the dramatist and his Elizabethan audience took an evident interest (53). No doubt, it is exceedingly tedious; but surely it is meant to be tedious and to send Henry himself with his courtiers to sleep (as in not a few productions of the play)! Such long-winded circuitous genealogical argument is surely self-defeating, especially for the purpose of justifying the aggressive war with France on which both the King and the Archbishop have determined for various reasons of their own. So far from being a somewhat naive expression of Shakespeare's presumed ideology, the speech is rather to be interpreted as a satire on Henry's ideology, which is all too frankly Machiavellian.

As for Henry's subsequent conversation with the three English soldiers on the eve of Agincourt, so far from this being a "clash of temperaments and world-views" (54), it is rather a question of the morality of this particular war of aggression against France. The English soldiers, especially the young Michael Williams, state the question very pointedly: "But if the cause be not good, the King himself hath a heavy reckoning to make" (5.5)—to which the Welsh-born Henry notably fails to make any convincing reply, as he is himself unconvinced of his own right whether to invade France or to rule England. All he can do is to shift the burden of responsibility off his own on to their shoulders, when it comes to dying in battle.

Then, as for the phenomenon of the "rash of prose" into which "Shakespeare's plays broke out . . . from about 1595 to 1601" (55), I would attribute it not only to Falstaff—though admittedly he had a large share in it—but more generally to the double incursion of comedy into history leading up to *Hamlet* and of the sub-plot of low life into the aristocratic main plot. It is, in other words, an incursion of the spirit of comedy, incarnated (if you will) in Sir John Falstaff, into the more serious action of the plays whose conventional medium is verse, according to the axiom enunciated by Puck, "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" But then this spirit is quenched not so much by Henry V at his coronation as by Prince Hamlet with his melancholy—or rather by the spirit of melancholy which Hamlet and (at that time) his dramatic creator have in common.

6. Finally, it seems to me that "the impression, eloquently created by Brown, that Hamlet is constantly holding back," so far from being refuted by Maurice Charney or Holger Klein (57), is more than an impression created by any scholar: it is the dominant motif of Hamlet himself, and of Hamlet's creator. It begins with his paradoxical utterance (for all his prolixity of speech), "But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue" (2.2). It continues in that "something in his soul," noted by Claudius, "o'er which his melancholy sits on brood" (3.3), and in the feeling "how ill all's here about my heart" that Hamlet himself confides to Horatio (5.2); also in his challenge to Guildenstern to "pluck out the heart of my mystery" (3.2). So it comes to an appropriate climax in his dying words, "The rest is silence" (5.2)—which may well be paraphrased in Klein's words, "All that remains for me to say must be unspoken." Yes, Hamlet may indeed be taken, together with his creator, as one of those "secret people" (of England) featured in a poem by G. K. Chesterton. What, then is this mystery over which his soul may be seen as still "on brood"? Ah!

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NOTE

¹Richard Levin, "On Fluellen's Figures, Christ Figures, and James Figures," *PMLA* 89 (1974): 302-11; cf. my reply in the Forum, *PMLA* 90 (1975): 118-19.

Brightness and Beauty, Taste and Relish: Advertising and Vindicating Eighteenth-Century Novels¹

ANDREW VARNEY

The preface to *The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery* (1709) complains that readers who question the book's authenticity act unfairly in giving a defenceless author "a Kick in the Britch."² The reader has bought the book "which is really his own by that Purchase" and in censuring what he buys he is censuring his own taste. In the early eighteenth century books were commonly sold without any cover or binder's material; the title-page described, advertised, the book. The Avery title-page is 199 words long, excluding publication details and price. Part of it tells of Avery's

putting to Sea in a Mechanic Ship, where he drew in the Crew to turn Pirates with him. His sailing to *Jamaica*, where he dispos'd of the Ship's Cargo. His taking a large Ship, worth above a Million Sterling, belonging to the Great *Mogul*, with his Grand-Daughter on Board, (who was going to be Marry'd to the King of *Persia*) attended by a great Retinue of Ladies. His Marriage with the said Princess, and his Men with her Retinue.

One can understand an author resenting a kick in the britch for telling improbable tales from a reader who has already swallowed this title-page, which makes no claim to offer anything other than a narrative of daring, rapid, exotic adventure.

Ten years later the title-page of one of Europe's most famous narratives promised much the same. It begins:

*The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner: Who lived Eight-and-Twenty Years, all alone in an un-inhabited Island on the Coast of America . . .*³

In our time much interest has focused on the theme of providential deliverance in this narrative. It is not mentioned on the title-page. The

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word "deliver'd" does admittedly appear: "deli-" in a small fount lower case comes at the end of the sixteenth line, and "ver'd" at the beginning of the seventeenth, which is completed with the words "by" and "PYRATES"—in capital italics for emphasis. Whatever first attracted the contemporary reader to *Robinson Crusoe* it was not the prospect of the conversion or deliverance narrative we have come to prize in it. Not that a title-page accurately describes this or any other early eighteenth-century novel. For example, in the present instance Crusoe is delivered from his island, but not by pirates, italicised or otherwise. The preface to *Robinson Crusoe* echoes the title-page in speaking first of the unmatched "Wonders of this Man's Life"; it then commends that narrative for its "religious Application of Events" which tends to "justify and honour the Wisdom of Providence," but it makes no specific reference to the theme of deliverance.⁴

Title-pages and prefaces are not simply the loyal servants of narratives. Title-pages are bait luring the reader to the hook; prefaces tend to justify him for having taken it. Both are unreliable. For example, the preface to *Moll Flanders* asserts, claiming a moral beauty for aspects of the narrative, "there is not a wicked Action in any Part" of the story "but is first and last rendered Unhappy and Unfortunate."⁵ The only defect of this respectable assertion is that it is entirely untrue. It is a common lure in title-pages to suggest that a wicked character has confounded morality by going either unpunished or even rewarded for wickedness. On her title-page Roxana is "The Fortunate Mistress"; likewise, Captain Avery may be a pirate, but his career traces the unimpeachable trajectory of meritocratic advance that was one of the favourite myths of Defoe's era. A daring title-page and the pious claims of a preface may often be at odds, and neither need accurately represent the narrative they herald.

Standing thus in rhetorical and tactical relationships within texts title-pages and prefaces are an integral part of the literary artefact produced, sold and bought, and they need to be recognised as one guide to the nature of early British fiction. They testify, *inter alia*, to the witty sophistication and creative deceptiveness of much early narrative. The book as it was sold was of course the product of a number of individuals, author, editor perhaps, master-printer, compositors, and so on. It is not clear that authors wrote the prefaces to their books, however likely it

may seem in the case of works we securely attribute to Defoe, where the prefaces display a consistency of matter and manner from one to the next, and it may well be unlikely that authors were responsible for title-pages. This is however of no particular significance in a period when almost all works were published anonymously and where there was much artful play about the status of texts, as when the author of the preface to *Moll Flanders* explains that he has presented the story

in modester Words than she told it at first; the Copy which came first to Hand, having been written in Language, more like one still in *Newgate* . . . (1).

Books were a technologically and culturally sophisticated product and they were offered for sale to an expanding and increasingly intellectually adroit readership with considerable subtlety.

Michael McKeon identifies three phases in the development of the early novel: romance narrative; a more ostensibly naturalistic phase, "naive empiricism," epitomised in Defoe; and a reactive phase—Fielding is an exemplar—of "extreme skepticism."⁶ This schema and McKeon's social and ideological contextualising of it is perceptive and helpful, but I believe that the phases interpenetrate more and are more wilfully confused than it suggests.

Romance narratives of the French kind had lost vogue by the turn of the eighteenth century. That Britain was at war with France for the last years of the seventeenth and the first decade of the eighteenth century was one spur to the generation of a native narrative manner in Britain. Prefacing her scandalous roman à (very obvious) clef *The Secret History of Queen Zarah, and the Zarazians; being a Looking-glass for . . . the Kingdom of Albion* (1705) Mrs Manley says:

THE Romances in *France* have for a long Time been the Diversion and Amusement of the whole World; . . . all Sorts of People have read these Works with a most surprizing Greediness; but that Fury is very much abated The Little *Histories* of this Kind have taken place of *Romances*

These little Pieces which have banish'd *Romances* are much more agreeable to the Brisk and Impetuous Humour of the *English*, who have naturally no Taste for long-winded Performances, for these have no sooner begun a Book but they desire to see the End of it.⁷

The greedy appetite for French romances might have declined but a taste for the exciting, transporting pleasures of narrative had not. Hospitality

to narrative, often very romantically conceived, is found even in unexpected places as three instances covering some forty years may help to show.

Firstly, in 1681 Robert Hooke, Secretary of the Royal Society, writes a gushing preface to the very factual *Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon*, a publication which carries, facing the title-page, statements from the East India Company and from Sir Christopher Wren certifying its authenticity. Hooke commends the book less for the information and instruction it offers than for the rapture of the reading experience: "Read . . . the Book itself, and you will find yourself taken Captive indeed . . ." ⁸ He describes how the author will transport the reader through all the wonders of the island: "Show you . . . acquaint you . . . entertain you . . . and by the way shelter you from the Sun and Rain, with a Fan, made of the *Talipat-Leaf*." There was of course no particular literary novelty in promising an exotic journey, any more than there was in deploying the figure of the journey as an image for spiritual experience (as Bunyan had so recently done) or for the reading experience itself. ⁹ What is striking however is Hooke's exploitation of the appeal of the romantic journey in a context normally so self-consciously factual, scientific and functional in style as a Royal Society publication.

Secondly, in 1712 Addison's philosophical *Spectator* papers on the Pleasures of the Imagination (nos. 411-21) analyse the functions of eyesight, and suggest that living in a world with colours is like living inside the world of literary romance:

. . . our Souls are at present delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing Delusion, and we walk about like the Enchanted Hero of a Romance, who sees beautiful Castles, Woods and Meadows; and at the same time hears the warbling of Birds, and the purling of Streams. ¹⁰

Thirdly, if Hooke and Addison seem to make the romantic world of narrative something of an earthly paradise then this becomes even more explicit in an unexpected context in Defoe. Colonel Jack's career is disreputable and ramshackle and most of it reflects poorly on him and on his world, which is the modern world of the wars with Louis XIV, but the *narrative* of that career is represented by the editor who writes the preface as a kind of Eden:

The various Turns of his Fortunes in the World, make a delightful Field for the Reader to wander in; a Garden where he may gather wholesome and medicinal Plants, none noxious or poisonous¹¹

The garden, it becomes clear, is harmless because of the moral and religious improvement deducible from the narrative, but the elision from the delightful field of narrative to the wholesome garden of morality is subtly managed and at the heart of discourse about narrative in this period. It would be unsurprising, indeed almost inevitable, to discuss English narratives of earlier eras—stories of chivalric romance from the Middle English period, such elaborate Elizabethan allegories as *The Faerie Queene*, or the spiritual autobiographies of the seventeenth century, for instance—in such terms. To find them applied in the context of a racy, modern and ostensibly factual narrative of near contemporary history, is a clear index of how much vitality there remained in the romantic mode at even so late a date as 1722.

J. Paul Hunter stresses the centrality of the didactic mode in early British fiction: "The sheer amount of . . . advice provided in popular print . . . argues a voracious public appetite for being told what to do."¹² Yes, but the didactic manner exists in a sophisticated self-conscious negotiation with the less deliberately improving aspects of narrative writing. The preface to *Roxana* gives an accessible example in the way even the rhythms of the prose enact the opposing pulls of the dubious glamour of Roxana's story and the instructive sobriety of her penitence. The carefully constructed pattern of antitheses, much closer to the elaborate structure of the periodic sentence than is common in Defoe, reinforced as it is by the placing of stress and alliteration, anticipates in its rocking motion the oscillation between improper excitement and proper reflection which readers may look forward to in the story:

It is true, She met with unexpected Success in all her wicked Courses; but even in the highest Elevations of her Prosperity, she makes frequent Acknowledgements, That the Pleasure of her Wickedness was not worth the Repentance; and that all the Satisfaction she had, all the Joy in the View of her Prosperity, no, nor all the Wealth she rowl'd in; the Gayety of her Appearance; the Equipages, and the Honours, she was attended with, cou'd quiet her Mind, abate the Reproaches of her Conscience, or procure her an Hour's Sleep, when just Reflections kept her waking.¹³

This passage may be construed as a more elaborate and poetic enactment of a collocation that had been evident five years earlier in the short preface to *Robinson Crusoe*, where the second paragraph emphasised the remarkable "Wonders" of Crusoe's life and the third stressed the modest and pious cast of the narrative. The fourth paragraph, incidentally, asserts the veracity of the narrative, the "Editor" saying that he "believes the thing to be a just History of Fact," and denying that "there is any Appearance of Fiction in it." That a narrative was true did not justify its publication *ipso facto*, but the case for the publication of obvious fiction was far harder to make, as was apparent when Defoe published what is sometimes called the third volume of *Robinson Crusoe*, the *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1720): he furnished the narrative with a long preface, purportedly written by Robinson Crusoe, which both claims that all Crusoe's story is "historical and true in Fact" (sig. A4) and simultaneously glosses this claim into meaning that the story is true as the allegory of a real man's [the author's, we may presume] life, every incident being a "just Allusion to a real Story" (sig. A5).

Title-pages and prefaces have to draw the reader towards a narrative, but prefaces in particular have to exculpate an interest that may be prurient without killing it dead. In an often knowing game prefaces negotiate between narrative interest and moral excuse. The opening phrases of the *Roxana* preface show this in the ambivalent use of the word "beautiful," which means at once the sexual glamour of Roxana and the moral beauty of a pious book: "The history of this *Beautiful Lady*, is to speak for itself; If it is not as Beautiful as the Lady herself . . ." (1) the editor says he has failed in his attempt to render it instructive and improving.

Defoe uses the language of aesthetics much more extensively as a bridging discourse between exciting narrative and pious moralising in Prefacing the narrative of the woman who was, as the title-page describes her,

Twelve Year a *Whore*, five times a *Wife* (whereof once to her own brother),
Twelve Year a *Thief*, Eight Year a Transported *Felon* in *Virginia*, at last grew
Rich, liv'd *Honest*, and died a *Penitent*.

Defoe stresses the moral improvement implicit in *Moll Flanders*' story: he trusts that "the Moral . . . will keep the Reader serious, even where the Story might incline him to be otherwise" (2). The story/moral antithesis is distilled into arguments about the beauty of the narrative. The word "beauty" first occurs in the fifth paragraph where Defoe explains why the wicked part of Moll's life has to be so vividly represented:

To give the History of a wicked Life repented of, necessarily requires that the wicked Part should be made as wicked, as the real History of it will bear; to illustrate and give a Beauty to the Penitent part, which is certainly the best and brightest, if related with equal Spirit and Life. (2)

There is clearly a tension between novelistic and moral values. The moral will only be the most beautiful part of a narrative if it is presented with sufficient verve. Countering the argument that a moral narrative must be duller than a wicked one Defoe deflects responsibility onto the reader's taste:

It is suggested that there cannot be the same Life, the same Brightness and Beauty, in relating the penitent Part as in the criminal Part: If there is any Truth in that Suggestion, I must be allow'd to say, 'tis because there is not the same taste and relish in the Reading, and indeed it is too true that the difference lies not in the real worth of the Subject so much as in the Gust and Palate of the Reader. (2)

The inherent "worth" of a subject and the reader's taste may be at variance. The reader's palate may relish unworthy material, or his gorge rise at too much morality. But the moralizing is what excuses indulgence of the taste, and an unstable or slippery use of aesthetic language is part of Defoe's strategy for exciting the gourmet in the reader without shocking the moralist. Defoe's practice as a novelist accords with the training he received at Charles Morton's academy in Newington Green, which was in all but name his university and which influenced him throughout his life.¹⁴ Morton's educational regime included thorough instruction in both classical rhetoric and Protestant casuistry, and Morton endorsed the employment of fiction in the service of morality and virtue.

This training, and a lifetime as a controversialist and fabulist had taught Defoe as well as Horace that

Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci,
Lectorem delectando, pariterque monendo. (*Ars Poetica* 343-44)

What has always to be acknowledged however is that the legitimating doctrine is not necessarily identical with authorial practice, which is more often to be discovered in a flux of variables than pinioned by rules. In the present case of Moll's story Defoe mentions some incidents, called "delightful" and understood to be risqué, that the reader will later encounter, but in the same breath explains that they are put to moral use: "there is an agreeable turn artfully given them in the narrating" that makes them instructive. The sensually delightful will be turned into the morally agreeable—and we can admire the art by which this excellent alchemy is performed. Acknowledging the pull of novelistic values the preface at times presents the morality as payment—atonement—for the pleasures of the story:

The first part of her leud Life with the young Gentleman at *Colchester* has so many happy Turns given it to expose the Crime, and warn all whose Circumstances are adapted to it, of the ruinous End of such things, and the foolish Thoughtless and abhorr'd Conduct of both the Parties, that it abundantly atones for all the lively Discription she gives of her Folly and Wickedness. (2-3)

But the argument that morality can be beautiful is not abandoned, even while more hints of lascivious things to come are given out. We see this when the preface mentions the extraordinary episode in which Moll and an elderly gentleman in Bath make love with money; the climactic phase of their relationship comes in a bedroom scene when, having invited Moll to reach her hand into a private drawer and feel the coins it contains, the elderly gentleman pours its contents into her lap. They also enjoy some less symbolic moments. In the preface Defoe says that the lover's ensuing penitence, together with the warnings of the irresistibility of sexual temptation, will "to a just Discernment . . . appear to have more real Beauty in them than all the amorous Chain of Story which introduces it" (3). Discovery of beauty is apparent here to the reader of taste. The phrase "real beauty" implies that there is another,

meretricious, kind of beauty that less discerning readers, or discerning readers in a weaker moment, might find in the erotic narrative.

The preface also mentions two narrative lines that do not exist at all in the book and calls them "two of the most beautiful parts" (5). These are the untold stories of Moll's "governess" and of her first husband. Given what is intimated about them, the beauty ascribed to these stories could consist only in vitality and variety of narrated incident. Admittedly, Moll's governess is said to have become at last a penitent, but this information is tacked only casually onto the summary of her story; and the husband's life seems simply to illustrate the rewards of unabashed villainy.

At the end of the preface the editor explains that he has omitted details related by a third hand of the end of Moll's life in Maryland and Virginia, pleasant and agreeable though they were—the language of the preface has become so destabilised that whether they were pleasant and agreeable in the exciting or the improving sense is undeterminable. The reason for omitting them has however nothing to do with their content. The editor says he omitted them as "they are not told with the same Elegancy as those accounted for by herself" (5). Although the preface to *Roxana* will later claim that "The Noble Inferences" of the narrative—its moral lessons—"are worth all the rest of the Story; and abundantly justifie (as they are the profess'd Design of) the Publication" (2) the *Moll Flanders* preface can by this stage, when sufficient libations have been poured at the altar of moral propriety, assume that the reader agrees that novelistic values rule supreme.

The year before *Moll Flanders* Penelope Aubin published her *The Life of Madam de Beaumont, a French Lady; who lived in a Cave in Wales about fourteen years undiscover'd, being forced to fly France for her Religion* (1721). It is a story which subjects female virtue and piety to ordeal by romantic adventure and very remarkable event, though as Penelope Aubin points out in her preface, it is not as extravagant as what was happening in British public life at the time. There "A Madness has for some time possess the *English*, and we are turn'd Projectors, exceed[ing] the French in extravagant Whimseys." She says her story "is very extraordinary, but not quite so incredible as these" (v-vi). She is referring principally to the wild and captivating speculative adventure known as the South

Sea Bubble. She also alludes to other remarkable things in her narrative: that, for example, it features two honest clergymen alive in Britain at the same time, and that Lord de Beaumont was faithful to his wife. The worldly jokiness of this preface is interesting as an introduction to a pious romantic narrative in that it does not really invite the reader to approach the story with any particular sobriety, or expectation of improvement from it. The Latin mottoes from Virgil and Juvenal, incidentally, which appear on the title-page commend fortitude under duress rather than religious resignation in adversity. One of the episodes which most strains credulity occurs when the young heroine Belinda faints, apparently dying of exhaustion after three days wandering in mid-Wales in late October, following her escape from capture and ravishment by a band of robbers largely formed of expatriate French noblemen. In an event that evokes the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac God brings her relief:

Thus the Almighty try'd her Faith and Patience, but design'd not she, who fled from Sin, should perish; a She-Goat, with a little Kid, at her recovering from her Trance stood by her; she catch'd at it with her eager hands, the Goat fled, but the Kid she laid hold of, calling her Companions to assist her, and with a Knife she had in her Pocket, she stabb'd it. They lick'd up the warm Blood, and eat the raw Flesh, more joyfully than they wou'd Dainties at another time (120)

This episode is referred to in the last paragraph of the book as teaching the lesson that none should despair of God's help, but as it is presented in the narrative it is far more vividly memorable for its image of the pious and beautiful young heroine eating goat tartare in desperate circumstances on a Welsh mountain than it is for the note that the goat was providentially supplied. Novelistic rather than pietistic qualities are valorised in the text. The raw goat flesh seems to feed the taste and relish, and to appeal to the gust and palate of the reader as much as it nourishes Belinda.

The attraction of narrative vitality evident in this case is pithily formulated by Defoe in a phrase Roxana uses when at a critical moment in her story she herself speaks of taste. About half-way through the book she is caught in a frightful storm at sea and is so terrified that she vows to reform if she gets safely to land:

I would live a single and a virtuous Life, and spend a great deal of what I had . . . wickedly got, in Acts of Charity, and doing Good. (126)

This would have a devastating effect on a narrative with 204 pages yet to go. Roxana does get safely ashore, and she reports what then happened to her state of mind:

The Danger being over, the Fears of Death vanish'd with it; ay, and our Fear of what was beyond Death also; our Sence of the Life we had liv'd, went off, and with our return to Life, our wicked Taste of Life return'd, and we were both the same as before, if not worse. (128)

Good news for the reader. Roxana's brilliant phrase "our wicked Taste of Life" pins down precisely what imaginative narrative ministered to. prefaces like those introducing Defoe's novels—and there are very many of them—play what I have called a knowing game between author and reader; the author legitimates his reader's desires by making an apparent moral interest the gateway to their fulfilment in the exciting world of fiction.

This sophisticated collusion grated on the testy moral sensibilities of Fielding, alert as he always was to any manifestation of hypocrisy. His preface to *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews* (1742) famously identifies hypocrisy as the species of affectation which is most fertile in generating the sense of the ridiculous on which comic narrative depends. It is not therefore surprising that there is implicit in much of his own fiction, and explicit in the opening chapter of *Tom Jones*, an intelligent, meticulous dismembering of the enabling codes and conventions of early eighteenth century prose narrative, of which he was of course himself nonetheless a practitioner. The intermingling of narrative excitement with pious moralising in a story, and the ingenious working of aesthetic language between the threads of conspicuous decency on one hand and sly indecency on the other, constitute a collaborative tissue woven by author and reader together. Fielding sardonically unpicks this by way of a ruthless analysis of the metaphor of taste that lay at the heart of aesthetic discourse, and is still so familiar to us that we hardly recognise what we are doing when we make our bodies speak our minds. The alimentary canal is a major highway of

aesthetic discourse, and almost all parts of it are traversed as we savour and digest our reading.

In the penultimate paragraph of the first chapter of *Tom Jones*, which he calls the Bill of Fare to the Feast, Fielding, having wittily argued that the only difference between the food of the rich and of the poor is in the presentation, goes on:

In like manner, the excellence of the mental entertainment consists less in the subject than in the author's skill in well dressing it up. How pleased, therefore, will the reader be to find that we have, in the following work, adhered closely to one of the highest principles which the present age, or perhaps that of Heliogabalus, hath produced. This great man, as is well known to all polite lovers of eating, begins at first by setting plain things before his hungry guests, rising afterwards by degrees as their stomachs may be supposed to decrease, to the very quintessence of sauces and spices. In like manner, we shall represent human nature at first to the keen appetite of our reader, in that more plain and simple manner in which it is found in the country, and shall hereafter hash and ragoo it with all the high French and Italian seasoning of affectation and vice which courts and cities afford. By these means, we doubt not but our reader may be rendered desirous to read on forever, as the great person just above-mentioned is supposed to have made some persons eat.¹⁵

Fielding's ironic detail interrogates the discourse of taste as it has been enrolled in the service of narrative. His history will move, he says, from the robustness of the country to the sophistication of the city: the reader may expect an increasing refinement and complexity in human wickedness the further he reads. In order to keep his taste sharp even while his need for nourishment declines the narrative provision will become, in images that we still use to describe certain kinds of writing, saucier and spicier. This carries its own criticism with it. Our food is going to be subjected to the unfamiliar foreign processes of hashing and ragooing. The text exploits the English reader's xenophobia: foreigners use sauces and spices, he knows, to enhance the taste of poor, or to disguise putrid, meat. Thus it must—this is the catch—be a corrupt taste that lures us polite lovers of eating or of reading further into the food or the fiction. Would reading on forever be any better than eating forever, especially now that we have been trapped into acknowledging that we read for titillation and not for improvement, just as much of our eating is done for pleasure rather than sustenance? Fielding's ironic strategy

has blown the gaff on the all excusing motive Defoe had held out to his reader, that he was reading for improvement. If Fielding's irony disables the narrative mode which leans on the *utile dulci* principle then it calls into being an ironic code in its place. It is not axiomatic that this displacement marks the increase in subtlety that we might expect and that McKeon's scheme of "extreme skepticism" supplanting "naive empiricism" implies. The game in earlier narratives was played as it were between equals. The buyer of the *Life of Capt. Avery* had exercised choice, and had "by that purchase" acquired something of his own he could treat as robustly as he wished. The play between author and reader, and between story and moral, was a power game. Fielding's reader has no choice; the narrative manner rests on irony and that requires a reader who is complicit and ductile. The title-page—*Tom Jones*—was by comparison with that of the Avery story and of many others highly laconic and it had to be taken on trust. In any case, Fielding's manner disempowers dissent. One can read *Roxana* and be steadily appalled by the heroine, but one cannot read the first chapter of *Tom Jones* and disagree, grumbling away that reading is not really anything like eating. You cannot quarrel with irony, and irony is additionally—and especially in British culture—socially compelling. To reject irony is uncool, and to miss it is worse. The worldliness of Fielding's manner makes the reader eager to become a member of his circle, and so when Fielding hands him a Bill of Fare he does not realise that what he is going to get is not à la carte but the set menu. The fictional tradition that began as a power game has descended to charades.

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NOTES

¹This article, although featuring some additional commentary and referencing, is based on a paper read at the E.S.S.E. 2 Conference (Bordeaux, September 1993) and retains some of the characteristics of the oral presentation for which it was prepared. Unfortunately, it was too late for me to refer to the ongoing debate on Fielding and reader-response in *Connotations*.

²*The Life and Adventures of Capt. John Avery* (1709) iii.

³[Daniel Defoe], *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe . . .* (1719).

⁴For further comment on the *Robinson Crusoe* prefaces see below.

⁵Daniel Defoe, *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders*, ed. G. A. Starr (Oxford: OUP, 1971) 3.

⁶Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987).

⁷"To the Reader" A2-A2^v.

⁸Robert Knox, *An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon, in the East-Indies* (1681), "The Preface."

⁹Cf. Bunyan's "Apology" to the *Pilgrim's Progress*: "This Book will make a Traveller of thee."

¹⁰*The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965) 536.

¹¹Daniel Defoe, *Colonel Jack* [*The History and Remarkable Life of the Truly Honourable Col. Jaque commonly call'd col. Jack . . .*, 1722] ed. S. H. Monk (Oxford: OUP, 1965) 2.

¹²J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth Century English Fiction* (New York: Norton, 1990) 246.

¹³Daniel Defoe, *Roxana*, ed. Jane Jack (Oxford: OUP, 1964) 2.

¹⁴Paula R. Backscheider, *Daniel Defoe: His Life* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989) 14-20.

¹⁵Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones*, ed. A. R. Humphreys, vol. 1 (London: Dent, 1962) 2-3.

Gaps and Stumbling-Blocks in Fielding: A Response to Černý, Hammond and Hudson*

BERNARD HARRISON

I

Wolfgang Iser's theory of reader-response¹ evokes a mixed response in this reader. Iser leaves himself open to some telling, and apparently fundamental, objections. But in general they seem to me to be objections of the sort which, as Johnson said of Berkeley, persuade without convincing. Lothar Černý's objections seem to me to run true to form in this respect.

Černý is broadly correct, I think, that Iser's theoretical claims, far from being the *a priori* constructions which some upholders of inductivism in literary criticism have taken them to be,² are founded upon a certain reading of Fielding's novels, which "do not just serve Iser as examples to illustrate the theory but actually provide the patterns or substrata on which it is based" (137). I also find myself, in common with Hammond and Hudson, wholly persuaded by Černý's central point: that Iser misses, or at any rate seriously underestimates, the extent to which the compliments Fielding pays to the "sagacity" of his readers are to be read as ironic; and that once one takes adequate account of this it becomes difficult to resist the conclusion that, whatever Fielding may have intended by these passages, it was not his intention to invite the reader to "participate" in the co-constitution of the "meaning" of

*Reference: Lothar Černý, "Reader Participation and Rationalism in Fielding's *Tom Jones*," *Connotations* 2.2 (1992): 137-62; Brean S. 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; Lothar Černý, "Fielding, Reception Theory and Rationalism: A Reply to Brean Hammond and Nicholas Hudson," *Connotations* 3.1 (1993): 85-89.

his work in the manner envisaged by Iser. Černý's contention that Fielding's praise of his readers' sagacity is hyperbolic is supported, among other things, by passages such as the following, in which Fielding reasserts his authorial privileges by expressly blocking the "participatory" response of the reader who, like Iser, imagines he can afford to smile at what he takes to be the simplicity of Allworthy.

... the reader is greatly mistaken, if he conceives that Thwackum appeared to Mr. Allworthy in the same light as he doth to him in this history . . . Of readers who, from such conceits as these, condemn the wisdom or penetration of Mr. Allworthy, I shall not scruple to say, that they make a very bad and ungrateful use of that knowledge which we have communicated to them. (135)³

I do not, then, disagree with the substance of Černý's critique of Iser. But I do have reservations concerning its scope. If Iser's readings of Fielding do indeed, as Černý suggests, provide the basic patterns which found his theory, then it might seem that if those readings can be shown to be flawed the theory must founder with them. I propose here to present some arguments for resisting this conclusion. The genesis of Iser's theory may indeed lie in his readings of Fielding, without that entailing any logical dependence of the former upon the latter. I shall argue that some of Iser's claims are detachable from any such dependence, and defensible. And I shall try to show that neglect of these parts of Iser's position, far from producing a more adequate reading of Fielding, leads to one which does him the disservice of situating him within a system of categories and conceptual distinctions from which his work in fact largely escapes: those of the very system of eighteenth-century religio-moral ideas whose influence Fielding was most concerned to combat.

Like Hammond, I find it easiest to articulate these reservations by way of an apparent digression. Accordingly, I shall begin by considering a different objection to Iser, one first raised more than a decade ago by Stanley Fish, in an article cast in the form of a review of Iser's *The Act of Reading*.⁴ I shall try to show that this objection, too, leads by way of an overly wholesale rejection of Iser's position to a reading of Fielding less adequate than Iser's.

II

One central claim of Iser's account of reading is that the enterprise of reading is directed towards the constitution by the reader of a hermeneutic counterpart of the text (the "aesthetic object" in Iser's terms), which may at times, although it need not, acquire a sufficient degree of precision to be identified with "the meaning of" the text.⁵ A second central claim is that the process by which the reader constitutes the aesthetic object proceeds mainly through the "filling-in" by the reader of "gaps" left in the text by the author. This gap-filling is not, according to Iser, a matter of arbitrary or subjective decision on the part of the reader, but is itself guided and prompted by cues and indications also planted by the author in his text.

Fish's counter-claim is that Iser's reader must be credited not merely with constituting the aesthetic object which results from his fillings in of Iserian "gaps," but with constituting the "gaps" as well. Fish's argument fastens upon the following extract from Iser's discussion of the encounter between Allworthy and Captain Blifil:

Allworthy is introduced to us as the perfect man, but he is at once brought face to face with a hypocrite, Captain Blifil, and is completely taken in by the latter's feigned piety. Clearly, then, the signifiers are not meant solely to designate perfection. On the contrary, they denote instructions to the reader to build up the signified, which represents not a quality of perfection, but in fact a vital defect, namely, Allworthy's lack of judgment. (Iser 65, Fish 7)⁶

Iser's reader, in effect, locates a "gap" between the moral perfection which Fielding's narrative has earlier ascribed to Allworthy, and the latter's manifest inability to detect the hypocrisy of another when it is staring him in the face. Fish's retort is that not every reader need perceive a "gap" here, or indeed any inconsistency in Fielding's depiction of Allworthy.

... one can easily imagine a reader for whom perfection is inseparable from the vulnerability displayed by Allworthy and for such a reader there would be no disparity between the original description of Allworthy and his subsequent behavior. (7)

One might think such a retort vulnerable to the objection that such a reader is not, in fact, all that easy to imagine; first, because the

proposition that moral perfection entails vulnerability to the deceits of hypocrisy is inherently implausible; and second, because so much in *Tom Jones* is inconsistent with the supposition that Fielding believed any such thing. In fact, such objections do no damage to Fish, since the example, inadequate as it is, serves merely to illustrate a more general point which seemingly strikes at the heart of Iser's theory of reading. In the *Diacritics* interview of June 1980 Iser identifies phenomenology as one of the four "frames of reference" of his theory:

4. Phenomenology, in order to set up the wandering viewpoint, the perceptual noema which is the correlate of the text in the reader's mind, the passive syntheses, and the structures of ideation as intersubjective patterns always occurring in covert processes. (73)

Iser's "aesthetic object," in other words, is conceived, in the spirit of Husserl's *noemata*, as a mental object, and the process of "filling in" the "gaps" in the text which constitutes it in the reader's mind as analogous to Husserlian "noetic-noematic constitution": a matter of the continuous adjustment of anticipations in the light of their fulfilment. It follows that the gaps or discontinuities which such reflection endeavours to convert into continuities are not gaps *in the text qua text*; the sort of gap that would be created, for instance, by deleting the second line from the last quotation above. They are gaps *between* the text and the *noema* undergoing constitution in the reader's mind. In the case of the example chosen by Fish, for instance, the supposed discrepancy is between the structure of anticipations built up in the reader by Fielding's insistence upon Allworthy's goodness and the note, allegedly both new and discordant with these expectations, struck by Allworthy's inability to see through Captain Blifil. But if Iserian "gaps" are gaps between the text and a mental object under constitution in the reader's mind, then, plainly, they will depend for their existence in part upon the particular, idiosyncratic turn of mind which a given reader happens to bring to the text, and which will from the beginning have given its own individual twist to the character of the *noema* which he or she has set about deriving from the text. No doubt Husserl can with some colour of plausibility ignore the possibility of variation from individual to individual in noetic-noematic constitution, but that is because he is for

the most part attempting to describe not the responses of readers to texts but the constitution of our common perceptual world. Iser echoes Husserl in his talk of "structures of ideation as intersubjective patterns *always* occurring in covert processes." But plainly, any such wholesale transfer of Husserlian assumptions from the phenomenology of perception to that of reading must beg the question of how far the *noemata* corresponding to a given text can be expected to vary from reader to reader. Into the resulting gap between Husserl's and Iser's phenomenologies, Fish inserts his knife. If different readers may generate different *noemata* from the text, and if the location (which is to say, the existence) of Iserian "gaps" is relative to both the content of the text and the content of the *noema* generated from it by a given reader, then different readers may find different Iserian "gaps" in one and the same text. Or, as Fish puts it:

If gaps are not built into the text, but appear (or do not appear) as a consequence of particular interpretative strategies, then there is no distinction between what the text gives and what the reader supplies; he supplies everything. (7)

Once one sees that this, deeply plausible, point underlies the marginal implausibilities of Fish's treatment of the Allworthy / Blifil example, then, of course, those implausibilities cease to matter; since once one grasps the force of the underlying objection, one can think of plenty of other instances of contested alternative readings which plausibly illustrate it. Iser's reply, in a subsequent issue of *Diacritics*,⁷ misses the point of Fish's objection, and so fails to answer it. Iser takes Fish's "there can be no category of the 'given' if by given one means what is there before interpretation begins" (Fish 11, Iser 84) to be equivalent to the claim that the text exerts no constraint upon interpretation. Since this claim is plainly absurd, Iser imagines that an easy victory over Fish lies within his grasp:

I must confess my bewilderment that he thinks interpretation a useful activity if, as he suggests, there are no givens to interpret . . . (84)

In fact, of course, Fish's point is that *whatever constraints the text does exert over interpretation* will yield a different Iserian "aesthetic object"

for different readers unless the location of Iserian "gaps" can be regarded as established independently of, and prior to the commencement of, the constitution of the "aesthetic object," which, *on Iser's own account*, they plainly cannot (Fish's argument, in other words, is in the form of a *reductio*). It is thus simply not to the purpose for Iser to insist once again, as he goes on to do, that texts possess the power to subvert readers' interpretations,

with the reader supplying significances which are then altered by subsequent significances that have to be produced in order to bridge the gaps between (a) given elements and (b) his previous determinate interpretations. (84)

This is a claim which Fish can grant, for reasons which should now be clear, without the slightest damage to his argument. Fish has, or need have, in other words, no quarrel with Iser's account of the actual machinery of interpretation: what he denies is that Iser has any grounds for supposing that, on such an account, the results of interpretation must prove convergent from reader to reader.

III

I now propose to outline a modified theory of reading which will do the job of countering Fish's objection, and which, as we shall see, although it dispenses with the phenomenological aspects of Iser's theory, retains important elements of his position; after which I shall return to my present business with Černý et al. In line with the going practice in the present symposium I shall not initially introduce the modification I have in mind in general terms, but by way of an alternative analysis of the literary example over which Fish and Iser clash: the encounter between Allworthy and Captain Blifil.

For both Iser and Fish what is at issue in that encounter is Allworthy's "perfection": in Iser's view Allworthy "is introduced to us as the perfect man"; in reply Fish postulates a reader "for whom perfection is inseparable from the vulnerability displayed by Allworthy." "Perfect" is Iser's term: what Fielding actually says about Allworthy is that he

possessed "a solid Understanding and a benevolent Heart" (32), and that he was "a human Being replete with Benevolence" (43). If Allworthy's encounters with the brothers Blifil are to be taken as derogating from Allworthy's "perfection," therefore, it must be either Allworthy's reputation for benevolence or his reputation for wisdom which emerges diminished from these encounters. The second suggestion, as we have already found Fielding drily observing, involves the dangerous assumption that a character in a novel can reasonably be charged with simplicity if he is taken in by another character whose motives and intentions are plain to the reader. Readers who in this way naively confuse fiction and reality as domains of comparison do indeed "make a very bad and ungrateful use of that knowledge which [an author has] communicated to them." That leaves us with Allworthy's imputed benevolence as the one remaining target of derogation. But Allworthy's recorded dealings with the Blifils do nothing to call his benevolence into question: on the contrary, they afford overwhelming confirmation of the adequacy of Fielding's initial authorial character-sketch. Both the humanity and the scholarship of Allworthy's refutation of the Captain's scriptural arguments for sending Tom to the foundlings' hospital, in order that he might be "brought up to the lowest and vilest Offices of the Commonwealth" (79) are impressive; for instance, Allworthy's earlier reply to Dr. Blifil's offices on behalf of his brother, while it impresses the corrupt Doctor as the reply of a fool ("it cost him some Pains to prevent now and then a small Discomposure of his Muscles" [72]), in fact displays an entirely worthy desire not to stand in the way of his sister's happiness, together with a decent unwillingness to quarrel with a man and a family recommended to his good graces by having become the objects of his sister's choice, and a desire to minimise the gravity of the Captain's provocations to that end.

If "perfection" comprises the union of moral and intellectual virtue, then, Allworthy displays both in full measure. There is no trace in Fielding's text, so far as I can see, either of the initially good-appearing but ultimately flawed character of Iser's reading, or of Fish's virtuous but vulnerable innocent whose vulnerability is inseparable from his virtue. And yet, surely, an Iserian might object, this *can't* be quite right. Surely there is plenty in *Tom Jones* to suggest that Fielding has

reservations about Allworthy's virtue? For one thing, nearly all of Allworthy's interventions in the plot not only prove barren of good consequences but smooth the path of the wicked as much as they entangle the footsteps of the good. This is true, and no doubt the temptation for the reader is to attempt to trace back the causal origins of these seemingly untoward outcomes to some defect of virtue, real or imagined, in Allworthy's character. I think, though, that we should resist this temptation, and instead dwell for a moment on the set of everyday assumptions about goodness and the nature of virtue which expose us to it.

It is now, as it was in Fielding's day, commonplace to think of goodness, or virtue, as a condition of mind or spirit opposed in principle to, and cultivated primarily by turning away from, the appetites and affections which link us to our bodily and social life in this world. One set of roots of this account of moral psychology lies, no doubt, in Plato's distinction between the philosopher, whose virtues are held stable by actual knowledge of the great Forms of the virtues, including ultimately the Form of the Good, the man of honour, whose virtue is real but unstable, since founded in opinion rather than knowledge, and the man of appetite whose ultimate type is the bottomlessly corrupt Despot of *Republic* 562a-576b. Another set is to be found in Paul's and Augustine's insistence upon the distinction between the Natural Man and the Spiritual Man reborn in Christ. By the eighteenth century both these compelling distinctions have fused into the distinction between Principle and Appetite, or Reason and Passion. That distinction sets the terms of all philosophical discussion of the nature of morality throughout the century. Whether defended by Price, Wollaston or Shaftesbury, ironically inverted by Hume, or transformed by Kant, thirty years after Fielding's death, into the yet more august distinction between Autonomy and Heteronomy, it informs all serious debate. The voyages of the philosophers set out and return across the seas swelling between its poles. It exercised such dominance over acute minds because it was presumed to exhaust the options open to us as moral beings. Either we must be men of Principle, in which case we must master and subdue Appetite, or else we must be men of Appetite, in which case we must forswear Principle. Further, if Principle and Appetite really are the grand heads

which conjointly divide and exhaust the class of motives, the question must be asked, where the affections of individual, family and social relationship are to be placed within this austere schema. And once we accept the general correctness of such a division it is hard to see how we can class them, save under Appetite: amiable appetites, no doubt, like the appetite for music, or for fun and frolic, but appetites nonetheless. Such a conclusion will seem natural both to the Christian attracted by Pauline spirituality, with its rejection of the wordly and "natural" aspects of our nature, to the Calvinist suspicious of the latitudinarianism to which Fielding leaned in theology,⁸ and to rationalist admirers of Roman stoicism and ancient virtue.

It is worth remembering, now, that *Tom Jones* impressed hostile critics in its day precisely as a speciously "moral" defence of Appetite against Principle. Thus Sir John Hawkins:

. . . a book seemingly intended to sap the foundations of that morality which it is the duty of parents and instructors to inculcate in the minds of young people, by teaching that virtue upon principle is imposture, that generous qualities alone constitute true worth, and that a young man may love and be loved, and at the same time associate with loose women. His morality, in respect that it resolves virtue into good affections, in contradiction to moral obligation and a sense of duty, is that of Lord Shaftesbury vulgarised, and is a system of excellent use in palliating the vices most injurious to society.⁹

Hawkins' contempt is clearly sustained by the conviction that Fielding's book cannot deal in anything more than ingenious sophism, since it contests self-evident verities. Let us, though, set this conviction on one side for a moment, and entertain, if only for the sake of argument, the possibility that Hawkins might be mistaken: that Fielding's book might be capable of presenting an intellectually serious challenge to the values Hawkins takes to be beyond question. Hawkins believes that we must choose either a life of Principle, forswearing Appetite, or a life of Appetite, forswearing Principle, and that the latter choice involves the renunciation of morality *tout court*. Such a belief rests upon three subordinate, and connected, claims. The first is that the life of Principle and that of Appetite are exhaustive alternatives. The second is that the Life of Principle is coextensive with the Moral Life *per se*. The third is

that Principle is the only motive capable of restraining Appetite from leading us to act with utter disregard for the welfare of others.

All three claims are in principle open to question. Two familiar objections to the second are worth noting here. The first is that it opens a curious breach between the achievement of virtue and the promotion of good. As Alasdair MacIntyre puts it, *à propos* of Kant's version of the morality of Principle,

... if the rules of morality are rational they must be the same for all beings
... and if the rules of morality are binding on all rational beings, then the contingent ability of such beings to carry them out must be unimportant—what is important is their will to carry them out.¹⁰

The second, due to Bernard Williams, is that it over-emphasises the importance of what it is a moral agent's duty to do at the expense of underemphasising the importance of what a moral agent should *feel*; and that that imbalance of emphasis may in turn, since feelings are in part cognitive states, lead us to neglect certain possibilities of impairment of the capacity to judge soundly in moral matters; both failings, as Williams observes, being a consequence of the failure of the morality of Principle to recognise that

No human characteristic which is relevant to degrees of moral esteem can escape being an empirical characteristic, subject to empirical conditions, psychological history and individual variation, whether it be sensitivity, persistence, imaginativeness, intelligence, good sense; or sympathetic feeling; or strength of will.¹¹

These objections suggest the possibility of a rather disquieting version of the Man (or Woman) of Principle: one who succeeds in preserving a kind of inner moral purity, but at the cost of a morally dangerous and cognitively disabling lack of interest in the empirical complexities of actual cases (a failure of interest encouraged in such a person and placed beyond the reach of his or her powers of self-examination by the emotional and relational impoverishment occasioned by the struggle against Appetite); such a Man (or Woman) of Principle would suffer in consequence from a diminished capacity to foresee and direct the worldly consequences of his or her actions.

Those who believe, as Hawkins plainly did, that morality is identical with Principle have a reply open to them, of course. It is that the fruits by which a life of inward moral purity is to be judged are not those valued by utilitarianism, or those manifested in warm affections, but the commitments to inward purity engendered in others by the example of the Man—or Woman—of Principle. Richardson lovingly records just such a contagion of virtue in the second part of *Pamela*, with Mr B., his family and the entire neighbourhood finding redemption through the force of Pamela's example, and although the volume makes a lame, stilted and profoundly implausible companion to the first, one can see what he is getting at.

At least one function of Allworthy's character within the moral argument which, as Empson believed,¹² *Tom Jones* is meant to advance is to provide, it seems to me, a counterweight to Richardson's Puritan optimism concerning the efficacy of inward virtue in transforming the human world. We ourselves tend to believe, following the maxim "By their fruits shall ye know them," that inner virtue must be as recognisable by its wholesome fruits as inner vice by its scabbed and emetic ones. Allworthy messes up this tidy picture by offering us a rather plausible example of a transparently virtuous man whose "fruits" are quite often sour or rotten. What sunders virtue from its harvest in Allworthy's case, I take it, is his detachment. His benevolence is beyond question, his principles are of the highest and most selfless character; and yet he appears to miss half of what is going on at Paradise Hall. He is, as we say, "unworldly," and his unworldliness manifests itself, at least in part, precisely by a certain culpable lack of interest in those to whom he is most nearly related. His attitude towards his sister is one of benevolent concern, and yet he is not close enough to her, though living in the same house, to know or guess anything about her relationships with men. Perhaps this is because he is, as Fielding expressly intervenes to tell us, Squire Western to the contrary, a prude with very little experience of women. His remoteness, though, is not merely exercised towards the female sex. He characteristically relies for the most part on intermediaries for his knowledge of his two wards: first the tutors Thwackum and Square; later, where Tom is concerned, on Blifil, whose stance of disinterested virtue agrees, at least in externals, with his own. On the few

occasions when he pursues an enquiry in person, as when he rescues Tom from Thwackum and questions him directly about the sale of his horse (142-43), he succeeds with perfect ease in establishing the truth; but such occasions are rare. What is wrong with Allworthy, in short, is not, *pace* Iser, that he is wanting in "perfection," or that we must balance the high score due him for benevolence with a low one for penetration. His problem is the very *unworldliness* which ought, were we to accept the Platonic and Puritan association of moral virtue with a turning-away from "worldliness," to be the keystone of the arch of his virtue. The Pauline enterprise of putting away worldly things in order to cleave to a disinterested inward pursuit of moral principle has produced in Allworthy an almost hermetic *Innerlichkeit* which is difficult at times to distinguish from simple lack of interest in the actual characters and machinations of those around him; from whom he is himself largely insulated by rank and wealth. His entirely genuine benevolence has modulated into an austere meting-out of good and evil according to an ideal internal yardstick. And he is untroubled, for the most part, by any impulse to verify the accuracy of that yardstick against the shifting and obscure contingencies of the world. For since nothing in his nature draws him into engagement with the world, as distinct from judgement upon it, nothing in his nature exposes him to the experience of finding his wishes, values and assumptions confounded or led into *aporia* by the unexpected, at least until the eventual *dénouement* of Mrs. Waters' and Lawyer Dowling's disclosures lets in an irresistible flood of light. His failure up to that point to grasp the need for any mediation between the hermetic realm of inner virtue and the ambiguous public world of society and other individuals is exemplified, *inter alia*, by the bland disregard for the requirements of the law which he shows in committing Molly Seagrim to the House of Correction; a lapse which Fielding is careful to note with telling irony:

I question . . . whether his Conduct was strictly regular.¹³ However, as his Intention was truly upright, he ought to be excused *in foro conscientiae*, since so many arbitrary acts are daily committed by Magistrates, who have not this Excuse to plead for them. (192)

Fielding's point, I take it, is that the morality of the mundane and public world represented by the English Common Law is not in this case trumped by the morality of the inward and ideal: that what will pass muster in the Court of Conscience may, but both legally and morally should not, pass muster in the court of an English Justice of the Peace.

If the possibilities which Fielding has imaginatively realised in Allworthy call into question the second of the three claims I listed a paragraph or two back, those embodied in Tom call into question the third: the claim that only Principle can restrain the pull of Appetite towards selfish disregard for others' interests. If the standard eighteenth-century distinction between Principle and Appetite is as exhaustive as it can be made to appear, then, as Hawkins soundly concludes, Fielding's "Good Heart," that "kind and benevolent Disposition, which is gratified by contributing to the Happiness of others" (270), is just one more appetite and as such undeserving of the moral credit due to principled action. The obvious counter to this, of course, is the thought that an anxious concern for the welfare of another can often force one to sacrifice other, more self-regarding, desires and interests.¹⁴ This is exactly how Goodness of Heart operates in Tom's case. It is Tom's inability to bear the sight of Black George's family starving which compels him to sell first his little horse and then his Bible, despite the fact that the first sale not only involves parting from a beloved animal but almost earns him a whipping, while the latter sale gives Blifil his first real victory in his long campaign to dislodge Tom from Allworthy's affections. Later, after his banishment from Paradise Hall, his love for Sophia manifests itself in just such another moral tussle between selfish and unselfish appetites.

The Thoughts of leaving her almost rent his heart asunder; but the Consideration of reducing her to Ruin and Beggary still racked him, if possible, more . . . and thus Honour at last backed with Despair, with Gratitude to his Benefactor, and with real Love to his Mistress, got the better of burning Desire, and he resolved rather to quit Sophia, than pursue her to her Ruin. (312)

But if the Good Heart can constrain selfish desire in this way, then, while we may agree with Hawkins that Goodness of Heart is one more appetite, it is clearly not *just*, or *merely*, an appetite. It is in fact what those who think like Hawkins regard as an oxymoron: an intrinsically

morally virtuous appetite. But if the notion of an intrinsically virtuous appetite is not necessarily oxymoronic, doesn't the whole Pauline distinction between the spiritual and the worldly, together with its philosophical counterpart, the distinction between Reason and Appetite, begin to totter? And, correlatively, don't the outlines of an entirely different manner of conceptually dividing up the territory of the moral life begin, in a shadowy sort of way, to loom into view? According to this, broadly latitudinarian, view, the moral life is not centred in a struggle between Appetite *per se* and Principle, worldliness and spirituality, but between some appetites and other appetites. Such a view, in a common and current philosophical sense of the term, *naturalises* the moral life. It treats the moral agent not as a being who has made an ascent from the natural world into a "pure," non-natural realm of Kantian rationality or Pauline spirituality, but as one to whom the very idea of seeking to become virtuous by making such an ascent becomes itself an oxymoron, since such an ascent, involving as it does the rejection of appetite *per se*, must involve bidding farewell to the very appetites, those of the Good Heart, which make the good man. Fielding's moral agent thus remains situated in the everyday world of Williams' anti-Kantian argument, ineluctably cast as the bearer of appetites with as much of good as ill in them. For such an agent, what is required for mature goodness is not the wholesale cauterization of appetite, but the establishment of order and priority among the appetites of the good man: an order which can only be achieved through long experience of the complexities of concrete existence leading to the formation of what Fielding terms "prudence." The truly good man is, indeed, for Fielding, "worldly"; and part of the job Fielding has set himself as a novelist is to transvalue the notion of worldliness by turning the word "prudence," with its connotations of worldly involvement and worldly knowledge, into a term of unqualified moral commendation: a name for the rather impressive combination of self-committing goodness of heart, sound judgment and self-control into which Tom has matured by the end of the novel.

IV

Back, now, to Fish's critique of Iser, and my proposed defence. In the light of the above analysis I want to suggest that reading a literary text is indeed, as Iser suggests, a matter of encountering tensions between text and expectation, but that the expectations which the text challenges are not ones which the reader has acquired in the process of constituting, as he pursues his reading, a hermeneutic counterpart of *that text*. They are, rather, tensions between the text and expectations which the reader *brings with him to the text*, and which he has acquired, not necessarily in a conscious or reflective manner, from many previous texts, and ultimately from the vast substratum of casual assumptions encoded in the language to whose community of speakers he belongs. Some of our assumptions about the meanings and implications of the common terms we use are impossible to question because if we question them we lose our grip on the concepts they enshrine. The conceptually unquestionable in this sense, however, may occupy a smaller domain than we are inclined to suppose. In the present instance, all that seems to be needed, if we are to retain enough of a common understanding of the term "good" to deploy the term in discourse is that the good, however we go on to characterise it, should be something which in some sense ought to obtain. One extensive tendency of thought and feeling in the eighteenth century, however, to which opponents of Fielding's vision such as Hawkins belong, wants, in effect, to claim considerably more than this. It wants to claim that a whole collection of conceptual oppositions line up with one another in something like the following way:

Good	Evil
Spirituality	Worldliness
Reason	Passion
Principle	Appetite
Morality	The Amoral

To those who most feel the undoubted power of the systems of thought and feeling which suggest such an alignment of conceptual oppositions, the alignment itself may appear to have the force of a conceptual necessity. It may be felt, that is to say, as constraining natural possibility.

But, unless the proposed alignment can be shown *a priori* to rest upon purely logical or conceptual considerations (and it is not easy to see how something like that could be demonstrated *a priori*), it remains open, to either the philosopher or the novelist, to contest its rule by demonstrating that familiar features of natural possibility permit the construction of counter-examples which displace and call into question the contrasts and associations to which it ascribes universal validity. This, it seems to me, is exactly what Fielding has done in the present case. He has constructed, with extreme detail and verisimilitude, an array of cases in which Appetite wields the sceptre of Principle, passion turns out to lie at the heart of goodness, morality turns out to demand worldliness (in a certain sense) of us, and unworldliness (in a certain sense) stands under moral condemnation. All this may indeed stagger expectation in the reader; but if it does, the expectations it staggers are not ones introduced for the first time to the reader through his hermeneutic struggles with the text, but ones insinuated by presumptions, fore-understandings,¹⁵ which while they are not, in fact, essential to the preservation of a common understanding of terms in the language in which the text is written,¹⁶ are sufficiently engrained and habitual within the cultural milieu addressed by the text as to seem so.

The present suggestion in effect displaces the space of interaction of author and reader from that of a *noema* or "aesthetic object" constituted by the author to that of the public language which author and reader share. Iser is half right and half wrong to say that

There is no common code—at best one could say that a common code may arise in the process [of reading].¹⁷

Certainly, if I am right, a thoughtful reader of Fielding would tend to find himself envisaging what one might loosely call "new meanings" for crucial terms in the language of the text—"goodness," for instance—through the power of the text to displace and remake the systems of metonymies, backed by miscellaneous theory, which form a penumbra of associations around each such term. But this process can only proceed because author and reader share, at the outset, access to the commonplace, linguistically-given systems of association and diacritical contrast upon which the text proceeds to exert its subversive pressures.¹⁸

Of course, if we drop Iser's *noema*-like "aesthetic objects" from our theory of reading, then we have to drop Iser's "gaps" as well; since an Iserian "gap" is, precisely, a gap or discrepancy between text and "aesthetic object." But now Fish's objection to Iser collapses in its turn. Fish's objection, recall, was that, since Iserian gaps are locatable only relative to a given aesthetic object, and since differently constituted readers will constitute, from the outset, different aesthetic objects, they will also locate the gaps in a given text at different points. The present suggestion is that what the reader encounters in the text are not gaps but, as it were, hermeneutic stumbling-blocks: points in the text at which the commonplace assumptions or fore-understandings about the relationships of everyday notions which he brings with him to the text are challenged and brought under pressure. It seems clear, now, that whether a story constitutes a telling counter-example to some set of commonplace assumptions or other depends entirely upon the intrinsic character of the story and that of the set of assumptions. The status of counter-example to a given set of assumptions, that is, is not one which we can confer upon just any old story provided we apply to it, to use terminology elsewhere developed by Fish,¹⁹ the right sort of "strategy" for "producing" the "formal features of the text." It is no more possible by appropriate choice of hermeneutic strategy to make *Tom Jones* into a text friendly to Sir John Hawkins' values and the theoretical assumptions upon which they rest than it is possible by the adoption of some ingenious style of inter-pretation to turn Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* into a text friendly to Deism. Of course, some readers may not perceive the threat to those values, even if they share them; and even if they perceive the threat may shirk the labour of confronting it and thinking out its implications for their own point of view;²⁰ but their failure to do either of these things has not the slightest tendency to show that the threat is not intrinsically "there" in the text. In the case of Allworthy, Fish can deal with Iser's suggestion, that there is a "gap" between Fielding's moral praise of Allworthy and the latter's failure to detect hypocrisy, simply by postulating a reader for whom inability to detect hypocrisy is a part of moral virtue. The status of Allworthy as a stumbling-block in the path of the common assumption that principle, even if unaccompanied by warm affections, is necessarily

productive of good, on the other hand, cannot be made to evaporate in that way. True, one might fail to notice the havoc wrought, despite his excellent principles, by Allworthy's inward remoteness from and indifference to the persons and affairs over which he exercises judgment (a remoteness and indifference not all that far at times from those of Fielding's other exemplary world-despiser, the Man of the Hill). But a reader insensitive to such things would just be a bad reader.

In an essay republished in *Prospecting*,²¹ Iser moves some way towards the concerns I have been exploring here. He suggests there that Fielding's writing offers the reader a standpoint from which he can view "the prevailing norms of eighteenth century thought systems and social systems" (37) not as "social regulators" (38), but from the point of view of "the amount of human experience which they suppress because, as rigid principles, they cannot tolerate any modifications" (39). This is certainly to grant in part the power of the text to displace assumptions implicit in the reader's customary point of view; but I wish to go further, and grant to the text not merely the power to focus on what "norms" marginalise, but also the capacity to bring into serious question the adequacy and exhaustiveness of the underlying conceptual oppositions which sustain the "norms" in question, and by so doing sustain also their power to marginalise.

This further step bears on another of Iser's convictions, which he shares with John Preston, and which I share: that reading is a sort of conversation between reader and author, in which the reader enters into a real communication with the mind of a writer who may be many centuries dead. Iser, rightly, raises (32) Socrates' objection to such claims:²² one cannot question a text as one can another speaker. Phaedrus in Plato's dialogue accepts this, but to my mind should have replied that while that is true, it is also true that a text can question its readers. That is of course part of what Iser is suggesting when he says that texts confront readers with gaps, the unspoken question from the text being "How is the gap to be filled?" In my view texts can pose questions to the reader which are, potentially, at least, more disturbing to the latter in that they are questions, not, or not just, about the coherence of the text he is reading, but about the coherence of his own extra-textual beliefs and assumptions. Paradoxically, we feel the "living presence" of an author

haunting his work to the extent that we grasp that work not as an utterance but as a contrivance, in which the workings of a mind shrewder than our own is manifest in the ingenuity of the traps he has set in advance for us. Such shocks of recognition and dialectical engagement, which go beyond the text and its systems of textually constituted author-surrogates, can arise in many ways. Leona Toker²³ suggests another in connection with her exploration of the differences between a first reading of *Tom Jones* and a second reading in which the reader is necessarily alive to the tactical reticences by which, on his first reading, Fielding managed to keep him in the dark about the machinery of the plot.

He [Fielding] turns Allworthy from an objective tool of justice into a target audience that is misled by its own preconceptions. [And] . . . in more ways than one "Fielding" does the same to the reader. (188)

V

It is time for me to return, in conclusion, to Černý's reservations concerning Iser's reading of Fielding; and I hope, to make good my initial promise that certain broad themes in Iser's theory of reading may prove a more fruitful guide to the reading of Fielding than the scepticism of my three co-symposiasts. For a start, if what differentiates intelligent from thoughtless reading is sensitivity not to "gaps" but to stumbling-blocks in a text, then we can agree with Černý without wholly abandoning the insights to be derived from reading Iser; since in that case we cease to be under any particular theoretical pressure to read Fielding's praise of his readers' perspicacity "straight." We can take them for what, I believe, they are: not encouragements to the reader and invitations to him to join in a co-operative enterprise of noematic constitution, but ironic warnings to him that the paths his feet are to travel have not been made smooth for him: that they abound in rough places where he must be ever on his guard against being misled by his own assumptions and fore-understandings.

Iser's account of reading is valuable, it seems to me, because for one thing it retains, against the current of the times, the capacity to render theoretically intelligible the notion of the text as a vehicle of communication between author and reader conceived as individual persons. What enables it to do so is Iser's obstinate sense that reading changes us: that we do not delude ourselves when we pick up a book not, in the spirit of Fish's neo-pragmatism, to bend it to the uses of a hermeneutic community, nor to pass hand-in-hand in happy collusion with the author into a paper world which will confirm instead of challenging our day dreams (something earnest-minded people do with agit-prop literature and television "drama-documentaries" at least as much as the unearnest do with cheap novels), but accepting the risk that in what we are about to read we may hear another voice than our own, and that what it says may introduce into our heads something which we may then find it difficult to expel from them, and which may change our inward landscape. Iser articulates this conviction, naturally enough, in terms of the power of the text to defeat readerly expectations. And Husserl's phenomenology offers a conceptual language in which to cast such investigations. Unfortunately, however, it is a language whose metaphysical commitments, to consciousness, presence, the transcendental, etc., open it to one form or another, including Fish's, of the objection that it ignores the "textuality" of the text. What I hope to have done here is to suggest a way in which Iser could drop his methodological attachment to Husserl-style phenomenology but retain access to an austere "textual" version of his position capable of sustaining its most important claims about the nature of the reading process.

For these reasons I find myself agreeing with Brean Hammond 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" (74). And I agree with him that, viewed simply from that point of view, the accounts both Iser and Černý offer "are intentionalist accounts, both are liberal humanist accounts, both are thematisations." I differ from him, however, on the question of what a more "radical" reading might amount to. Hammond seems to be, in Frank Kermode's useful phrase,²⁴ a constitutional "insider": for him the object of a "radical reading" appears to be the hyper-Barthesian one of breaking open the text by reading against its

flow, not in pursuit of the Barthesian goal of exhibiting the text as an empty play of codes but in pursuit of "knowledge already contained, on some level, within the text itself" (78). For me, as for Iser, what a properly penetrating reading involves is not the accession by a reader sufficiently active in dismantling the text to some body of arcane knowledge, but rather an ongoing sensitivity on the reader's part to the implications of the systematic and structured manner in which expectations nourished by his own assumptions and fore-understandings are being frustrated and dismantled by the text.

This awareness on Iser's part of reading as a process of successive frustration and reformulation of expectations is, it seems to me, the lustiest of the babies which Černý, in company with Hudson and Hammond, throws out with the bathwater of Iser's insensitivity to the ironies implicit in Fielding's ambiguous compliments to the reader. Černý, having made what to my mind is the absolutely sound point that "Fielding . . . is less interested in stimulating the reader to fill in gaps than in making him aware of the pitfalls of language" (155) takes this to indicate in Fielding "a certain distrust of words, but above all a trust in an indirect communication based on empathy." Such an account revives an old charge against Fielding, of moral sophistry insinuated by way of sentimental collusion with the reader; or as Hudson puts it, that "he counted on the reader's sentimental responses to make sense of the novel" (82). And I am in general agreement with Hudson that the fate of those in *Tom Jones*, and elsewhere in Fielding's *oeuvre*, who rest their fate upon appeals to the sentimental goodness of others demonstrates too great a scepticism on Fielding's part for that to be his chosen method as a novelist. Hudson's alternative account, however, seems to me to offer little advance on Černý's. In place of the sentimental Fielding of traditional dismissive criticism, who trusts that his reader will sigh in tune with him, Hudson offers a Fielding implausibly at one with Mandeville in his methods, who "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" (83). My own sense of the matter, one which I share with Toker, and with Empson, who thought that "the feeling that he is proving a case is what gives *Tom Jones* its radiance," and that the case

"builds up like Euclid,"²⁵ is that while Fielding is indeed "manipulating our reactions," he does so in ways which appeal more to our experience of the world and our ability to perceive the limits of plausible conceptual contrasts than to our vanity. My further suggestion is that the "building-up" of the Empsonian "case" proceeds by the building-up within the text of a system of stumbling-blocks which, in a systematic and coordinated way, obstruct the free passage of the reader's habitual assumptions, bringing him up short in ways which confront him, if he is a sufficiently intelligent and candid reader, with a genuine and substantial challenge to his usual ways of thinking.

Thinking of the reader's relation to the novel as one of sentimental collusion or of blind susceptibility to rhetorical manipulation, is in either case, I think, liable to lead one into errors concerning the actual content of *Tom Jones*. Černý is kind enough to cite an earlier work of my own²⁶ in support of his ascription to Fielding of dissent even from a sentimental rationalist like Shaftesbury, on the ground that (Černý's words) "practical goodness can hardly be grounded on moral rationalism" (149). This is fair enough as far as it goes. But it fails to address the important—indeed crucial—issue of the nature of Fielding's positive view of the relationship between reason and sentiment. Černý, like me, wants to resist Hawkins' time-honoured verdict that Fielding's morality "resolves virtue into good affections, in contradiction to moral obligation and a sense of duty." In Černý's words, "Fielding is surely not putting forward an ideal of mere irrationality and sentimentality." Černý's positive account, however, is that "[Fielding's] exemplary characters are guided by reason, which, though not an end in itself, is necessary as a means to an end" (156). This won't quite do, it seems to me. It saddles Fielding with something along the lines of Hume's reduction of morality to sentiment: sentiment is the source of all our ends, and the role of reason is reduced to the purely instrumental one of teaching us how best to realise in practise the ends which our sentiments proffer for our pursuit. Now, Fielding does, clearly, think something like this: he thinks that Appetite, including the appetite for the good of others which he calls "Goodness of Heart" is the source of all our ends; and he thinks that reason, which he tends to call "Prudence," does have the role of guiding our steps among the pitfalls of the world, rather than that of dictating our ends (which is

what, in effect, young Blifil and his father allow it to do). But similarity is not identity. *Tom Jones* may advance views akin in certain leading respects to those published ten years earlier by the young Hume in the *Treatise of Human Nature*; but for all that, I want to say, Fielding is not Hume. The main difference it seems to me, is that Fielding has a much richer notion of sentiment than Hume. Hume's "cool passions" of moral approbation and disapprobation have no essential connection with relationship. They are instilled in the mind by a variety of influences, ranging from self-love to parental training and political exhortation, which have in common only that they are by their nature insusceptible of rational correction. The deep reason for this last feature of Hume's theory of morals is that reason has to do with truth and the correction of belief, whereas a sentiment, as Hume defines the term, has nothing to do with either: its nature is solely to motivate to action. That being so, one Humian sentiment cannot function, either, as a source of quasi-rational criticism of another. In Hume's theory one sentiment may conquer another because it is felt with greater urgency; what it cannot do is to give someone who feels both anything worth calling a *reason* for turning away from the other. And this seems right, at least in Hume's terms. A competition between Hume's sentiments is, when it comes down to it, a competition between two desires of one and the same person, and surely neither one of these desires, nor any external consideration, can give that person a reason for choosing to give the implementation of one of them priority over the implementation of the other. It is simply a matter of which desire is strongest, of what the person "wants most."

One great merit of Fielding, it seems to me, is to have seen, that, even if we do owe all our ends to Appetite and none to Reason, our situation when it comes to adjudicating between those ends is more complex than Hume's persuasively simple philosophical schema suggests. Fielding sees that to desire the good of another, whether as lover, as friend, or simply as fellow human being, is not simply to admit another entry into the lexicon of desires originating within oneself. To be afflicted with Fielding's Good Heart is to take seriously the status of the Other as a second, independent, source of needs and desires. If a Good Hearted person turns away from the achievement of his own ends in order to

give precedence to those of another, in other words, it is not because those ends are more attractive to him *as ends* (how could they be?—they are somebody else's ends), but because the thought of *the other's failing to achieve them* is obnoxious to him. For Hume the object of an affection is always an end—a state to be realised—for Fielding it is sometimes a person. That is why the Good Heart, although an appetite, can wield the power, reserved for Reason in rationalist philosophies of morals, to make its possessor relinquish the satisfaction of his or her internally generated desires where that would conflict with the good of another: as Tom does when his perception of Sophia's needs compels him to turn away from his desire to involve her in his downfall.

To see this is to see, as I have been arguing throughout this response, that what Fielding is doing cannot be grasped within the terms of the standard eighteenth-century distinction between Reason and Sentiment, Principle and Appetite. My objection to Černý's tendency to assimilate Fielding's moral outlook to Hume's, correct as that is up to a point, is, as I indicated at the outset, that it does tend to site Fielding within the terms of a distinction which, ultimately, he escapes. Fielding's "Prudence," as manifested at the end of the book by the redeemed Tom, is not, I want to suggest, that coldest of all parodies of morality, sentimentality guided by instrumental rationality. Rather, it is that very different thing, knowledge of the world, and involvement in it, animated and informed by good affections. Tom has become the polar opposite of the Man of the Hill, while Allworthy remains uneasily poised somewhere in between.

There remain Černý's suggestions concerning Locke and Fielding's "New Vein of Knowledge": Contrast. I am not as convinced as Černý that Fielding is here (212) being ironic. One central point of the plot, after all, is to deepen our sense of individual characters through their contrasts with one another. Thus the contrast with the Blifils enables us to focus more sharply on what it is that makes Allworthy a genuine and within limits admirable man of principle; while the moral weight of Tom's version of the Man of Appetite appears more sharply by contrast with the version represented by Western. Gilbert Ryle in an insightful article²⁷ argues that Jane Austen pursues just such a method; and suggests plausibly that she got it from Fielding, with whom it

originated. Possibly, then, Fielding is not poking fun at Locke here, but simply boasting, as he not infrequently does.

In more general terms also I remain unpersuaded that Locke was a central target of Fielding's anti-rationalism. Moral rationalism in the first half of the eighteenth century in England was closely bound up with Deism. Fielding, like Swift, disliked the Deists, and there can be little doubt that he is guying them in *Square*, as Swift, perhaps, guys them in the *Houyhnhnms*. Equally certainly Locke was perceived by Pope, and no doubt by others, as the arch-partisan of Deism, as witness a suppressed couplet of the "Essay on Man":

What partly pleases, totally will shock:
I question much if Toland would be Locke.²⁸

But such a link between Fielding and Locke might not be close enough for Černý.

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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); *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989).

²Professor Norman N. Holland, for instance, takes this line in his contribution to the interview with Iser organised by Rudolf E. Kuenzli in the June 1980 issue of *Diacritics*.

³All quotations refer to the Wesleyan Edition of the Works of Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*, ed. Fredson Bowers, introd. and commentary Martin C. Battestin, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974).

⁴Stanley Fish, "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser," *Diacritics* 11 (1981): 2-13.

⁵Cf. Iser's *Diacritics* interview (n2 above) 64.

⁶Fish's version of this extract contains a number of departures from Iser's wording and punctuation which, while no doubt inadvertent, have the effect of making Iser's English prose appear slipshod and, in a couple of instances, of corrupting his sense, though not in a way crucial to the argument. The version given here restores the text of Iser's 1978 English translation.

⁷Wolfgang Iser, "Talk like Whales," *Diacritics* 11 (1981): 82-87.

⁸See Martin C. Battestin, *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1959).

⁹Sir John Hawkins, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1787; New York: Garland, 1974) 214-15.

¹⁰Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1981) 43-44.

¹¹Bernard Williams, "Morality and the Emotions," *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: CUP, 1973) 228 and *passim*.

¹²William Empson, "Tom Jones," *Kenyon Review* 20 (1958): 217-49.

¹³As the editors of the Wesleyan Edition record in a note, it was wildly and manifestly irregular, the conditions of such imprisonment, among other things, being considered too severe for a pregnant woman, so that by law not only committal but examination were unlawful until one month after the birth of the child.

¹⁴For an account of Sterne's rather different literary development of this thought, see my "Sterne and Sentimentalism," *Commitment in Reflection: Essays in Literature and Moral Philosophy*, ed. L. Toker (New York: Garland, 1994), forthcoming.

¹⁵Frank Kermode's rendering of the German *Vorverständnis*; see Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1979) 70.

¹⁶If they were, of course, the effort to dislodge or question them would result only in some form of oxymoron or category-mistake.

¹⁷Iser, *The Act of Reading* 21.

¹⁸Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Prose of the World*, ed. Claude Lefort, tr. John O'Neill (London: Heinemann, 1974) 11-14.

¹⁹Cf. Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1980) pt. II: "Interpretive Authority in the Classroom and in Literary Criticism," *passim*.

²⁰I am grateful to Dr. Leona Toker, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, for drawing my attention, in correspondence, to the need for these *caveats*.

²¹Wolfgang Iser, "Interaction Between Text and Reader," *Prospecting* 31-41.

²²Plato, *Phaedrus* 275c-d.

²³Leona Toker, *Eloquent Reticence: Withholding Information in Fictional Narrative* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1993).

²⁴Kermode 2 and *passim*.

²⁵Empson 220.

²⁶Bernard Harrison, *Henry Fielding's Tom Jones: The Novelist as Moral Philosopher* (London: Sussex UP, 1975).

²⁷Gilbert Ryle, "Jane Austen and the Moralists," *Oxford Review* 1 (April 1966): 5-18.

²⁸Cited by Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 1 (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962) 78.

"Strange Meeting" Again*

DOUGLAS KERR

Kenneth Muir's essay "Connotations of 'Strange Meeting'" is a thoughtful and interesting contribution to a discussion that has been going on, in various forms and fora, for the three-quarters of a century since the poem was first published in 1919, the year after Wilfred Owen's death. In the past, "Strange Meeting" has attracted more discussion than any other of Owen's poems (and it remains the only one to have had an entire book written about it).¹ It is still, arguably, Owen's best-known poem, and from the first it has played a central part in the making and development of Owen's reputation. Prompted by Professor Muir's essay, and to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of this haunting poem's first appearance, I want to sketch here the history of "Strange Meeting" since its publication, and the way the poem has functioned as a focus of debate about Owen and the interpretation of his work. This will bring me back, in a roundabout way, to Professor Muir and some of the points in his essay.

A notable absentee from the discussion, unfortunately, is Owen himself. He wrote "Strange Meeting" in the first half of 1918, in that extraordinarily creative last year of his life, but there is no mention of the poem in any of his surviving letters. A mere handful of his poems appeared in print in his lifetime, but he had plans for a collection to be called *Disabled and Other Poems*, and "Strange Meeting" is listed towards the end of two drafts for a table of contents which he drew up in the summer of 1918.² One of these lists the "motive" of each of the poems he planned to include: the "motive" given for "Strange

*Reference: Kenneth Muir, "Connotations of 'Strange Meeting,'" *Connotations* 3.1 (1993): 26-36.

Meeting" is "Foolishness of War." This tiny hint that he thought of "Strange Meeting" as a satire is the author's only surviving comment on the poem.

The 1919 number (or "cycle") of *Wheels* was dedicated to the memory of Wilfred Owen and was the first forum in which a number of his poems appeared in print. *Wheels* was an annual miscellany of contemporary poetry edited by Edith Sitwell with the assistance of her brother Osbert, who had become friends with Owen in 1918. They printed seven of Owen's poems, with "Strange Meeting" in the leading position, given a prominence that may have reflected Osbert Sitwell's very high opinion of the poem—in 1950 he was to declare it "as great a poem as exists in our tongue."³ The foregrounding of "Strange Meeting" was meant to draw attention to it, and indeed J. Middleton Murry singled it out in a review article in the *Athenaeum* on "The Condition of English Poetry" (5 December 1919). Murry was reviewing the 1919 *Wheels* alongside the 1918-19 anthology of *Georgian Poetry*, and much of his article is devoted to showing that the Georgians, with their "false simplicity" and weak emotional content, are a spent force. Murry has fun likening the Georgians—with their "indefinable odour of complacent sanctity"—to the jaded Coalition Government, with the *Wheels* poets as the Radical opposition. "Strange Meeting," then, enters the critical debate as a contrasting and salutary example of what is essentially modern in English poetry. This recruitment of Owen's work to a post-Georgian modernism—Owen and T. S. Eliot are the only contemporaries Murry speaks of here with admiration—did not really catch on, except in the limited and inexact sense in which the war poems of Owen and Sassoon are routinely said to have displaced the sensibility embodied in Rupert Brooke. Middleton Murry meanwhile was also at pains to point out (here inaugurating a still flourishing industry) how "Strange Meeting" drew on a deep well of poetic tradition, and especially on Keats' *Hyperion*.

When Murry came to review (in the *Nation and Athenaeum*, 19 February 1921) the wider selection of poems in Siegfried Sassoon's edition of Owen's *Poems* (1920) he again singled out "Strange Meeting," hailing it as a work in which "a true poetic style" had been achieved.

"Throughout the poems in this book we can watch Owen working towards this perfection of his own utterance, and at the same time working away from realistic description of the horrors of war towards an imaginative projection of emotion." It is interesting to see Murry privileging "Strange Meeting," without evidence, as Owen's last word. Here already is the outline of what was to establish itself for a long time as the orthodox reading both of the place of "Strange Meeting" in the evolution of Owen's work, and of the place of Owen himself in the history of English poetry of the Great War. Beneath Murry's claim that the sombre calm of this poem was the crowning effort of Owen's career, a "complete, achieved, unfaltering" masterpiece, lay a feeling that in this case maturity was the passage beyond superficial realism to what Murry called "imaginative sublimation." The emphasis he gave to "Strange Meeting" enabled Murry to go on to declare, rather extraordinarily, of the *Poems* (1920) as a whole: "In these poems there is no more rebellion, but only pity and regret, and the peace of acquiescence." T. E. Hulme's definition of Romanticism as spilt religion holds more true for romantic criticism than for romantic poetry, and here we can watch "Strange Meeting" being transformed into a religious poem—or more accurately, itself becoming a religious text. Seeming, as the poem's dramatic apparatus does, to be an utterance *d'outré tombe*, this of all his poems became at the same time inseparable from the desperate poignancy of Owen's life and death, an inseparability sealed by Siegfried Sassoon's suggestion, in his introduction to *Poems*, that in "Strange Meeting" Owen had written his own epitaph. (Indeed it is sometimes written about almost as if, by confusion with the words of the "enemy" who is its main character, it were a post-mortem utterance of Owen's.)

Sassoon followed the Sitwells in placing "Strange Meeting" first (of twenty-three poems) in his selection, and he followed it with what he entitled "Another Version," the fragment beginning "Earth's wheels run oiled with blood." The fragment—with its biblical furniture of wells, pitchers and chariot wheels—was given favourable notice by the *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer, Basil de Selincourt, who found welcome indications of "a constructive message" in its "tone of veritable 'prophesy,'" and exempted it from his general judgement that Owen's moral revolt was largely misplaced.⁴

Then when much blood hath clogged the chariot wheels,
 We will go up and wash them from deep wells.
 What though we sink from men as pitchers falling,
 Many shall raise us up to be their filling,
Even from wells we sunk too deep for war
And filled with brows that bled where no wounds were.

De Selincourt approvingly italicized the last two lines of his quotation, though he did not pause to say what he thought they meant. It is of some interest that he chose to praise this version—with its future tenses suggesting that some sort of post-war redemption is a possibility or likelihood—rather than the later version incorporated into “Strange Meeting,” with its disconsolate past-conditional (“I would have poured my spirit without stint . . .”), telling a story which can never now happen.

The next edition was Edmund Blunden’s *The Poems of Wilfred Owen* (1931), which more than doubled the number of poems Sassoon had included, and gave the war poems in, as far as Blunden could judge, their chronological order. He starts with “From my Diary, July 1914” (which was believed to be a 1914 poem, but is now dated to late 1917),⁵ and his list ends with the sequence “Spring Offensive,” “The Sentry,” “Smile, Smile, Smile,” “The End,” “Strange Meeting.” Like Sassoon (but unlike Murry), Blunden considered “Strange Meeting” unfinished; but it seems to have been poetic instinct more than editorial reason that led him to place it as the culmination of Owen’s work. “This unfinished poem, the most remote and intimate, tranquil and dynamic, of all Owen’s imaginative statements of war experience, is without a date in the only MS seen by the present editor; it probably belongs to the last months of the prophetic soldier’s life.”⁶ The poem demanded a special place in the foreground, and again this seemed to have to do with its prophetic content, and with its status as somehow Owen’s last testament. Blunden’s edition itself re-asserted that life and poems interpreted each other, by appending in his “Memoir” the first biographical study of Owen, a tradition continued in Cecil Day Lewis’ 1963 edition, which reprints the Blunden memoir, and by Dominic Hibberd’s edition of *War Poems and Others* (1973), which intersperses poems with extracts from Owen’s letters.

Blunden had first commended "Strange Meeting" as a prophetic poem when he reviewed Sassoon's edition in the *Athenaeum*, 10 December 1920. Now in 1931 he felt there was a need to insist that it had its roots firmly planted in realism: it was "peculiarly a poem of the Western Front," he said, "a dream only a stage further on than the actuality of the tunnelled dug-outs."⁷ Realism in this context, largely because of the reputation of Sassoon, had a political connotation of protest, whereas what Murry had called "imaginative sublimation" was an aesthetic, even spiritual mode. The debate about the nature of Owen's achievement—how much of a realist was he?—continued, on the grounds of this poem, trailing its difficult questions about the political meaning of a poet's "acquiescence" or "protest," questions which were themselves bound up with the nation's and Europe's struggles to understand the Great War.

Blunden's edition was the vehicle for the spread of Owen's popularity in the thirties, notably with the young left-wing poets associated with Auden. In 1936, the year Yeats notoriously excluded Owen from his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, Michael Roberts chose seven Owen poems (including "Strange Meeting") for *The Faber Book of Modern Verse*, and shrewdly discussed Owen's half-rhymes in his introduction. Yeats' anthology is perhaps too eccentric to be described as reactionary, Roberts' too canny to be called radical, but Owen in the latter was certainly in more up-to-date-looking company. Yeats was unrepentant:

"When I excluded Wilfred Owen, whom I consider unworthy of the poets' corner of a country newspaper, I did not know I was excluding a reverend sandwich-board Man of the revolution & that some body has put his worst and most famous poem ["Strange Meeting"?] in a glass-case in the British Museum—however if I had known it I would have excluded him just the same."⁸

Yeats' attack is intemperate and unpleasant—he says Owen is "all blood, dirt & sucked sugar stick"—but it is not absurd. One of his objections is to Owen's use of clichéd poetic diction—he points the finger at "bards," "maids," and (from "Strange Meeting") "titanic wars." How modern, after all, was a poem that could speak of wars as titanic? Yeats' real antipathy was undoubtedly temperamental and political—a mixture

of envy of Owen's subject, and impatience at his failure to relish action as (say) Gogarty had done in the Troubles in 1921—and can be measured by the distance between "Strange Meeting" and "An Irish Airman Foresees his Death," where an undoubtedly modern idiom carries an ethic of the secular middle ages. The spirit of the prophetic section of "Strange Meeting" is of—perhaps ahead of—its time, but its idiom is high-style Victorian Evangelical.

"Strange Meeting" seemed to speak even more profoundly to the experience of a second world war which (as Kenneth Muir points out) it could even be said to have prophesied. Its quasi-religious status reached a kind of climax in 1961 when Benjamin Britten used a number of Owen's poems intertextualized with the Latin mass in his *War Requiem*. The piece culminates ambiguously, with the officially reassuring "In paradisum" accompanied by a haunting repetition by tenor and baritone of the mournful invitation to sleep which comes at the end of "Strange Meeting." To Britten, pacifist and sometime conscientious objector, the poem of pity and hopelessness seemed an appropriate last word in this requiem for the dead of another war. Owen's "masterpiece" (as Sassoon had again declared it in 1945)⁹ had become the generic war poem, an anthem for all doomed youth, now fully canonized—or at least institutionalized—as part of a cathedral service.

Cecil Day Lewis, in his 1963 edition that was to take Owen into the Vietnam War period, moved "Strange Meeting" back from the last place which Blunden had given it, to the first place it had occupied in Sassoon's edition. Day Lewis speaks of the "visionary heights" of "Strange Meeting," as opposed to the "brutal, close-up realism" of much of Owen's other work, and explains in his preface how, abandoning attempts at an uncertain chronological order, he has decided to group it together with other poems that treat the subject of war "in a more general, distanced way," separating these from poems of direct experience and descriptions of action.¹⁰ Day Lewis' edition had benefited greatly from the pioneering scholarly work of D. S. R. Welland's *Wilfred Owen: A Critical Study* (1960). For Welland, "Strange Meeting" is still the great Owen poem, which includes in the words of the "enemy" "lines that are in effect Owen's own elegy," as well as "a wise comment on history since 1918."¹¹ Two points in Welland's

sensitive and influential discussion of this poem can be isolated here. In the first place, Welland was the first to suggest that the "enemy" in the poem was a species of romantic *Doppelgänger* or alter ego. "The enemy Owen [*sic*] has killed is, he suggests, his poetic self."¹² And secondly, his work on the manuscripts gave Welland an insight into the poem's weaknesses as well as its strengths. Everyone congratulated Owen on his use of consonantal rhyme and cited "Strange Meeting" as the supreme example of the technique. Welland agreed, but he also noted how a half-rhyme as exact as Owen's was bound to be prone to monotony, and showed how the various drafts of "Strange Meeting" suggested, "by the dogged retention of certain pairs of words, that even in that great poem the exigencies of the medium are at times near to determining the sense."¹³

Welland's study had four principal effects on the poem's reputation. He was the first to identify Shelley (in *The Revolt of Islam*) as a major source, and the first to wonder about the origins of Owen's par rhyme (two questions that still exercise Kenneth Muir in his *Connotations* essay). His finding of a romantic theme of the double was widely accepted, encouraging a psychological or psychodramatic reading of the poem. And he drew attention to (and offered some explanation for) local problems of coherence in the poem.

When the poetry of the First World War reached new heights of popularity in the era and aftermath of the Vietnam War, Owen was that poetry's best-known exponent, and "Strange Meeting" his most famous and most anthologized poem. But a certain revaluation was taking place. In 1965 Bernard Bergonzi admitted that the opening was magnificently dramatic, but found some of the later passages needlessly obscure. It was "a slightly overrated poem, which has many splendid lines but is not entirely thought through."¹⁴ An academic generation trained by Leavis and the New Critics was perhaps less readily impressed by the vatic afflatus of "Strange Meeting," and at the same time less forgiving of its unfinished texture. Curiously enough, "Strange Meeting" was chosen by Helen Gardner for her *New Oxford Book of English Verse* (1972) but not by Philip Larkin—though he included seven other Owen poems—for his *Oxford Book of Twentieth Century Verse* (1973).

That same year saw the first Owen volume—Hibberd's edition of *War Poems and Others*—that did not accord "Strange Meeting" the pride of either first or last place in the book. It is no longer assumed to be Owen's last poem: that distinction now belongs, in Hibberd and in Jon Stallworthy's definitive *Wilfred Owen: The Complete Poems and Fragments* (1983), to "Spring Offensive"; and along with this better-informed estimate of the poem's chronological place there is a definite sense that the poem is being somehow demoted. "For a long time the general enthusiasm for the poem seemed to prevent its readers from admitting its undeniable obscurity," says Hibberd.¹⁵ Developing Welland's idea, Hibberd thinks that "Strange Meeting" should be read as Owen's comment on his decision to return to France, since its first speaker kills a poet who is both his equivalent on the other side and himself. Jon Stallworthy's biography, *Wilfred Owen* (1975) has little to add. He adduces Shelley, Sassoon and Barbusse as sources, and then quotes only the first ten lines (though he reproduces "Disabled" and "Spring Offensive," poems of comparable length, in their entirety).

And although the seventies saw the most assiduous round-up of the poem's sources, in S. B. Das' *Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting"* (1977) and especially in Sven Bäckman's *Tradition Transformed: Studies in the Poetry of Wilfred Owen* (1979), the most influential study of the decade, Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), contrived not to mention "Strange Meeting" at all. Owen's contemporary reputation was being formed here. Isaac Rosenberg is increasingly admired, especially since Ian Parsons' edition of 1979. Ivor Gurney is starting to get some of the attention he deserves. Owen, however, remains probably the best-loved of the English war poets, but his reputation no longer rests, so unequivocally as Middleton Murry thought it must, on "Strange Meeting."

Jon Silkin, indeed, felt that the prestige of "Strange Meeting" might have been positively pernicious. In a lengthy and rather repetitious argument, pursued through the introduction to his *Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* (1979), he challenges (in the name of Rosenberg, largely) Owen's predominance, and he does this principally through an attack on "Strange Meeting." Once again, the poem becomes the chosen ground

for a critical—or critical-political—debate. Silkin dislikes exactly the quality in Owen that earlier writers, and especially Blunden, had singled out for praise. Blunden admired Owen as a spokesman of the ordinary fighting man. But for Silkin, "Ever so slightly, Owen's language suffers from the settled quality of the 'spokesman.'"¹⁶ Somehow a representative status gets conferred on the people in Owen's poems. They are too easily generalizable, as Rosenberg's are not. This is exemplified for Silkin by Owen's decision to amend "I was a German conscript, and your friend" to what was to become the most famous line in "Strange Meeting," "I am the enemy you killed, my friend." Silkin prefers the particularity of the earlier version, regretting that Owen went for an effect of poetic profundity rather than specificity. Further, most Owen poems are *recollected* experience (with the Wordsworthian "calm" which is what Murry most admired in Owen) whereas Rosenberg's were relived in the present. "Strange Meeting" was in fact too concerned with being a traditional kind of English poem—too vague, too quiet, and (especially if you accepted Welland's and Hibberd's "non-value-making psychological exegesis")¹⁷ too private—too closed, in fact, and not imbued with an active desire for change. Silkin seems unsure whether his complaint is about Owen or about the way he is read. But as usual, beneath the debate on "Strange Meeting" lay an ideological argument, and the elegiac reading of deterministic acquiescence in the poem, which pleased Middleton Murry, seems to Silkin an affront, and a betrayal of Owen's anti-war principles and protest.

Once bitten by Silkin, Dominic Hibberd in his *Owen the Poet* (1986) judiciously gives equal weight to both the intense personal drama and the wide-ranging political statement of "Strange Meeting" in what is probably the fullest and best-informed discussion to date. He is now more sceptical about the idea that the "enemy" is Owen's double, but he does not share Silkin's preference for the earlier, more specific version.

The event in Owen's poem cannot be reduced to a meeting between a man and his double—he had no intention of presenting war as a merely internal, psychological conflict—but neither is it concerned with the immediate divisions suggested by 'German' and 'conscript' or 'British' and 'volunteer.' The poem is larger and stranger than that.¹⁸

He notes that the manuscript drafts show signs that Owen intended to continue the poem—"Let us sleep now" is scribbled in as an afterthought, and in any case it is a sleep that can be neither welcome nor peaceful. Hibberd also finds a mysteriously sexual element in this encounter between two men who meet, discover each other and sleep. It seems likely that Owen criticism is going to show an increasing interest in questions of the poems' sexuality. Meanwhile, though Hibberd's approach is more expository than evaluative, his account of "Strange Meeting" is overshadowed by the longer discussion of "Spring Offensive" that forms the climax of his book. I might add here that my own *Wilfred Owen's Voices* (1993) is more interested in "Spring Offensive" than in "Strange Meeting," and (I see from the index) gives more space to "Disabled" than to either.

Kenneth Muir's essay, then, joins a discussion that has been going on for seventy-five years, about a poem which has repeatedly acted as the focus of Owen's reputation. Professor Muir addresses three questions in particular, all canvassed in the foregoing debate—the issue of sources, the finished or unfinished nature of the work, and the origins of pararhyme, and I will end by considering these very briefly.

Muir suggests that Owen may have found precedents for spectral self-meetings in incidents from Shelley's life. This is persuasive, for Owen drew as much from the lives as from the work of his favourite poets.¹⁹ Still, Muir's suggestion does assume that the enemy is the poet's double (the poem itself doesn't seem to make that assumption), and does lead us away from the *dramatic* centre of the encounter between the man and another, like himself, whom he has just bayoneted to death.

Most commentators would agree that Owen probably did not regard the poem as complete, and Professor Muir usefully adduces Keats' *Hyperion*, a poem whose status as a fragment Keats deliberately stressed by ending it in the middle of a sentence. It seems quite possible that Owen's "Let us sleep now . . ." carries a similar intention. But the question of whether a poem is finished does not only have to do with where and how it stops. Finish is also a matter of texture. Like most of Owen's poems, "Strange Meeting" was not prepared for publication. I think we have to admit that as it stands it contains some of the weakest—as well as some of the strongest—writing in late Owen.

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.
 Courage was mine, and I had mystery,
 Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery:
 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,
 Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.

A number of factors—the prophetic solemnity of these lines, reinforced by their biblical connotations, their enclosure between the poem's powerful Dantesque beginning and the shock and pathos of the recognition that follows them, as well as the way they have repeatedly been construed as Owen's own posthumous message to futurity—have generally inhibited the observation that they do not make sense. Why (apart from the prosodically obvious reason) a tigress? If "they" are like a tigress, why are they marching in ranks? How does mastery help someone to miss a march? How can a citadel not have walls? If the entire world is retreating, what is it retreating from? What is achieved by washing blood off chariot-wheels, with poetry or with anything else? Owen was a patient reviser ("Miners" seems to have been an exception to this rule); there is every possibility he would in time have made these ideas blend and fuse, as they do not in the version he left behind. As it is, this part of the poem is not so much obscure as incoherent.

And the main reason for that incoherence appears to be the exigencies of par rhyme itself. Professor Muir claims "a native source" for par rhyme in Marlowe (32), specifically in several moments in *The Jew of Malta* (2.3.171-86). But he must know better than to suppose that he has definitively "put the record straight" (as he optimistically says), especially in the absence of any external evidence that Owen knew the play. Marlowe must join the long identity parade of the putative parents of Owen's par rhyme, rounded up by Welland, Bäckman and others, but it seems unlikely that we will ever now reach a conviction on this matter. Meanwhile in hunting for the source of Owen's par rhyme (and assuming that there must be one) it is possible that we have not paid

enough attention to its effects. Its effects on the unfinished "Strange Meeting" seem to me to have been, on the whole, baleful. The incoherences of the middle section, glanced at above, seem to be largely due to the demands of the rhyme, and the way the substance of the lines had to accommodate itself to a topography imposed by the presence of the rhyme pairs. Pararhyme helped Owen achieve some of his most powerful moments—early in "Strange Meeting," for example, or in the wonderful "Exposure" and "Futility"—but it could cripple a poem as well as make it fly. In the poems we do know that Owen worked on in France in the last months of his life—"The Sentry," "Smile, Smile, Smile" and "Spring Offensive"—he had stopped using it.

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NOTES

¹Sasi Bhusan Das, *Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting": A Critical Study* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1977).

²Wilfred Owen, *The Complete Poems and Fragments*, ed. Jon Stallworthy, 2 vols. (London: Chatto & Windus, The Hogarth Press, and OUP, 1983) 538-40.

³Osbert Sitwell, *Noble Essences or Courteous Revelations* (London: Macmillan, 1950) 92.

⁴*Times Literary Supplement* 7 January 1921: 6.

⁵See Jon Stallworthy's note on the composition of this poem, in *The Complete Poems and Fragments* 120-21.

⁶*The Poems of Wilfred Owen*, ed. Edmund Blunden, with a memoir (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931) 125.

⁷Blunden 128.

⁸*Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley* (London: OUP, 1940) 124.

⁹Siegfried Sassoon, *Siegfried's Journey 1916-1920* (London: Faber, 1945) 59.

¹⁰*The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*, ed. C. Day Lewis, with an introduction and notes (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963) 27.

¹¹D. S. R. Welland, *Wilfred Owen: A Critical Study* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960; repr. with a postscript, 1978) 101.

¹²Welland 101.

¹³Welland 118.

¹⁴Bernard Bergonzi, *Heroes' Twilight* (London: Constable, 1965) 133.

¹⁵*Wilfred Owen: War Poems and Others*, ed. Dominic Hibberd, with an introduction and notes (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973) 45.

¹⁶*The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, ed. Jon Silkin (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979) 31.

¹⁷Silkin 62-63.

¹⁸Dominic Hibberd, *Owen the Poet* (London: Macmillan, 1986) 177.

¹⁹Sassoon himself is the most obvious example. See also my discussion of the importance to Owen of the story of Keats' death, in Douglas Kerr, *Wilfred Owen's Voices: Language and Community* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993) 247-50.

"Strange Meeting," a Fragment? A Reply to Muir's "Owen"

JON SILKIN

In footnote 3 to his "Connotations of 'Strange Meeting'" Kenneth Muir somewhat irritably censures me, for my continued unease with "Anthem for Doomed Youth." I would, however, maintain, that questioning "Anthem" one strengthens, perhaps, Owen's greater achievements. Besides "Strange Meeting" these include "Insensibility" and "Exposure." "Anthem" is a much lesser achievement, I believe, and other poets have thought so too. In reviewing Ted Hughes' selection of poems by a poet of the Second World War, Keith Douglas, the poet Geoffrey Hill contrived to make a pungent comment on this poem of Owen's:

... it seems as if Owen's purpose is defeated, in "Anthem for Doomed Youth," between the opening question:

'What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?'

and the concluding vista:

'And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.'

The fact that Owen employs irony in this poem cannot alter the fact that he takes thirteen lines to retreat from the position maintained by one. If these men really do die as *cattle*, then all *human* mourning for them is a mockery, the private and the public, the inarticulate and true as much as the ostentatiously-false. In many of his letters Owen presses relentlessly on this very point. "Anthem for Doomed Youth" seems rather to dissipate the force of testimony.¹

Not many, I suspect, would share his view; I am one who does, in part. The "sad shires" syndrome in effect buttresses the War and its slaughter

¹Reference: Kenneth Muir, "Connotations of 'Strange Meeting,'" *Connotations* 3.1 (1993): 26-36.

in an unexpected way, by countering the horror at the destruction with the anodyne of consolation. This is contradictory to the statement in the Preface that "these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next."² Here, the elegiac "sad" merges with the pressure of tradition enshrined in "shire" to produce something beautiful, and effectively obscures the "monstrous anger" of the guns and their slaughter. The beautiful artefact sheds the pain of the griever, and instead, substitutes women's beauty and their Natural correlative of feeling—cut flowers. The authenticity of this may be tested by one's asking oneself, as Owen did, elsewhere, in "Insensibility" for instance, what would be the right adjective to reproduce the pain of the bereaved. It would not be, one feels, "sadness"—'sad' evacuates any sense of pain (and sympathy for the bereaved), and effects the quite different mode of acceptable grief, elegantly cutting off further inquiry as to the state of the bereaved person's mind by the expedient of drawing down blinds—although the reader has up till then had the privilege of witness. This view may seem uncharitable. There are many enthusiastic readers who will, one suspects, disagree. On the other hand, Owen himself reacted angrily to such people who made themselves immune to pity

By choice they made themselves immune
To pity and whatever moans in man.³

Immunity from grief and pain the "Anthem" unintentionally achieves by cloaking these primitive responses with sadness. This earlier draft, "Bugles sang," makes fewer concessions in its last five lines. Perhaps a suitable antidote to Owen's 'retreat' in "Anthem" would be a reading of Ivor Gurney's "To his Love," especially the last stanza.

Cover him, cover him soon!
And with thick-set
Masses of memoried flowers—
Hide that red wet
Thing I must somehow forget.⁴

And now to the notable footnote. Professor Muir writes:

Jon 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*.⁵ (34)

I think I should reply to Muir on this. His "anxious" actually refers to my desire to have some of the appreciation of the poetry of that period shared out. Thus not only Owen, but Herbert Read and Gurney. And not only these but especially Isaac Rosenberg whom I do regard as a better poet than Owen. But to suggest that I depreciated Owen's achievement, which is what I think he is implying, is itself "anxious." I am not alone in thinking Rosenberg's achievement to be considerable, and the evaluations of Leavis and Denys Harding,⁶ to mention just two, pioneered things well before I did. But I think I helped on that process, and yes, again, Rosenberg is the more interesting poet. Owen took English prosody and left it where he found it. He used it with great care and sometimes with power (rather than delicacy, I suggest). Rosenberg surpassed Owen, probably, in his use of metrical verse and certainly in his contribution to free verse, of which Owen wrote none I am aware of. Something of these considerations may be tested by comparing Owen's "Strange Meeting" with Rosenberg's "Dead Man's Dump"; for their conclusions are similar enough to allow overall comparison, though the verse of each is entirely different.

Such a comparison is worth going into, but I haven't the space for that here. All I wish to register is my unhappiness with Muir's implication, and all of what I say above can be easily tested. In the anthology he refers to, Owen receives 23 pages (21 if one removes the two pages of "Strange Meeting" ms.); and Rosenberg receives 20.

Moreover, Muir omits to mention my critical book *Out of Battle*.⁷ The principal chapters in it are devoted to Owen and Rosenberg, of which the former receives 56 pages and the latter 66. My admiration for Owen's poetry (not uncritical) is registered in these pages and elsewhere. My own anxiety on behalf of Rosenberg has not led me to depreciate Owen, but simply to try to sort out the strong poems of Owen's from the weaker ones.

Having tried to clean myself up a bit, I will now try to answer some of Muir's perceptions regarding Owen, as a man and soldier, and also

concerning his assertion that "Strange Meeting" is "a fragment" (30, 34). Owen, Muir writes,

wished to indicate, as Keats had done with *Hyperion*, that the poem was a fragment

"As Keats had done" is tendentious because in getting us to agree that this was the case with Keats, we shall, he seems to imply, be willing to accept it in Owen's. I don't see any reason for doing so. The poem makes, or rather coalesces, a number of considerations which I have discussed in *Out of Battle*, concerning beauty, truth and pity, and the pessimism of the conclusion. I think that Owen experienced trouble with this poem not because he wished it to be fragmentary (which is to project a fashionable and inappropriate aesthetics upon the poem) but precisely because the themes and concerns would not easily ramify together. Owen's poem concludes with a row of dots (Owen's, not an editor's), but these follow the complete sentence spoken by the "German soldier." In the last ms. in the British Library of "Strange Meeting" the workings of the famous line "I am the enemy you killed, my friend," appear to have gone thus:

enemy
am the German whom you killed, my
I was a German conscript, and your friend.

In *Out of Battle*, I attempted to argue that Owen is speaking of two enemy soldiers, one of whom (the English) has killed the German. On the whole I disagreed with Welland's interpretation of *alter ego*,⁸ and I disagree with Muir's "If Owen knew any of these stories it might have reinforced his idea of his meeting the enemy who was himself" (31).⁹ This appears to be re-cycled Welland; and I argue that apart from the war being fought by actual combatants, who destroyed each other, the textual evidence shows "German" persisting through two versions of the line. If the last version expunges "him," we may still be reasonably sure that he remains in the poem. The line and its dots were Owen's, and were pencilled in by Owen at a later stage in the process of composition, and subsequently inked in. It seems to be Owen's intention to suggest, not that the soldier's

(or soldiers') discourse is incomplete (anything but), but that the situation cannot be "undone." The very irresolution in Owen's dots constitutes poetic resolution in the form and the poem. It is (as I read it) evaluative judgement on the poet's part. It constitutes an overall view of the catastrophe of war, of which these two soldiers are, if you wish, a fragment; but the discourse concerning their condition has closure and conclusion. Owen's row of dots constitutes the *poem's* closure.

This concern with the War, of Owen's, leads to my other objection. Muir cites Owen's "fought like an angel," but a fuller quotation reads:

It [the experience of fighting] passed the limits of my Abhorrence. I lost all my earthly faculties, and fought like an angel.¹⁰

Muir omits to mention the recipient of the letter (Owen's mother) and its date (4 or 5) October 1918. In fact the date is important because it comes from the last period of Owen's experience in the Army, and shortly before he was killed. He had voluntarily returned to the Front although there had been the possibility of a safe job in England, probably training others to kill. This he rejected; and to judge from the evidence of the letter to his mother (December 31, 1917), and the poem "The Calls," Owen returned not, as I believe, out of patriotism but to be with his fellow-soldiers on whose behalf he was to continue to plead. In a sense his poetry drove him to this, for how else could he occupy such a position, in his poetry, if he were to avoid sharing their doom.

Thus the assertion by Muir that Owen "was probably echoing Henry V's speech on the eve of Agincourt" (he refers to another letter written by Owen to his mother) eases in a connotation of patriotism, which misrepresents what Owen actually wrote concerning his fighting, "It passed the limits of my Abhorrence."

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. (31)

This hardly helps corroborate the implication of patriotism in Muir's interpretation but suggests at least two things. First, that in not breaking ranks he remained the patriot that Muir appears to suggest he had become. But surely to fight bravely, or ferociously, does not of itself

evinced patriotism. Second, Muir is simply and transparently re-cycling Owen's own words "None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress." In the poem, not breaking ranks is the ironic version of marching in admirably disciplined order *from* progress. Whereas in Muir's transcription of these words he appears to be suggesting that Owen marched in patriot acceptance. Whereas I suggest that *if* indeed it may be said that he did not break ranks, it was not out of patriotism but a desire to help and plead for his fellows. As to "but he still adhered to his symbolism," what respect does this assertion show for Owen's poetry? Surely it is more than the sum of *symbolism*? Of course the tigris remained evil; but Owen "fought like an angel" within the parentheses, not of patriotism and a hatred of war, but within a sense of his being committed to his fellow-human together with his hatred of war. If Owen wished to prove himself a "good" soldier, then he did so, and, as some have suggested, did so with ferocity. But that doesn't argue patriotism, either. The unhappiest thing of all is that the war brought to the surface of his conduct that which he detested most, and before it killed him, it apparently elicited these responses in full. The letter is to his mother and in telling her "I . . . fought like an angel," he may be soliciting her approval. At any rate, it seems to me, what the circumstances of the *declaration* really need is not just the assertion as of "Anthem" that "Owen turned it into a great poem" but criticism and patient examination.

I beg to conclude with a personal remark. Like that assignment of greatness to poems Muir's enumeration of some all-too-great symbols, "Guernica, the Gulag, the Holocaust, Hiroshima and so on" does not do justice (in matter and form) to the unbelievable though all the more real catastrophes which they mean. But here I am convinced that *au fond*, Professor Muir and I are in perfect agreement.

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NOTES

¹Stand 6.4 (1964).

²Owen's "Preface."

³Owen's "Insensibility."

⁴Ivor Gurney, "To his Love."

⁵Professor Muir used the second edition published in 1981. The first edition appeared in 1979.

⁶F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1932); Denys Harding, "Isaac Rosenberg," *Scrutiny* 3.4 (March 1935); Denys Harding, *Experience into Words* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963).

⁷Jon Silkin, *Out of Battle: The poetry of the Great War* (London: OUP, 1972).

⁸Dennis S. R. Welland, *Wilfred Owen. A Critical Study* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960).

⁹See also Muir: "In other words Owen meets his *doppelganger*" (30).

¹⁰Wilfred Owen, *Collected Letters*, eds. Harold Owen and John Bell (Oxford: OUP, 1967) 580.

Christmas as Humbug: A Manuscript Poem by Letitia Elizabeth Landon ("L.E.L.")

F. J. SYPHER

"L.E.L."—as she signed her work—enjoyed great popularity and esteem during the 1820s and 1830s, not only in England, but also in the United States and on the European Continent.¹ Landon was a literary prodigy, who started to compose poems as a child and began publishing in March 1820, when she was seventeen years old. She died at the age of thirty-six, in West Africa, where she had gone to live after her marriage in June 1838 to George Maclean, governor of the British post at Cape Coast (in present-day Ghana). In her remarkably productive career, Landon wrote seventeen volumes of poetry, three substantial novels, two books of short stories, a tragedy, countless reviews and critical articles, and many other works, in addition to journals and letters. In fact, considering the quantity and variety of her work, and the high regard accorded it by contemporaries, one might make a case for Landon as one of the most prominent English poets during the period between the death of Byron in 1824 and the emergence of the great Victorians.

Among specific reasons why her poetry is not better known today, is perhaps her early predilection for the now-obsolete genre of romantic verse narrative as, for instance, in *The Improvisatrice* (1824), or *The Troubadour* (1825), which were inspired by Sir Walter Scott's poems. Furthermore, many of Landon's poems appeared in annual volumes like *Forget Me Not*, *The Keepsake*, or *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book*—gift-books which enjoyed a great vogue at the time but went out of fashion in the 1840s, when Landon's work went out too, as if by association with an outmoded cultural phenomenon. (The fiction of Bulwer and Disraeli underwent a similar eclipse.)

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debsypher00302.htm>>.

Finally, much of Landon's writing is frankly sentimental. Her chosen themes, she says in the preface to her book of tales for children, *Traits and Trials of Early Life* (1836), were "Sorrow, Beauty, Love, and Death." But to dismiss Landon's work as "merely" sentimental is a mistake. Certainly she wrote for the paying press many poems that were little more than charming decorations.² But even in the least of them there are hints of an earnestness and intensity that is far from facile or superficial. And in her best work she is never dealing in "mere" sentiment. On the contrary, there are cynical, almost nihilistic qualities in her work; they did not pass unnoticed. Contemporary critics, such as S. Sheppard³ and Frederic Rowton,⁴ commented on her tendencies to melancholy and gloom, with no available solace in religious faith or programs for social improvement (compare E. B. Browning's view of Landon as expressed in "L.E.L.'s Last Question"). As examples, one might cite Landon's poems "Necessity," "The Astrologer," and "The Feast of Life." Landon was even capable of deep sympathy with a wicked lust for revenge. Her poem, "The Laurel," with its vengeful expression of a poet's curse upon a faithless lover, is a case in point. More violent is the revenge of Lady Marchmont, who murders both her husband and her lover—in Landon's novel *Ethel Churchill* (1837; a new edition, with an introduction by the author of this article, was published October 1992 by Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, Delmar, New York 12054).

Criticism of the cruelty, greed, injustice, and vanity of "actual" life, then, is pervasive in Landon's work. But since much of her writing was composed for members of the "establishment" she rarely speaks out on specific political or social issues. A notable exception is her poem, "The Factory" (1835), in which she decries the child labor system.

The interest of "Christmas" is that the poet openly voices the darker thoughts she nourished while writing "poetical illustrations" for costly picture-books that were destined to grace the drawing-rooms of the rich at Christmas time. In this poem, one feels, the mask of propriety is put aside, and the author gives free rein to her anger and bitterness in an ironic tone, which, in light of the sacrosanct status of Christmas, is nothing less than shocking. It is a time when one is supposed not only to be "merry" but also to believe in hope and redemption, even of the

most unredeemable characters, as in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. To join old Scrooge in calling Christmas "humbug" is blasphemous.

But Landon is, of course, no Scrooge. Scrooge dismisses Christmas because he is interested only in money; he accepts without question the actualities and institutions of the world, such as prisons and workhouses. By contrast, Landon strongly protests the conditions of everyday life. Like Dickens, she glances back to an idealized Christmas past, "When the red hearth blazed, the harper sang, / And the bells rung their glorious chime." She writes in this nostalgic vein in her poems, "Christmas in the Olden Time, 1650" and "Thoughts on Christmas-day in India,"⁵ where she seems to be drawing on happy memories of her childhood at Trevor Park—the ancient gabled country house at East Barnet, where her family lived until the postwar depression of 1815 compelled them to move back to London.⁶

But when Landon turns her thoughts from the past and considers the present, she—unlike Dickens—finds no redeeming power in memories. The "merry" Christmas of her past, and of tradition and conventional belief, appears to her as an empty, obsolete illusion. At Christmas, as at any other time, people hurry along dreary streets, struggling to make a living; the needs of the poor, old, and helpless are ignored; a child is murdered so its body can be sold for use in scientific experiments.⁷ In the countryside, the mythical "Captain Swing"—as the rick-burners and machinery-breakers were known—is setting fire to haystacks and barns to protest agricultural depression, unemployment, and the importing of cheap Irish labor. At the same time, there were repercussions from the French revolution of 1830, together with intense political controversy over electoral reform, which finally resulted in the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832.⁸ And the cholera, having marched across Europe, has now arrived in England like a plague, seemingly carried across the English Channel by unseasonably warm winds.⁹

Amid material struggle, crime, social protest, and disease—Landon suggests—celebration of Christmas is not a gesture of hope, but a hypocritical mockery. She sees the prevailing social conditions as signs that the nation is under a kind of curse, or moral retribution, as a punishment of society as a whole for its evil and inhumanity.¹⁰ She implies that neither faith nor annual effusions of good feeling alter

fundamental conditions in a world which rolls round in its diurnal course like a vast juggernaut, crushing everything before it. For Landon, the only refuge is the ethereal, unattainable realm of the ideal, to which she appeals so eloquently in poetry that earned for her pen name—"L.E.L."—the epithet "magical letters."

The constellation of topical allusions in Landon's "Christmas" suggests a date around Christmas 1831, when she was living at 22 Hans Place, London. The drab interior of her narrow attic chamber—in which most of her works were composed—is described in detail in Laman Blanchard's *Life and Literary Remains of L.E.L.* (London, 1841), and starkly depicted in an illustration to Thomas Crofton Croker's *A Walk from London to Fulham* (London, 1860; reprinted 1896).¹¹

Other works written by Landon at about this time are her first novel, *Romance and Reality* (1831), and her poems for *The Easter Gift* (published by Fisher in 1832 and reprinted in following years). Most significant for the present purpose is that she had been engaged as "editor" of the first volume of *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book* (published late 1831, dated 1832). For this and other similar works, Landon had to compose dozens of pieces to accompany engraved plates which had been prepared in advance and sent to her during the summer. As one critic comments: "A more devastating form of drudgery it is difficult to imagine."¹² Nevertheless, one may agree with L.E.L., as she writes to her publisher, not so much with complacency as, undoubtedly, with pointed irony: "Some of my best poems have appeared in the Drawing-Room Scrap Book."¹³

The text of "Christmas" is printed, by permission, from the holograph manuscript (signed "L.E.L.") in the collection of Mr. John Elliott, Jr., to whom grateful thanks are due. The poem does not appear in volumes of Landon's collected works. However, L.E.L. published literally hundreds of poems in newspapers, magazines, gift-books, anthologies, etc., and many of these were never collected for republication, either by the author or by later editors. There are also many poems in manuscript collections. The bibliography of Landon's voluminous work is therefore an immense, complex subject, and it has hardly been touched. That "Christmas" may perhaps have been published somewhere may be suggested by the stanza-break marks in the left margin of the

ms.—these would presumably have been noted for the use of a printer. But it is of course possible that the poem never appeared in print.¹⁴

The ms. of "Christmas" is lightly punctuated and contains a number of deletions which suggest that Landon was, at least to some extent, composing or revising her verses as she wrote. In fact this may well be a first and only draft of the poem. The author was known, even as a teenager, for the ease and rapidity with which she composed. In the absence of a fully punctuated text, gone over by a contemporary editor and proofread by the author, one hesitates to make extensive alterations or additions—line endings can serve for pauses; but a few emendations seem to be called for. Where changes have been made or textual comments are needed, actual readings of the ms. are noted as follows: references are to lines; ms. readings are given in roman type; angle brackets enclose readings crossed out by the author; square brackets enclose editorial explanations, in italics.

Christmas.

Now out upon you Christmas!
Is this the merry time
When the red hearth blazed, the harper sang,
And the bells rung their glorious chime?

You are called merry, Christmas [5]
Like many that I know
You are living on a character
Acquired long ago.

The dim lamps glimmer o'er the streets
Through the dun and murky air [10]
You may not see the moon or stars
For the fog is heavy there.

As if all high and lovely things
Were blotted from the sight,
And earth had nothing but herself,— [15]
Left to her own drear light.

A gloomy world goes hurrying by
And in the lamplight's glare
Many a heavy step is seen
And many a face of care. [20]

I saw an aged woman turn
To her wretched home again
All day she had asked charity
And all day asked in vain.

The fog was on the cutting wind [25]
The frost was on the flood
And yet how many past that night
With neither fire nor food.

There came on the air a smothered groan
And a low and stifled cry [30]
And there struggled a child, a young fair child
In its mortal agony.

"Now for its price," the murderer said
On earth we must live as we can
"And this is not a crime but a sacrifice [35]
In the cause of science and man."

Is this the curse that is laid on the earth
And must it ever be so
That there can be nothing of human good
But must from some evil flow? [40]

On on and the dreary city's smoke
And the fog are left behind
And the leafless boughs of the large old trees
Are stirred by the moaning wind

And all is calm, like the happy dream [45]
Which we have of an English home
A lowly roof where cheerful toil
And healthy slumbers come.

Is there a foreign foe in the land
That the midnight sky grows red [50]
That by homestead and barn, and rick and stock
Yon cruel blaze is fed?

There were months of labour, of rain and sun
Ere the harvest followed the plough
Ere the stack was reared, and the barn was filled [55]
Which the fire is destroying now.

And the dark incendiary goes through the night
With a fierce and wicked joy
The wealth and the food which he may not share
He will at least destroy. [60]

The wind—the wind it comes from the sea
With a wailing sound it past
'Tis soft and mild for a winter wind
And yet there is death on the blast.

From the south to the North hath the Cholera come [65]
He came like a despot king
He hath swept the earth with a conqueror's step
And the air with a spirit's wing.

We shut him out with a grille of ships
And a guarded quarantine [70]
What ho! now which of your watchers slept?
The Cholera's past your line.

There's a curse on the blessed sun and air
What will ye do for breath?
For breath which was once but a word for life [75]
Is now but a word for death.

Woe for affection when love must look
On each face it loves with dread
Kindred, and friends; when a few brief hours
And the dearest may be, the dead. [80]

The months pass on, and the circle spreads
 And the time is drawing nigh
 When each street may have a darkened house
 Or a coffin passing by.

Our lot is cast upon evil days [85]
 In the world's winter time,
 The earth is old, and worn with years
 Of want, of woe and of crime.

Then out on the folly of ancient times
 The folly which wished you mirth! [90]
 Look round on the anguish—look round on the vice
 Then dare to be glad upon earth.

L.E.L.

- 1 Christmas [no punctuation]
 4 rung [clearly, and not "rang"—see OED for examples of this past tense form as used
 by Southey (1797) and Disraeli (1837)]
 4 chime.
 11 stars [the star of Bethlehem would not be visible here]
 16 [the image recalls Byron's "Darkness"]
 21 aged woman [perhaps an ironic parallel to the Virgin Mary]
 27 past [alternate past tense form for "passed"—see OED; cf. l. 62]
 28 f<l>ood.
 31 young fair child [perhaps an ironic parallel to the Christ Child]
 32 agony [no punctuation]
 33 'Now for its price,' [single quotation marks]
 35 sacrifice [a bitter inversion of Christ's sacrifice]
 39 That that there [sic]
 40 flow.
 45 all is calm [perhaps an ironic echo of the Christmas hymn, "Stille Nacht" ("Silent
 Night"), composed in 1818 by Franz Gruber, with words by Josef Mohr]
 45 happy <home> dream

- 50 the <mind> midnight
 51 by <by> homestead
 52 <The> Yon
 52 fed.
 53 of <su> rain
 55 barn [suggests the setting of the Nativity]
 67 conqueror's <king> step [the image may parallel the Epiphany]
 68 wing [no punctuation]
 69 a <guard> gville [sic, clearly, over <guard> probably a slip of the pen, or possibly an inadvertent phonetic spelling reflecting the author's pronunciation]
 71 slipt [sic, clearly, with no punctuation, and not "slept"]
 74 for <the> breath [no punctuation]
 75 word for life [Greek ψυχή, Latin "anima" and "spiritus"—as in the Holy Spirit—literally mean "breath"]
 79 Friends, and kindred [with author's indication to transpose]
 80 dead [no punctuation]
 85 is <ch> cast
 87 The earth
 90 mirth [no punctuation]
 92 [The words "glad upon earth" and the previous reference to the "old" earth (line 87), recall phrases from the well-known hymn that begins: "Turn back, O man, forswear thy foolish ways," by Louis Bourgeois (1551). The moral message expressed in the first two stanzas of the hymn, with their reference to "tragic empires," is perfectly in harmony with Landon's poem.]

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NOTES

¹Many American editions of her works were published in Philadelphia, Boston, and New York; and in Germany her poem *The Improvisatrice* was reprinted as *Die Sängerin, nach dem Englischen von Clara Himly, Englisch und Deutsch* (Frankfurt: Schmerber, 1830). During Landon's visit to Paris in the summer of 1834, she frequented the famous salon of Mme. Récamier, and made the acquaintance of many literary figures, including Heinrich Heine. See *The Autobiography of William Jerdan*, 4 vols. (London, 1852-53) 3:187-206, where several of Landon's letters from Paris are printed. See also the reference to Landon in: Heinrich Heine, *Säkularausgabe*,

vol. 24, *Briefe an Heine*, 1823-36, ed. Renate Francke (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag; Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1974) 266; also Fritz Mende, *Heinrich Heine: Chronik seines Lebens und Werkes* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1970) 116—including “Besuch bei Landon,” June 29, 1834. (I am grateful to Eric Sams and Peter Branscombe for these German references.) In connection with Landon’s reputation in Germany, note also her poem “Wave, Wind and Bark” (alternative title, “Forget-Me-Not”), translated by the poet Wilhelm Gerhard (1780-1858) as “Welle, Lüftchen und Rinde” (alternative title, “Vergiss mein nicht”) and published in William Sterndale Bennett’s musical score, *Sechs Gesänge*, Opus 23 (Leipzig, 1841). Several of Landon’s publishers had connections with Germany: Ackermann (or Ackerman—both spellings occur), Shoberl, and Fisher, for example. Detailed research would undoubtedly turn up evidence that Landon’s work was known and respected both in Germany and France. It is fair to consider her a member of the international circle of influential women of letters at the time, among whom (at a slightly earlier period), one of the most brilliant was Germaine Necker, baronne de Staël-Holstein (*dite* Mme. de Staël). I mention her in particular because the heroine of her novel *Corinne* (1807) was one of Landon’s role-models, and a pattern figure for *The Improvisatrice*, and “Erinna.”

²An example is the poem “Little Red Riding Hood,” in *The Book of Gems: The Modern Poets and Artists of Great Britain*, ed. S. C. Hall (London, 1838) 179-81, with an engraving by W. H. Simmons of a picture by J. Inskipp.

³*Characteristics of the Genius and Writings of L.E.L. with Illustrations from her Works, and from Personal Recollection*, by [Miss] S. S[heppard]. (London, 1841).

⁴Editor of *The Female Poets of Great Britain* (Philadelphia, 1853); reprint edited by Marilyn L. Williamson (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1981).

⁵“Christmas in the Olden Time, 1650” appears in *Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap Book* for 1836, 47-48. “Thoughts on Christmas-day in India” appears in *The Zenana and Minor Poems*, with an introduction by Emma Roberts (London, 1839) and in Landon’s *Poetical Works*, ed. W. B. Scott (London, 1873), reprint edition with an introduction and additional poems, ed. F. J. Sypher (Delmar, N.Y.: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1990) 504-06.

⁶Concerning Landon’s years at East Barnet, see the information and bibliographical references in the introduction to a reprint of her first book, *The Fate of Adelaide* (1821), ed. F. J. Sypher (Delmar, N.Y.: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1990). See also *N&Q* 236 [ns 38] (1991) 520.

⁷*The Times*, London (7 Nov. 1831) p. 6 col. 4, under the heading “Police,” reports the case of the murder of a fourteen-year-old boy, whose body was sold to a “demonstrator of anatomy at the King’s College,” who believed that “death had been produced by violence.” The grim details of the story are fully exposed in a series of articles in subsequent issues of the newspaper; for references to later dates and pages, see *Palmer’s Index to The Times Newspaper* for 1 Oct. to 31 Dec. 1831, under the heading “Police.”

⁸On the agricultural disturbances, see Elie Halévy, *The Triumph of Reform 1830-1841*, 2nd ed. (London: E. Benn, 1950) 7-9.

⁹See the memorable description by Eugene Sue in *The Wandering Jew*, Book I, “Interval” between chapters xvi and xvii; original title *Le Juif Errant* (Paris, 1844-45). For a near-contemporary scientific discussion of cholera, see the classic epidemiological papers by John Snow in *Snow on Cholera* (New York: OUP, 1936). Snow is mainly concerned with British outbreaks in 1848 and 1854, but the cholera of 1831-32

(referred to by Landon) was observed by him, and is mentioned in several places in his book (20, 99-100, 104-05). There was a widely held belief at the time that cholera was spread by airborne means (9, 113-14, 159-60); however, Snow persuasively argued that it was in fact transmitted via contaminated drinking water. Snow also discusses the association of cholera with warm weather (117-18), when water was more likely to be drunk at relatively mild temperatures, instead of being boiled and therefore purified, in the process of making hot tea. There are numerous articles on cholera in *The Times* at this period; see *Palmer's Index to The Times Newspaper* for 1 Oct. to 31 Dec. 1831.

¹⁰For near-contemporary instances of disease regarded as a kind of moral retribution, see Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843) III.iii, and Kingsley's *Alton Locke* (1850).

¹¹I owe this reference to the kindness of Mr. John Harris, author of *The Artist and the Country House* (1979). Croker's text and illustrations about L.E.L. originally appeared in *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. 31, no. 181 (January 1845) 5-7, 14-15. The illustration is reproduced in the introduction to my edition of Landon's *Ethel Churchill* (6), cited in the text of the present article. The description given by Blanchard is in his *Life*, vol. 1, 78-79.

¹²D. E. Enfield, *L.E.L.: A Mystery of the Thirties* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1928) 88.

¹³Quoted in the memoir of L.E.L. by William Howitt (signed "W. H.") in *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book* for 1840 (5). See Thackeray's review of the *Annuals* for 1837, where he speaks of Landon in detail: "She will pardon us for asking, if she does justice to her great talent by employing it in this way? It is the gift of God to her—to watch, to cherish, and to improve: it was not given her to be made over to the highest bidder, or to be pawned for so many pounds per sheet. An inferior talent (like that of many of whom we have been speaking) must sell itself to live—a genius has higher duties; and Miss Landon degrades hers, by producing what is even indifferent." *Fraser's Magazine*, vol. 16, no. 96 (December 1837) 763. The review is unsigned but the attribution to Thackeray is given by Miriam M. H. Thrall in *Rebellious Fraser's: Nol Yorke's Magazine in the Days of Maginn, Thackeray, and Carlyle*, *Columbia University Studies in English and Comparative Literature* 117 (New York: Columbia UP, 1934) 295. This volume contains a chapter, "The Story of L.E.L.," on Landon's association with Maginn (193-207).

¹⁴Except for the first eight lines, quoted in an entry which appears on an untitled, undated auction-catalogue leaf, among papers relating to Landon, in Special Collections and Archives, Rutgers University Libraries, New Brunswick, New Jersey. A powerful 20th-century work expressing somewhat similar doubts about Christmas is the title story by Katherine Anne Porter, in her collection *The Leaning Tower and Other Stories* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1944).

Notes from the Body—

JACQUELINE VAUGHT BROGAN

Is it over between us, before it's begun?

We talk, several times daily
at great cost.

Something spiralling between
our vision—naked trees,
grey light, flashing storms,
reddest aspens
of the fall

You're afraid of your job.
I'm afraid of the world—

what tree, what sister,
felled again
whispered her last
syllables this night?

And did anyone hear?

My neighbor, pregnant,
with a two-year old child
was murdered.
Someone tried to break in
to my house, twice in one week.
(My children were asleep—with only

one staircase: no escape.)
I could go on.

I try to go on.

Listen: the air is hurting
like a person
who misused the once sacred
tobacco
water is phlegming
like a person
with too many years
of too many medicines.

If I can't say this
to you, whom I know best
of all, how can I speak
of it, of us, at all?

Today, *that* man was lonely,
on my street,
dressed in a heavy overcoat,
hiding something cheap—

and the river, St. Joseph's
only looked clean from the street.

Children are dying
at 74 degrees heat
from hypothermia (starvation)
a whole continent is dying
(global warming) Antarctica

And we've all lost our names.
And the map stays the same:

in every war

someone always rapes a corpse,
someone pisses in a flagging
mouth
someone puts out a cigarette
in a frozen eye
someone always cuts out a tongue
not knowing why

Is it over between us,
before it's begun?

I never bore your children
nor danced in the sun-
light upon the waters
Austin, Oahu, wherever—

this spiral, this spiro-
graph, even spies of my own

keep nudging me, saying
separate

and not because I've quit loving you—
aspen smells
flannel voice
leathered whispers
silk and skin—

but because I'm becoming afraid
of just how much
I really am
learning
to hate

A Note on "Notes from the Body"

ALICIA OSTRIKER

Women's love poetry is not what it used to be. Of course it never was. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, whose "Sonnets from the Portuguese" were once considered the height, or is it depth, of sentimentality, is actually writing about what it means to be a pair of lovers who are intellectual and moral equals. "Two souls erect and strong," as she puts it, makes for a revolutionary notion of romance in our time as well as her own. Emily Dickinson, about whose love for some unknown male "master" critics and biographers have endlessly speculated, probably wrote some of her hottest love poems to her sister-in-law Susan Gilbert Dickinson. When women today write love poetry, they are as often as not writing not only to/about their lovers, but about their concept of love; a concept which begins with the body, includes the passions, rises to the intellect, and does not end with the lovers but abuts onto the world of politics and history.

The sweet old view that coupling constitutes a shelter from the storm—Matthew Arnold's notion that if the world is a darkling plain where ignorant armies clash by night, you can solve the problem by saying "Ah, love, let us be true / To one another"—doesn't work for us any more. We cannot in our poems divide the private life from the public life. There is only one life. When Shelley wasn't writing love poems he called it "the one life within us and abroad." We share it with lovers, yes, or we hope to. We also share it with our neighbours, who may be next door or in Africa. We share it with the rapist and the torturer. We share it with trees—we are trees, and may be cut down

*Reference: Jacqueline Vaught Brogan, "Notes from the Body—," *Connotations* 3.2 (1993/94): 204-06.

without warning—and poisoned rivers, and dying continents. The claim in Vaught Brogan's "Notes from the Body" that the "talk" between lovers needs to include the world is a radical claim, and a necessary one. True love in this version of love poetry does not mean sexual fidelity. It means truth to one's vision of reality, and the demand that the other, the beloved, be able to hear. "If I can't say this," the poet insists, no other communication is possible. There cannot be "us" without "it." The map of the world maps us.

We are used to poems which resolve themselves. This one does not. It reads like a part of a conversation-in-progress, a slice of a relationship of which the future is unknown, and not hopeful. That too is a radical move in a poem. Like the Language poets of the eighties, and like post-modern poets in general, Brogan draws on, and draws together, theories of discourse and theories of politics. As we bow to the indeterminacies of language and history, so we submit to the indeterminacy of love. None of these things are finite, or final, or even definable, and it is the absence of certitude—in the presence of passion—which shapes the form of "Notes from the Body." The close, in which there are two assonant antonyms of love, "afraid" and "hate," lets the reader think several things, all of which may be the case: it is possible to love when you are paralyzed by fear; it is impossible to act on your love when you are consumed by hatred of the violence and stupidity in the world; it is impossible to act on it if the lover refuses to listen.

Separate: it is not what the poet or the poem wishes. But it may be the fact.

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Reading Jacqueline Vaught Brogan's "Notes from the Body"

MARTINE WATSON BROWNLEY

Writing is supposed (I think so at least) to try and say the truth—it's a desperate deep poet's truth. And truth is always violent; it is a synonym of violence.

—Hélène Cixous¹

In her evolving sequence of almost a dozen poems, "Notes from the Body," Jacqueline Vaught Brogan makes a distinguished contribution to the work of the numerous American women poets who over the last two decades have taken, in Alicia Suskin Ostriker's words, to "the fields of the skin."² For these poets, Ostriker explains, the body "is taken first of all as a reliable reality—"the body cannot lie"—and by extension as the medium whereby realities beyond the body are interpreted, their codes read."³

The poem from Brogan's sequence printed above is her ironic contemporary recension of centuries of traditional love lyrics. In this poem she explores the impossibility of intimate human connections in a world of escalating violence impervious to linguistic comprehension, or to any other kind of care or control. In this kind of world, the inadequacies of language to experience and of experience to language result in the lovers' growing inability to speak to each other depicted at the beginning of the poem. The impossibility of mutual understanding—of reaching anything that can honestly be described as "our vision"—is represented and the reasons for the impasse explored as the poet moves between the public and the private, the body and the body politic, in an effort to break the silence.

Brogan's poem is about gaps, about the gulfs between the lover's concern for a job and the poet-speaker's concern for the world, between

¹Reference: *Connotations* 3.2 (1993/94): 204-06.

dying children and a dying continent, and between personal destruction and geopolitical permanence. The poet's stark juxtapositions emphasize that language can only represent, never bridge, such abysses. Drawing on traditional associations of women and nature, throughout the poem she fuses them with contemporary concerns with violence against both. In the poem's world of murder and mutilation, the potential fecundity of women and of nature remains blocked. Within such sterility the plenitude of language itself is ultimately reduced to "syllables" as nature and women—"what tree, what sister"—are "felled again" in an endless cycle of destruction.

At the beginning of the poem, the possibility of a joint vision for the lovers is disrupted by images of a nature desolate ("naked trees"), impotent ("grey light"), hostile ("flashing storms"), or dying ("reddest aspens / of the fall"). Subsequent personifications of polluted air and water emphasize the tragic natural results of limited human understandings through historical time. The "once sacred" tobacco is only after centuries recognized as toxic; the healing medicines taken in excess prove poisonous over the long term; the river can finally appear clean only from a distance. In the poem a revived nature appears merely to suggest experiences denied to the speaker. There can be no human fusion with another and with nature—the chance to bear the lover's children and dance "in the sun- / light upon the waters"—nor can the "aspen smells" associated with love at the end of the poem endure.

This destruction obliterates the individual even as it insures a monotonous global stasis: "And we've all lost our names. / And the map stays the same." The stability of the body politic rests on the bodies of the victims of "every war," where the individuality of each body is irrelevant among the unthinking mutilations endlessly repeated. In contrast to the earlier natural damages in the poem, which can be understood only with the passage of time, the grisly images of bodies desecrated in war emphasize the terrifying sameness of political violence.

Hélène Cixous, in a postmodernist revision of Keats' negative capability, writes that "there is no *invention* possible, whether it be philosophical or poetic, without there being in the inventing subject an abundance of the other, of variety."⁴ For the poet-speaker, it is the internalized "abundance of the other" that disrupts the relationship that

the speaker and the lover are attempting to create. The lover's fear of his or her job, reflecting the narrow limits of diurnal rounds, is placed in ironic perspective by the larger global fears of the speaker. But even as the speaker faces this chaos, she remains acutely aware of the personal dimensions and reflections of public trauma, from the thief twice in her home to the man on her street, whose overcoat hides only the cheapness to which his own humanity and loneliness have been reduced in the context of a world gone awry. The insignificance of the individual, the overwhelming crises in the body politic and in nature, the speaker's recognition of both, and the lover's failure to engage either combine to teach the speaker the hate with which the poem ends. The colloquial insertion of "really" in the straightforward statement of the final lines highlights both the speaker's disgust and her despair.

The juxtaposition of "I could go on"—the ability to keep recounting violations—with "I try to go on"—the attempt to endure—and the gap between them in the text register the difficulties in sustaining even minimal life under conditions where language can represent only multiplied violences. The lover's inability to recognize personal complicity at any level produces the silence that the poet-speaker decries:

If I can't say this
to you, whom I know best
of all, how can I speak
of it, of us, at all?

As a result the speaker feels continuing pressure on all sides to end the relationship. Pressure comes from the "spiral," her geometric representation of the chaos outside of and between the putative lovers, and also from the "spirograph," the machine that in its measurements of respiratory depth and rapidity reflects the poem itself as a precise register of the scope and intensity of fluctuating feelings. Geometric and technological metaphors give way to "spies of my own," a final impetus depicted in terms merging the personal and political concerns that run through the poem.

The italicized word "*separate*" marks the final turn in the poem, as the speaker, who has written throughout in terms of her own victimization and that of others, moves towards a complex refusal to become a victim herself. In addition to its conventional meaning of "divide,"

"separate" carries from its Latin roots the literal meaning of "to make ready by oneself" (*separare*: *se*, "by oneself, apart," and *parare*, "to make ready, to furnish"). The word thus suggests not merely the negative sundering of the lovers, but the more positive process of making necessary preparations independently. Separation is finally what the poet-speaker must experience in order to prepare to deal with life as it is, a preparation in which "learning / to hate" will play a vital role as a defense against acquiescence and therefore complicity through passivity.

Through natural and human bodies Brogan deftly and boldly depicts the course of love thwarted and the reasons for the failure to make human connections. Chantal Chawaf writes:

Isn't the final goal of writing to articulate the body? . . . Language through writing has moved away from its original sources: the body and the earth. Too often GOD was written instead of LIFE. . . . Linguistic flesh has been puritanically repressed.⁵

This poem resolutely refuses repression, whether puritanical or any other kind. It writes "LIFE" instead of "GOD," for its sole direct invocation of the spiritual is through the ironic deadliness of the "once sacred" tobacco. Only the spirograph remains to reflect the breath of life also once sacred, reduced here to its own measure. Brogan vividly represents the fearful inevitability of hate given the alternatives in the world she depicts.

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NOTES

¹Hélène Cixous, "Difficult Joys," *The Body and the Text*, ed. Helen Wilcox et al. (New York: St. Martin's, 1990) 19.

²Alicia Suskin Ostriker, *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women's Poetry in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986) 119.

³Ostriker 96-97.

⁴Hélène Cixous, "Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays," *The Feminist Reader*, ed. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore (New York: Blackwell, 1989) 103.

⁵Chantal Chawaf, from "La chair linguistique," *New French Feminisms*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (1980; rpt. New York: Schocken Books, 1981) 177.