Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate

Volume 4 (1994/95) Number 3
Waxmann Münster/New York

Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Department of English
Johannisstr. 12-20, 48143 Münster, Germany
Fax: +49 (251) 834827; E-mail: connotations@uni-muenster.de
WWW homepage: http://anglisti.uni-muenster.de/conn/con_home.htm

Waxmann Münster/New York

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. Contributions to the forum should be limited to 4,000 words. If possible, all contributions should be submitted on diskette (preferably in WordPerfect), 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.

Printed in Germany
ISSN 0939-5482

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

Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate

Volume 4 (1994/95) Number 3

ARTICLES

NOTE

DISCUSSION

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

E. K., A Spenserian Lesson in Reading

FRANCES M. MALPEZZI

As the mysterious glossarist of Edmund Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender*, E.K. has long been a thorn-in-the-side of Spenserian critics who have bristled over inaccuracies and labeled him pompous and pedantic. While E.K.'s comments have perplexed, irritated and annoyed readers, an even thornier issue has been his identity, which Paul McLane terms "one of the darkest and most controversial mysteries in Spenser scholarship" (280). Far from being able to identify E.K., critics have yet to ascertain if he is real or fictional. Manipulating initials or historical evidence, some have identified him as Edward Kirke, Fulke Greville, or Gabriel Harvey; others conclude he is Edmund of Kent or Edmundus Kedemon, a persona of Edmund Spenser.[1]

While we may never ascertain the identity of E.K., we are, nonetheless, drawn to speculate about the function of the glosses within the *Calender*. Short of coming up with a signed confession, we are left to mull over the *why* of E.K. instead of the *who*. If E.K. is a Spenserian persona, why would the poet create glosses that are at times inaccurate and why would he create a scholar-commentator who has for centuries irritated other readers? If E.K. was someone other than Spenser, why would the poet allow those pedantic and at times obtuse or off-target glosses to be included in a work whose presentation he seems to have so closely supervised?

Critics who hypothesize Spenser created his own commentary believe he did so either to lend an air of scholarly credibility to his text or as part of an elaborate literary game. In the former group, Michael McCanles asserts:

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debmalpezzi00403.htm>.

> It is part of the fiction of *The Shepheardes Calender* that E.K.'s glosses and commentary are not part of the fiction. This fiction's success shows it to have been through the centuries a kind of trompe-l'oeil since editors, critics and readers have usually taken it for the real thing. (5)

McCanles demonstrates that through the glosses, a "part of the total literary artifact" (6), Spenser was able to transform his work into a scholarly edition: "In other words, what Spenser published in 1579 was not simply a collection of pastorals with a commentary attached. What he published was a fictional imitation of a humanist edition of classical texts" (97). In similar vein, Ruth Samson Luborsky in two articles in *Spenser Studies* has argued that its apparatus is integral to the design in the *Calender*. Through a study of other works printed by Hugh Singleton and of printed works contemporary with the *Calender* Luborsky convincingly argues for authorial intention in the overall design of the book and concludes "the presentation becomes important also as a unit of the poem's meaning" ("Allusive Presentation" 29).

Those who see the commentary as part of an elaborate literary game include Bruce R. Smith. Smith points to E.K.'s commentary as a "kind of academic in-joke":

> E.K. represents one way of confronting a text: detached, analytical, aware of precedents, full of schemes, but curiously aloof from the emotional force of poetry. His commentary figures as a parody of a certain kind of overly zealous reader, a sixteenth-century example of *The Pooh Perplex* or *The Overwrought Urn*. (89)

More recently, Louise Schleiner has argued for E.K. as a "definable persona" created by Spenser in partial collaboration with Gabriel Harvey (404). She finds E.K. assumes four roles: "self-parodying teaser of Harvey"; "teaser of the general reader"; "friend showcasing his learning for his tutor-friend"; and "cover man for the eclogues' sensitive allusions to matters of ecclesiastical governance and court politics" (405).

While these options are not mutually exclusive, I would argue E.K. and his glosses serve a further function within the *Calender*, that of reinforcing the work's structural and thematic thrust. As Spenser shepherds his readers into a pastoral world that teaches about art, religion, and love, he constructs a framework that belies the simplicity of its rustic setting

and calls for the critical admiration and scrutiny of its audience. Certainly one of its most complex components is the relationship between the outer and inner fiction of the *Calender*. With its extensive apparatus of prefatory material, arguments, woodcuts, and subsequent glosses, *The Shepheardes Calender* does call attention to itself as a "book" in imitation of humanist editons of classical texts. This larger construct includes the fiction of the "new Poete," Immerito, and his reader/commentator E.K., whose introduction and glosses are replete with references to writers like Theocritus, Virgil, Chaucer, Skelton, and Marot as they place the work directly within the continuum of classical, British, and continental literary traditions and attempt to elucidate its mythological and linguistic background.

Subsumed within this fiction, however, is yet another fiction—that of the oral tradition. This most literary and bookish of texts has at its core unlettered singers and tellers of tales, such as Colin, Thenot, Cuddie, and Perigot. This inner fiction also focuses on the audience of the songs and tales throughout the *Calender*: for example, Cuddie, who is unmoved by Thenot's tale of the oak and briar; Thenot, who appreciates Colin's song of fair Eliza in "Aprill" as it is sung by Hobbinol (who had once been Colin's audience for that song and was moved enough to make it his); Palinode, who misses Piers' point in the tale of the fox and kid; and Thenot, who seeks consolation through Colin's elegy for Dido.

In this inner fiction, Spenser uses the figure of the shepherd to focus on the vocation of the poet-singer and preacher and to suggest analogies between the two, as Anthea Hume has cogently illustrated (49-56). Through language both the poet and minister have the potential to delight, to instruct, and to move the will to virtuous action. Moreover, what and how they love affects the determination and accomplishment of their goals. Rightly directed love of God and neighbor furthers the power of their words while a love of self, of earthly pleasures or ambition hinders them. Diggon and Cuddie, for instance, are both motivated by gain. Diggon's sheep suffer as a result just as Cuddie's refusal to pipe is a neglect of his metaphorical flock (Hume 50). Thus, the *Calender* encompasses not only the obligations and responsibilities of the poet and minister but their failures as well. Even those who choose to instruct and counsel do not always succeed as we see in the instance of Thenot and Cuddie. Lynn

Staley Johnson has focused on this failure of language in the moral eclogues:

> Spenser suggests that the language that should be a common medium of exchange is not even legal tender in the *Calender's* pastoral world: like those dwelling in the suburbs of Babel, Spenser's shepherds do not use and understand language in the same way. (64)

Johnson shows how in these eclogues characters with different values seem to debate but acutally engage in monologue, never reaching their intended audience.

Yet failure to communicate cannot be attributed solely to the orator or singer. If, to paraphrase Morrell, a great deal of good matter can be lost for the lack of telling, the import might also be lost for the lack of listening. In interchanges such as that of the July eclogue between Morrell, who prefers life on the "hyll" to that of the "lowly playne" (ll. 6-7) since the hills are "nigher heuen" (l. 89), and Thomalin who prefers the "humble dales" where the footing is fast (l. 13), Spenser reminds us not only of the complexity and difficulty of human communication but also of the fact that listeners as well as speakers have responsibilities. Jonathan F. S. Post has argued that the Protestant Reformation intensified the stress placed on the auditory and that Paul's assertion that "faith cometh by hearing" (Romans 10:17) provided authority for elevating the ear over the eye as the "superior sensory organ" (160). While the stripping of Duessa in Book I of *The Faerie Queene* illustrates the way in which vision must be mended, the many listeners in the *Calender* who mishear illustrate that a correlative corrective must be applied to the ear. As the properly or improperly directed love of the singer, storyteller, or preacher can affect his creation and performance so the love of the auditor can affect what he hears and how he interprets it. Morrell's appreciation of the "high" life and his belief that "When folke bene fat, and riches rancke, / It is a signe of helth" (ll. 211-12) ultimately affect his interpretation of Thomalin's recounting of the sights of shepherds "pampred in pleasures deepe" (l. 198) that Palinode saw on his pilgrimage to Rome.

Throughout the *Calender* we are constantly made aware of the limitations of language, the imperfect tool of imperfect humanity in the postlapsarian world. Peter C. Herman believes this reflects Spenser's difficulty "in

reconciling his poetic ambitions with the antipoetic strain within Protestantism" (29) and he sees the *Calender* constantly oscillating between Spenser's "vaunting ambition and the subversion of that ambition" (30). Yet throughout the *Calender* we are reminded that poetry is about more than earthly ambition. Colin's blazon of Eliza as sung by Hobbinol in "Aprill" suggests the power of poetry to set forth the virtuous ideal and the power of the poet to instruct and lead the community in praise of that ideal. Colin's elegy for Dido also suggests the power of poetry to console troubled hearts. Language—imperfect as it is in the postlapsarian world—is the necessary vehicle of ministers and poets who seek to serve God and the community. Although A. Leigh DeNeef sees Spenser's ambivalence about language as central to all of his work, he concludes, "To have committed himself so completely to the written word while entertaining such doubts about that word was one of Spenser's most heroic endeavors" (176). Perhaps he was able to move beyond this ambivalence because he did realize the necessity of transcending the realms of the narrowly personal and temporal desire for fame in the struggle to use language in the service of a greater good. I would not argue as S. K. Heninger, Jr. does that for Spenser "The verbal system is a disposable husk of no value in itself, to be thrown away as soon as possible in the construal of a poem" (310). For Spenser as for many poets during the period words, when rightly used and rightly understood, can be incarnational embodiments of the Word. Yet every good in the fallen world is subject to abuse. Spenser is imminently aware of the complexity involved in human communication, the potential for both success and failure that is dependent upon the intervention of grace.

When language fails in *The Shepheardes Calender* it is often because one of those involved in the exchange has failed to move beyond the limits of self. Colin is a fine singer. His panegyric to Eliza establishes his capable manipulation of language in the service of a greater good. Hobbinol and Thenot laud his accomplishments. Yet when Colin attempts to use his gift to serve his own desire, to win Rosalinde's favors, he is met with derision. Thus, in the January eclogue Colin laments the way the lass scorns his "rurall musick" and laughs at his songs (ll. 64-66). In the April eclogue Thenot marvels that Colin has the skill to compose excellent verse, "Yet hath so little skill to brydle loue" (l. 20). When Colin's fleshly desires

are unrestrained by reason, when he is guided by irrational passion, then his capabilities are severely limited. Hence, Thenot laments after Hobbinol's rendering of Colin's song to Eliza:

> And was thilk same song of *Colins* owne making?
> Ah foolish boy, that is with loue yblent:
> Great pittie is, he be in such taking,
> For naught caren, that bene so lewdly bent.
> (ll. 154-57)

As an inspired poet serving the community (in the April and November eclogues, for example), Colin, through the grace of God, succeeds in reaching his listeners. However, when Colin would prostitute his muse by using his poetry for the satisfaction of his base desires, he fails and is as Leslie T. Whipp has noted "a negative foil for the brilliant new poet, Edmund Spenser" (22).

In the same manner there are listeners in the *Calender* whose inability to move beyond the limits in self results in failed communication. Palinode in the May eclogue is a good example.

This "worldes childe" (l. 73) lustfully longs "to helpen the Ladyes their Maybush beare" (l. 34). He espouses a *carpe diem* philosophy, a perspective identified in the Biblically apocryphal but nonetheless morally sapiential Book of Wisdom as wrong reasoning. When Piers condemns shepherds who live well while their sheep fare badly, Palinode questions

> What shoulden shepheards other things tend,
> Then sith their God his good does them send,
> Reapen the fruite thereof, that is pleasure,
> For while they here liuen, at ease and leasure?
> (ll. 63-66)

Palinode asserts that "good"—which he identifies with the temporal and material—must be enjoyed in life for when shepherds are dead "their good is ygoe" (l. 67). As a result, he cannot heed Piers' counsel, and the import of Piers' exemplary tale of the deceived kid and the false fox eludes him. Caught up in the world's ephemeral pleasures, Palinode is unable to comprehend the applicability of Piers' tale to his own situation.

Throughout the *Calender* language, especially its highest form —poetry—exemplifies Sidney's dichotomy between the erected wit and the infected will of humankind. At its best language not only enables humanity to achieve temporal greatness but can be spiritually salvific as well; however, the taint of original sin, fallen human nature, often presents an obstacle to the attainment of both worldly and other-worldly aspirations.

The difficulties of using and interpreting language are central not only to the inner fiction of the *Calender* but to the outer fiction as well. E.K. in his reading and interpretation of Immerito's work parallels the numerous listeners and interpreters in the eclogues. In doing so, E.K. functions as an exemplum—sometimes positive and sometimes negative. Through his glosses, he vividly presents a lesson about the art and responsibility of reading. E.K.'s response to Immerito's work is not ancillary to the text but as integral to it as Cuddie's response to the tale of the oak and the briar in "February" or Palindoe's response to the tale of the fox and the kid in "Maye." Although Evenly Tribble argues that the function of a gloss is to bridge a gap between "the author's intent and the words on the page" (163), E.K.'s commentary functions as something more or other than such a compendium. Whether the commentary is a deliberate creation of Spenser's or exists through permissive inclusion, it is not an appendage to the text but the text itself. And E.K. is as vital and central a character to the fiction of *The Shepheardes Calender* as Colin, Piers, Diggon, or Immerito. As E.K. responds to Immerito's work, he mirrors the various audiences in the *Calender* who respond to its tales and songs. Just as "February" is not simply the story of the oak and the briar but about Thenot's manner and telling that tale and Cuddie's response to it, about Thenot's values and Cuddie's as they interact, so *The Shepheardes Calender* is not simply a collection of eclogues written by the fictional Immerito but about E.K.'s engagement with that written word and the way in which his personality, beliefs, values, and learning color and shape what he has read.

In addition, there is also a parallel between E.K. and the figure of Colin presented in the "December" eclogue. As I have shown elsewhere, Colin in "December" details the practical things of the world he has learned. In tracing the seasons of his life, Colin articulates the way he applied

himself to things of "ryper reason" in the autumn of his life: he learns to build shelters for himself and his sheep and to read the stars; he learns the power of herbs, both in their medicinal properties and their poisonous ones. Yet he has not learned the cure for love's wound. Absorbed in scientia, he has yet to learn *sapientia*. The shepherd-poet-lover has knowledge, but he does not have wisdom ("By the Waters of Babylon"). E.K., too, has the practical tools of his trade. In fact, E.K., through his prefatory material and glosses provides a commentary that fulfills most of the functions William W. E. Slights outlines in his study of Renaissance marginalia (685-86).[2] E.K. highlights allusions, clarifies meaning, provides paraphrases of obscure expressions, identifies figures of speech, and judges the aptness of expression, for example. Yet as Lynn Staley Johnson has remarked there is a curious dichotomy between Spenser's presentation of Colin and E.K.'s response to him: "Whereas Spenser allows Colin to entangle himself in inconsistencies, to misapply certain terms, figures, and forms, and generally to subvert his own arguments, E.K. is relatively uncritical of Colin" (7-8). This suggests limitations in E.K.'s moral vision. Like Colin, E.K. has gained knowledge but perhaps has not attained the fullness of wisdom. E.K. could not, for example, see the criticism of Colin that Immerito/Spenser builds into the November eclogue. Leslie T. Whipp in delineating three traditions of Dido—Virgilian, Ovidian, and Augustinian—has shown that the latter emphasizes "the blindness of a man who would weep for Dido dead and know not to weep for his own dying to God" (23). Whipp argues that there is

> yet another turn, for Colin is himself like Dido in having failed to resolve the conflict between the demands of his responsibilities as a poet-shepherd, and the demands of his love, the conflict which provides the slender, central narrative skeleton of the *Calender* as a whole. (24)

Yet neither Colin nor E.K. can recognize the similarity between Dido and Colin. Perhaps this is because both, in different ways, are the world's children, their love of different facets of that world —Rosalinde/pedantic knowledge—hindering them from attaining true spiritual insight. E.K. as reader reminds us that knowledge is not an end in itself. While E.K. can appreciate Immerito's literary expertise, his metaphors and lively expressions, he sometimes misses the spiritual import of his words. It

is no small matter that he is well aware of Immerito's classical allusions but much less attuned to the scriptural resonances of the poem.

Although E.K. may miss some deeper insights, at the same time we see something very positive in his response. As a reader, he is one of Immerito's flock and he has been well shepherded. He has been delighted by Immerito's poetry, as his prefatory material indicates, but he has also been taught and moved to the virtuous action of taking pen in hand and becoming a shepherd in his own right. In his response to literature, through his glosses and commentary, he seeks to edify others.[3] Reading Immerito's work has helped him transcend the narrow bounds of self and his love of pedantry as *caritas* motivates him to serve the larger community. He is a dramatic example of a reader deeply involved in the poetry he has read and profoundly influenced by it.

While *The Shepheardes Calender* is about many subjects, it is ultimately about the word—the mouth that utters it, the hand that pens it, the ear that hears it, the eye that reads it, the mind that comprehends or fails to comprehend its full import, and the will that acts or fails to act upon that import. If Colin and various shepherds within the *Calender* dramatically illustrate the obligations of pastors and poets, E.K. functions as a lesson about the art and work of reading. E.K., whether a fiction of Spenser's—a deliberately created persona—or a glossarist whose comments Spenser allowed to be incorporated into the *Calender*, becomes a vital part of its design as he underscores fundamental themes of that poem: the ambivalence of language in a world of fallen reason, the difficult work of interpretation, the power of poetry, and the social and religio-political obligations of every Christian who loves and serves the Word.[4]

Arkansas State University

NOTES

[1]For a survey of the controversy engendered by E.K.'s commentary, see chapter one of Patsy Scherer Cornelius' *E.K.'s Commentary on* The Shepheardes Calender. Cornelius' first chapter also treats earlier attempts to identify the mysterious glossarist as do Osgood and Lotspeich in the Variorum edition of Spenser's minor poems (645-

50). All quotations from the *Calender* in this paper are from that edition. For more recent discussions of E.K.'s identity, see McCanles, Schleiner, Smith, and Waldman.

[2]Slights notes that while E.K.'s glosses "are not marginalia in the strict sense of being side-notes, they engage with Spenser's text in many of the same ways that marginalia do" (684).

[3]This work of edification is the purpose of such marginalia, as Slights argues: "Unlike manuscript marginalia, which usually record a reader talking to himself, printed marginalia address a wider audience, instructing readers in the relation of the parts to the whole and of the whole to the cultural discourse at large, occasionally redefining the work's readership in the process" (682-83).

[4]The idea for this paper was first prompted by discussion in a 1983 NEH summer seminar conducted by Elizabeth Kirk and further stimulated by discussion in a 1990 NEH summer seminar directed by John N. King. The lively exchange of ideas in both seminars has affected my readings of numerous texts over the years. I am also grateful for the released time provided by Arkansas State University that allowed me to develop this present paper.

WORKS CITED

Cornelius, Patsy. *E.K.'s Commentary on* The Shepheardes Calender. Salzburg: U of Salzburg, 1974.

DeNeef, A. Leigh. *Spenser and the Motives of Metaphor*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1982.

Heninger, S. K., Jr. "Words and Meter in Spenser and Scaliger." *HLQ* 50 (1987): 309-22.

Herman, Peter C. "*The Shepheardes Calender* and Renaissance Antipoetic Sentiment." *SEL* 32 (1992): 15-33.

Hume, Anthea. *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet*. Cambridge: CUP, 1984.

Johnson, Lynn Staley. *The Shepheardes Calender: An Introduction*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 1990.

Luborsky, Ruth Samson. "The Allusive Presentation of *The Shepheardes Calender*." *Spenser Studies* 1 (1980): 29-67.

---. "The Illustrations to *The Shepheardes Calender*." *Spenser Studies* 2 (1981): 3-53.

McCanles, Michael. "*The Shepheardes Calender* as Document and Monument." *SEL* 22 (1982): 5-19.

McLane, Paul E. *Spenser's* Shepheardes Calender: *A Study in Elizabethan Allegory*. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1961.

Malpezzi, Frances M. "By the Waters of Babylon: A Psalmic Allusion in the December Eclogue." *Publications of the Arkansas Philological Association* 3 (1978): 34-39.

Post, Jonathan F. S. *Henry Vaughan: The Unfolding Vision*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982.

Schleiner, Louise. "Spenser's 'E.K.' as Edmund Kent (Kenned/of Kent): Kyth (Couth), Kissed, and Kunning-Conning." *ELR* 20 (1990): 374-407.

Slights, William W. E. "The Edifying Margins of Renaissance English Books." *RQ* 42 (1989): 682-716.

Smith, Bruce R. "On Reading *The Shepheardes Calender*." *Spenser Studies* 1 (1980): 69-93.

Spenser, Edmund. *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition. The Minor Poems,*

vol. 1. Eds. C. G. Osgood and Henry G. Lotspeich. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1943.

Tribble, Evelyn. "Glozing the Gap: Authority, Glossing Traditions and *The Shepheardes Calender*." *Criticism* 34 (1992): 155-72.

Waldman, Louis. "Spenser's Pseudonym 'E.K.' and Humanist Self-Naming." *Spenser Studies* 9 (1991): 21-31.

Whipp, Leslie T. "Weep for Dido: Spenser's November Eclogue." *Spenser Studies* 11 (1994): 17-30.

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

Melting Earth and Leaping Bulls: Shakespeare's Ovid and Arthur Golding

ANTHONY BRIAN TAYLOR

Like other Elizabethans, Shakespeare would have known Ovid's myths from his grammar school study of the poet's work which primarily centred on the *Metamorphoses*.[1] He would also have been taught a variety of interpretations of Ovidian myths as well as a miscellany of related but un-Ovidian Graeco-Roman traditions. Gathered from works such as mythography manuals, emblem books, translations, the voluminous editorial notes in contemporary editions of Ovid's poems, philosophical tracts, educational works, and dictionaries, these appendages to myth reflect the eclectic and copious nature of sixteenth century culture.[2] And as is shown by his use of works like Abraham Fraunce's *The Third Part of the Countess of Pembroke's Yvychurch* (1593), the exegesis and traditions of myth remained of interest to the dramatist in later life.[3] It is unsurprising, then, to find material from an array of secondary texts mediating and colouring Ovidian myth in his work.[4]

A small but representative illustration is provided by Richard II's comparison of himself to Phaethon as he descends to kneel before Bolingbroke:

> Down, down I come like glist'ring Phaethon,
> Wanting the manage of unruly jades.
> (*Richard II* 3.3.177-78)[5]

As the king indulges his taste for grandiose, tragic roles, the allusion to the boy who set fire to the earth and fell when he no longer had the strength to control the horses of the chariot of the Sun, primarily derives from the Latin text of Ovid's poem where Phaethon is pictured as an ill fated, glamorous figure.[6] But a debt to Golding in these lines subtly mediates Ovid; the word Shakespeare uses to convey Phaethon's

---

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debtaylor00403.htm>.

brilliance, "glist'ring," is taken from the translation where it is used on several occasions but never applied to the boy himself. And its first and most striking use is when the Sun god voluntarily removes his own crown,

> putting off the bright and fierie beames
> That glistred rounde about his heade like cleare and golden streames (2.53-54)[7]

before embracing the mortal who will take his place, and, in Golding's words, "*usurpe* that name of right" (48, italics mine).[8] Soon his successor will cause chaos, blinded by "the glistring light" (231) so that all the earth "with flaming fire did glistre" (320), "*Bicause he wanted powre to rule*" the "charge" he took "in hand" (221, italics mine). Richard's apparently glamorous epithet for Phaethon, therefore, carries ominous connotations of impending disaster. And as the king kneels speaking "like a frantic man" (3.3.184) before Bolingbroke, the political moral Golding drew from the myth is echoing in the background:

> how the weaknesse and the want of wit in magistrate
> Confoundeth both his common weale and eeke his owne estate
> (*Epistle* 75-76)

Richard's reference to the horses as "unruly," a word which could carry the political meaning of "not amenable to government" (*OED*), also recalls the tradition that the uncontrollable horses pulling Phaethon's chariot represented the rebellious subjects who destroy the prince. Shakespeare could have known this from a number of sources,[9] but, given Richard's neurotic character and histrionic make up, Abraham Fraunce is the likeliest. In his interpretation of the myth, Fraunce not only sees Phaethon as a youthful "magistrate" ruined by his rebellious subjects, represented by the "fierce and outragious" horses, but also describes him as one of those who "by their owne wishes procured their owne confusion," and whose "ambitious conceit" served only "to comfort his destruction."[10]

Finally, the description of the horses of the Sun as "jades" is taken from an Elizabethan translator whose work Shakespeare knew well and who was himself so fascinated by the Phaethon story in Ovid that he repeatedly introduced it, often without the least justification, into his

translations of Seneca. In *Hercules Oetaeus*, John Studley once again shows his fondness for the story with a digression in the Chorus to Act Two where, as Phaethon loses control of the horses:

> While he from wonted wayes his *Jades* doth jaunce.
> Amonge straunge starres they pricking forward praunce,
> Enforcing them with Phoebus flames to frye,
> Whose roaming wheeles refuse the beaten rutt:
> Thus both himselfe, and all the Cristall skye
> In peril of the soulthring fyre he put. (Italics mine)[11]

This passage occurs as the Chorus, taking up a familiar theme in Seneca, laments the dangers attending kings "every time the sunne at West goes downe, / They looke another man should clayme the Crowne"; the poor man to whom "Fortune hath bequeath'de a slender share," can drink at leisure from a "woodden dishe" while a king who sups from the "goulden cup,"

> . . . ever as hee liftes his head and drynkes,
> The rebelles Knyfe is at his throate hee thinkes.[12]

And moments before he makes the Phaethon comparison, Richard, his mind filled with "sad stories of the death of kings," had expressed his desire to exchange his "gorgeous palace for a hermitage," and his willingness to give "My figured goblets for a dish of wood" (3.3.149).

Richard's Phaethon allusion thus reflects the dramatist's awareness of the price that the king, Bolingbroke, and England will have to pay for the surrender of the crown. And its rich, dense language is redolent of deposition, rebellion, and disaster because Shakespeare is characteristically drawing on a range of secondary works to mediate and colour Ovidian myth. And as he does in this example, Arthur Golding often features prominently among such secondary texts; Shakespeare knew the translation well and it offered its own quite distinctive interpretation of the *Metamorphoses*. But besides contributing, along with other works, to the rich and complex texture of Shakespeare's Ovid, there were also occasions, as two examples will show, when it suited the dramatist's purpose for Golding alone to mediate Ovidian material.

a) The Melting Earth

Subscribing to the belief that the Bible was the inspiration for the *Metamorphoses*,[13] Golding, as he explains at some length in the *Epistle* to his translation, attached particular importance to the Pythagorean Sermon in Book Fifteen; in his view, Ovid's philosophical summation of the ever changing world of his poem contained important "shadowy" and "veiled" Christian doctrine.[14] When he comes to translate it, however, committed as ever to the sense of each line of Ovid's text, he characteristically refrains from explicit or interjected comment on its content; but it is also characteristic that he cannot resist occasionally, implicitly pointing the reader in the direction of its real, hidden meaning. There is no system or pattern to these "pointers"; indeed, their being intermittently scattered through his text on a random, ad hoc basis is also, unfortunately, characteristic of Golding who, working at speed, rarely paused to think things through.[15] Thus, for example, after conveying the picture of life passing endlessly between birds, animals, men, plants, and faithfully rendering expressions like "*Omnia mutantur, nihil interit*" (xv.165; "All things doo chaunge. But sure nothing dooth perrish" 15.183), Golding deliberately mistranslates "*omnis . . . vagans formatur imago*" (xv.178). This literally means "everything is formed with a changing or wandering nature," but from being a phrase which takes the reader to the heart of the pagan philosophy being expounded, it suddenly becomes the very different and very Christian sentiment "every shape is made too passe away" (15.198). This occurs in the midst of a discussion of transmigration where it is not only totally out of place but positively subversive. And some time later, after further description of universal change, time and renewal, when Ovid concludes that in this world all moments and actions are renewed and repeated ("*momentaque cuncta novantur*" xv.185), Golding again exercises Christian licence. Translating as "Eche twincling of an eye / Dooth chaunge" (15.205-06), he implicitly invites the reader to compare Ovid's world of constant change to the very different scenario of the Last Day when "we shall all bee changed / In a moment, in the twinkling of an eie" (1 Corinthians 15.51-52).[16]

Later in the Sermon, when Ovid, after describing change in the seasons of the year and in man's life, tells how the elements themselves mutate upwards,[17] the same instincts are at play. Ovid's text reads:

> Alta petunt, Aer atque Aere purior ignis.
> Quae quamquam spatio distant, tamen omnia fiunt
> Ex ipsis, & ipsa cadunt, resolutaque tellus
> In liquidas rarescit aquas, tenuatus in auras,
> Aeraque humor abit, demptoque quoque pondere, rursus
> In superos aer tenuissimus emicat ignes. (xv.243-47)

and this becomes:

> The other cowple Aire and Fyre the purer of the twayne
> Mount up, and nought can keepe them downe. And though there doo remayne
> A space betweene eche one of them: yit every thing is made
> Of themsame fowre, and intoo them at length ageine doo fade.
> The earth resolving leysurely dooth melt too water sheere,
> The water fyned turnes too aire. The aire eeke purged cleere
> From grossenesse, spyreth up aloft, and there becommeth fyre.
> (15.266-72)[18]

What has aroused Golding's christianising instinct here is the prospect of a form of earthly life being refined and purified before rising up irresistibly to heaven in a final, fiery form. And in his version, this process begins with the biblical image of the melting earth. Ovid had written that the earth "rarefied" into water ("*tellus / In liquidas rarescit aquas*" xv.244-45), an image which particularly impressed later distinguished English translators of the *Metamorphoses*.[19] But Golding forfeits the sense of refinement in the Latin verb, opting instead for "The earth . . . dooth *melt too* water sheere" (15.270, italics mine). This recalls examples such as Amos 9:5 where, having created "his globe of elements in the earth," in order to punish the wicked, "the Lord God of hostes shal touche the land, and it shal *melt away* . . . & shall rise wholy like a flood"; or Psalm 46 where, against the backcloth of a changing world—"thogh the earth be moved, and thogh mountaines fall into the middes of the sea," the power of the Almighty is such that when "the nations raged, & the kingdomes were moved, God thundred, & the *earth melted*" (italics mine).[20]

Elizabethan writers were fond of the Pythagorean Sermon and Shakespeare, who, like Spenser, knew it in both the original Latin and in the translation, was particularly attracted by Golding's image of the melting earth.[21] He uses it on several occasions to signify the passing of time and universal change: there is the ailing Henry IV's wish,

> O God, that one might read the book of fate,
> And see the revolution of the times
> Make mountains level, and the continent,
> Weary of solid firmness, *melt itself*
> Into the sea . . . . (2 *Henry IV* 3.1.44-48, italics mine)

This echoes not only the theme of the Pythagorean Sermon but also details like how "mountaynes hygh" are made "levell ground" (291-92) or have "intoo sea beene worne" (293). And in *Troilus and Cressida*, Ulysses in his speech on degree, states that were discord to prevail,

> Each thing *melts*
> In mere oppugnancy; the bounded waters
> Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
> And make a sop of all this solid globe . . . . (1.3.110-13, italics mine)[22]

But more intriguing is his use of the image of the melting earth to depict changes not in the outside world but in man himself. Thus with Rome at his mercy, Coriolanus confesses at the approach of his mother, wife, and son, as they come to plead for clemency, that,

> I *melt*, and am not
> Of stronger earth than others.
> (*Coriolanus* 5.3.28-29, italics mine)

Primarily, he is confessing that the difference on which he has based his proud life, is now lost, and like other men, he is not constant. Yet in his weakness, and he presumably dissolves into tears, Coriolanus is paradoxically also becoming richer for a process of refinement has begun in him.

And, of course, the image is used again in the play in which the refinement of the elements is a major theme, most notably in Antony's magnificent opening declaration of love for Cleopatra:

> Let Rome in Tiber *melt*, and the wide arch
> Of ranged empire fall. Here is my *space*,
> Kingdoms are clay. Our dungy earth alike
> Feeds beast as man. The nobleness of life
> Is to do thus; when such a mutual pair
> And such a *twain* can do't—in which I bind
> On pain of punishment the world to weet
> We stand up peerless.
> (*Antony and Cleopatra* 1.1.35-42, italics mine)

And it is not only a matter of a single image here for, as is indicated by the italicised words, the passage from Golding cited above is an important subtext for the speech, underlying its structure and giving complex richness to its language.[23] Here, too, the image of earth melting into water begins a process of refinement, a purging process in which the lovers, too, will be free from "grossenesse." And while at one level, the word "twain" has associations with marriage,[24] at another, in the context of a speech dealing with the refining of earthly life, it echoes the "twayne" of Golding's passage and signifies the two superior elements, "Aire and Fyre." Shakespeare is thus associating Antony and Cleopatra with air and fire from the beginning, yet like the speech, magnificent though it is, this identification has at this stage an air of unreality about it. Cleopatra's teasing comment on the speech, "Excellent falsehood" (40), is not without truth; its unreal, fanciful nature is reflected in the debt to the hyperbole of love poetry, most patently in the closing lines where the world is pictured as being at their beck and call and punishable as if it were their servant. And for Antony, at this point, of course, kingdoms are not "clay," he does indeed care about Rome and empire, and Cleopatra is not his "space" in the absolute sense he implies.

The irony is that the speech is prophetic of Antony's fate, the play's action translating what has been amorous fancy into reality: "the wide arch / Of rang'd empire" does indeed fall for him, and caught and degraded in the "toils" of the real world, more and more Cleopatra becomes his only "space." Yet when their politically disastrous love has shamed him, the paradox of the play is that it is also revealed as glorious and transcendent. And once again, in the play's finale, as in its beginning, we have an implicit picture of the mutating and ascending elements.[25] This time, however, the lovers' refinement is not simply

in fancy; nor is the process truncated, ending with their merely standing up "peerless" on the "dungy" earth. Beginning with Cleopatra's memorable expression at the death of Antony:

> O see, my women:
> The crown o' th' earth doth *melt*.
> (4.16.64-6, italics mine)

the queen herself rises above the "drosse" of earthly life, as the elements do in Golding, and prepares to follow her "man of men" and "mount up" to heaven, declaring as she approaches her own death:

> I am fire and air; my other elements
> I give to baser life . . . . (5.2.284-85)

The profundity and mystery of Shakespeare's great lovers, therefore, derives in some part from Ovid's "Pythagoreanism" as it was mediated by Arthur Golding. Like the Pythagoras of Book Fifteen of the *Metamorphoses*, "though distant from the Goddes," in their complex love, Antony and Cleopatra come "neere / To them in mynd" (15.69-70) and see "the things which nature dooth too fleshly eyes denye" (71); like Pythagoras, too, they finally resolve "too leave the earth," "this grosser place," and "in the clowdes too flye" (164-65) and to spend their time,

> looking downe from heaven on men that wander heere and there . . . (167)

b) Leaping Bulls

In the final scene of *Much Ado About Nothing*, when he meets the Prince and Claudio for the first time since their estrangement, Benedick's sombre, "February face" prompts Claudio to remark:

> I think he thinks upon the savage bull. (5.4.43)

This recalls the Prince's earlier reference to the proverbial "'In time the savage bull doth bear the yoke'" (1.1.241-42), the inference being that

Benedick is preoccupied with marriage and gloomy because it is the fate of husbands to wear horns. And Claudio continues:

> Tush, fear not, man, we'll tip thy horns with gold,
> And all Europa shall rejoice at thee
> As once Europa did at lusty Jove
> When he would play the noble beast in love.

to which Benedick replies:

> Bull Jove, sir, had an amiable low,
> And some such strange bull leap'd your father's cow
> And got a calf in that same noble feat
> Much like to you, for you have just his bleat.
> (5.4.42-50)

Such witty, bawdy banter is to be expected among courtiers, but notwithstanding the lightness of its tone and the fact that it comes only moments before the play's happy and harmonious finale, within the overall context of Shakespeare's "dark" comedy, it is disconcerting. Based on the premise that women are inevitably adulterous in marriage, Claudio's mockery of Benedick includes the startling image of a woman relishing the prospect of a divine bull making love to her, Europa, the daughter of King Agenor, rejoicing as "lusty Jove" in the bovine shape he has assumed, prepares to "play the noble beast in love." And Benedick, taking his cue from this, fashions his insulting riposte with the even more outlandish image of a woman, the Countess who is Claudio's mother, giving birth after copulating with "some strange bull," an image recalling the story of the Cretan queen, Pasiphae, and another "savage bull."[26] Jocular though this interchange is, it is also an uncomfortable reminder of the play's icy, misogynistic undercurrent, its imagery of high born women satisfying their sexual appetites with cattle recalling the comparison of their sex with "pamper'd animals / That rage in savage sensuality" (4.1.60-61).

And if the source for the passage is examined, its disconcerting implications are underscored. It is based on a favourite passage for Elizabethan writers, Arachne's tapestry in Book Six of the *Metamorphoses*,[27] and again Shakespeare is using Golding to mediate Ovid.

Arachne's tapestry begins by revealing Jove deceiving Europa "in shape of Bull," and then assuming a series of other forms with Asterie, Leda, Antiope, Alcmena, Danae, Aegina, Mnemosyne, and Proserpine. But the dramatist has selected details not from the escapades of "Bull Jove" himself but the god with whom Arachne next deals:

> She also made Neptunus *leaping* by
> Upon a Maide of Aeolus race *in likenesse of a Bull,*
> And in the streame Enipeus shape begetting on a trull
> The Giants Othe and Ephialt, and in the shape of Ram
> *Begetting one Theophane Bisalties ympe with Lam,*
> And in a *lustie* Stalions shape she made him covering there
> Dame Ceres with the yellow lockes . . . (6.141-47, italics mine)[28]

Here we have the "lustie" god in the shape of a "leaping" bull, and the procreation of bleating young animals. But incidental verbal echoes are far less important than the meaning Golding sees in this revelation of the erotic escapades of the pagan gods.

The girl intended the pictures she wove into her tapestry as a revelation of the degeneration and debauchery to which gods could be reduced by lust. For the Renaissance, however, her tapestry took on a range of meanings: it could be interpreted scientifically as the mixture of the higher and lower elements that created all life;[29] its features could be read as spiritual allegory, "Danae may represent mans soule, and Iupiters golden showre, the celestiall grace and influence";[30] and even if a moral reading was adopted, as Spenser's treatment of the motif in the House of Busyrane shows,[31] the richness and profusion of the scene tempers any narrow condemnation. The views of Golding, however, were extreme and exceptional; a passionate Calvinist, he regarded the flesh as "a sinke of sinne and cage of unclennesse," and in the Preface to his translation, in the course of expounding a narrow, moralistic reading of Ovid's poem, he is especially outraged by this passage. Who,

> . . . seeing Jove (whom heathen folke doo arme with triple fyre)
> In shape of Eagle, bull or swan too winne his foule desyre? (33-34)

he asks, "would take him for a God?" The answer he arrives at is that the deities depicted by Arachne are not gods at all but allegorical figures for men whose nature is so prone to vice that they habitually sink to

the level of "brutishe beasts" for lust. And in a passage that immediately follows in which he identifies different classes of his own society with different gods, he specifically identifies Jove with "all states of princely port" (59), using the allegory to launch an attack on aristocratic excesses.

As his romantic comedy draws to its end, therefore, Shakespeare is thinking of an erotic Ovidian tapestry which significantly became a spider's web when its creator met her eventual fate, and which for Golding, was an illustration of the depravity of the flesh and of the deceitful, degrading, and lustful nature of love for princes. One is led to reflect not only on the irony of an apparently casual phrase like the "noble *beast* in love," but also on what deceit and degradation love *almost* proved for the princely faction in the play. Returned from the wars where they had covered themselves in glory, when they involve themselves in love, Don Pedro and his companions are all but overthrown. An ironic undertone is also added to the moment when Don Pedro singles Hero out in the masked revel:

> DON PEDRO My visor is Philemon's roof. Within the house is Jove.
> HERO Why then your visor should be thatched.
> DON PEDRO Speak low if you speak love. (2.1.88-91)

This is a charming moment, recalling from Golding the gods and Philemon and Baucis.[32] But this Jove in the person of a prince, has come to earth and is humbling himself not to receive homely entertainment and tribute, but to involve himself in love by initiating the affair between Claudio and Hero. And as he does so, appearance and reality are confused for the first but by no means the last time in the play. Moreover, although the affair eventually ends happily, from the outset love involves him and his companions in a *web* of deceit and humiliation. There are the immediate suspicions of broken trust followed by actual treachery; the young men are involved in degrading squabbles with old men and in the similarly demeaning and potentially deadly quarrels among themselves; and all the while, as their situation deteriorates, they have before them at least the illusion that love is no more than "savage sensuality."

As *Much Ado About Nothing* finally breaks free from its dark mood and moves towards its end, with Golding's acerbic Ovid in mind,

Shakespeare is recalling the monstrous vision of love and of women glimpsed earlier in the play. His doing so does not puncture the happy mood of the final denouement, of course, but it does show his continued awareness of the potentially sinister nature of love and of women. And shortly after writing this "dark" comedy, when the chill fell on his imagination, this vision of love and women as monstrous and depraved was to become a central feature of his work in the great tragedies. The archetypal figure of the prince in the dramatist's work will reject love with deep seated loathing; and whereas savage denunciations of women are transient and illusory in *Much Ado*, they take on a frightening permanence and reality in the sexually voracious "Centaurs" of Lear's agonised world.

The Swansea Institute

NOTES

[1]At Eton, Winchester, and Westminster, for instance, Elizabethan schoolboys first encountered Ovidian myth in the fourth or fifth form, where they began a study which, besides the *Metamorphoses*, involved the *Fasti*, *Tristia*, and the *Heroides*; see T. W. Baldwin, *Shakspere's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1944) 1: 339 ff.

[2]Baldwin, for instance, refers to the use of the most popular of the mythography manuals, Natalis Comes' *Mythologiae*, and of the emblem books, Alciati's *Emblemata*, in the grammar school (1: 421 and 436).

[3]Fraunce's work consists of a series of loose translations of episodes from the *Metamorphoses*, each followed by a recital of "their auncient descriptions and philosophicall explications." For recent examples of Shakespeare's use of Fraunce, see my "O brave new world: Abraham Fraunce and *The Tempest*," *ELN* 23 (1986): 18-23, and "Two Notes on Shakespeare and the Translators", *RES* 38 (1987): 523-26.

[4]For valuable recent work on Shakespeare and Ovid, see William Carrol, *The Metamorphoses of Shakespearean Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985); L. Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1986); and Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).

[5]Reference is to *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. S. Wells and G. Taylor (Oxford: OUP, 1987).

[6]The final word on Phaethon in the Latin text, for instance, is a tribute to his daring; it comes in his epitaph which reads, "Hic situs est Phaethon currus auriga paterni / Quem si non tenuit, magnis tamen excidit ausis" (ii.327-28; "Here lies Phaethon, the driver of his father's chariot, who, if he did not succeed, nevertheless dared great things"). Reference is to a standard sixteenth century edition of Ovid's poem containing the notes of Regius and Micyllus, *Metamorphoseon Pub, Ovidii Nasonis* (Venice, 1545).

[7]Reference is to *The xv Bookes of P.Ovidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis, translated oute of Latin into English meeter, by Arthur Golding Gentleman* (London, 1567), ed. W. H. D. Rouse (London, 1904; rpt. Centaur Press, 1961).

[8]In its ironic undertones, "glist'ring" compares with the debt to Golding in that other well known reference to the Phaethon myth where in her impatience for Romeo's arrival, Juliet refers to the boy as a "waggoner":

> Gallop apace, you fiery footed steeds,
> Towards Phoebus' lodging. Such a *waggoner*
> As Phaeton would whip you to the west
> And bring in cloudy night immediately. (3.2.1-4)

The word recalls the precise moment of the boy's death in the translation where, with the world in flames, Jove takes action:

> Then with a dreadfull thunderclap up to his eare he bent
> His fist, and at the *Wagoner* a flash of lightning sent,
> Which strake his bodie from the life . . . (2.293-95, italics mine)

Like Phaethon, Romeo and Juliet will be struck down at the high point of their young lives.

[9]See, for example, Alciati's *Emblema LVL*, "In temerarios" (*Emblemata Cum Commentariis*, ed. S. Orgel [New York: Garland, 1976] 264), or Georgius Sabinus, *Metamorphosis Seu Fabulae Poeticae* (Frankfurt, 1589), ed. S. Orgel (New York: Garland, 1976) 55-57.

[10]For Fraunce's interpretation of Phaethon, see *The Golden Book of the Leaden Gods: The Third Part of the Countess of Pembrokes Yvychurch entituled Amintas Dale: The Fountaine of Ancient Fiction*, ed. S. Orgel (New York: Garland, 1976) 35^{r}-37^{r}.

[11]Reference is to *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies* edited by Thomas Newton (1581), ed. in 2 vols. by Charles Whibley with an Introduction by T. S. Eliot, vol. 2 (London: Constable, 1927) 217.

[12]*Seneca His Tenne Tragedies* 216.

[13]See the *Epistle* where the translator discusses the long held belief that Ovid had taken the "first foundation of his woorke from Moyses wryghtings" (340 ff.). For a discussion of the tradition that Moses pre-dated classical literature and was the source of all the wisdom of the ancients, see D. C. Allen, *Mysteriously Meant* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1970) 5 ff.

[14]See the *Epistle* 22-66.

[15]For evidence of his working at speed and the carelessness that consequently blemishes the translation, see my discussion of his metre ("Lively, Dynamic, but Hardly a Thing of 'rhythmic beauty': Arthur Golding's Fourteeners," *Connotations* 2 [1992]: 205-22) and of his translation of Actaeon's dogs ("Arthur Golding and the Elizabethan Progress of Actaeon's Dogs," *Connotations* 1 [1991]: 207-23).

[16]Three lines later, Golding also contributes to the random Christian colouring of his translation of the Sermon, describing how the *"daystarre* cleere and bright" banishes the darkness at dawn (209); as readers of the Geneva Bible would know, the "worde of the Prophetes" is "as unto a lyght that shineth in a darke place, until the day dawne, and the dayestarre arise in your hearts," which a marginal note identifies "Meaning Christe the sunne of iustice, by his Gospel" (2 Peter 1:19, italics mine; reference is to *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* [Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1969]).

[17]Although presented as Pythagoras' Sermon to Numa (xv.75-478), the sermon does not represent anything like the philosopher's teachings; in fact, apart from the doctrine of transmigration, it owes very little to Pythagoras. For example, the flow of life from one form to another derives from Heraclitus, the nature of the elements from Stoic philosophy. The "Pythagorean" sermon is actually a fabric of diverse philosophical materials woven together by Ovid to provide a suitably profound finale for his poem. For a discussion of the various philosophies involved, see P. de Lacy, "Philosophical Doctrine and Poetic Technique in Ovid," *Classical Journal* 43 (1947): 153-61.

[18]"The earth resolving leysurely" in these lines means resolving "slowly," not "at its leisure"; the word was not used in that sense until the seventeenth century (*OED*).

[19]Cf. George Sandys, "Earth to Water rarifies . . .," and John Dryden, "Earth rarefies to dew . . ." (15.374). Reference is to *Ovids Metamorphosis Englished, Mythologiz'd, and Represented in Figures* (1632), ed. S. Orgel (New York: Garland, 1976) and *Ovid: Translated by Dryden, Pope, Congreve, Addison and Others* (London: A. J. Valpy, 1833).

[20]In fact, there is a small cluster of images with biblical associations in these lines: in response to "Who shal abide the day of his coming?" Christ is pictured as "a *purging* fyre" to "trye and *fine*" men (Malachi 3:2-3); in Psalm 107 the watery elements "*mount up* to heaven" (26); in Isaiah "we all do fade like a leafe" (64:6); and in 2 Peter, as a prelude to the general ascent into heaven on the Last Day, "the elements shall melte" (3:10).

[21]For Spenser's use of Golding's version of the Pythagorean Sermon, see Brents Stirling, "Two Notes on the Philosophy of Mutabilitie," *MLN* 50 (1935): 154-55, and my "Spenser and Arthur Golding," *N&Q* 32 (1985): 18-21.

[22]Like the New Arden editor, Kenneth Palmer, I here follow the Q reading (see *Troilus and Cressida* [London: Methuen, 1982] 129); the Oxford editors prefer the F reading of "Each thing *meets*."

[23]In the translation, Golding's passage is also prefaced by an account of the way the earth provides food for man, beast and bird, and a declamation of its "filthye drosse" (15.216; "terrae . . . contagia," xv.195); and it is followed by a denunciation of "tyme, the eater up of things" (257), which leads into a disquisition on the transience of empires including "The Citie Roome" on "the banke of Tyber" (476).

[24]Cf. "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they *twain* shall be one flesh" (Mt 19:5, italics mine).

[25]An interesting variation on the motif had also been used earlier when, hearing of Antony's marriage to Octavia, and believing herself betrayed, the embittered Cleopatra wishes for universal degeneration: "Melt Egypt into Nile! and kindly creatures / Turn all to serpents!" (2.5.78-79).

[26]Ovid's lines on Pasiphae and her "savage bull" read: "te vere coniuge digna est / Quae torvum ligno decepit adultera taurum / Discordem utero fetum tulit (*Met.* viii.131-33; "A worthy wife for you is the adulteress who deceived the savage bull with that wooden structure and bore a hybrid child in her womb").

[27]As the *Anatomy of Absurditie* (1589) shows, however, Elizabethan writers were often shaky when it came to matters of detail in such mythological set pieces; Nashe is discussing the perversity and inconsistency of women:

> What shall I say? They have more shifts than Iove had sundry shapes, who in the shape of a Satyre inveigled Antiope; tooke Amphitrios forme, when on

> Alcmena he begat Hercules; to Danae he came in a showre of gold; to Io like a Heyfer; to Aegine like a flame; to Mnemosyne like a Sheephearde; to Proserpina like a Serpent; to Pasiphae like a Bull; to the Nimph Nonacris in the likeness of Apollo. (*The Works of Thomas Nashe*, 5 vols., ed. R. B. McKerrow [1904-10], reprint ed. F. P. Wilson, vol. 3 [Oxford: OUP, 1958] 312)

Jove never was associated with Proserpina "like a Serpent," nor with Pasiphae as a bull, and there was no "Nimph Nonacris." "Nonacria" was Arcadia and Nashe is confusing one of Jove's other victims, Callisto, with her place of origin; she is introduced into the *Metamorphoses* as an Arcadian maiden ("virgine Nonacrina," ii.409) and Jove seduces her disguised not as Apollo but as the goddess upon whom she attends, Diana.

[28]Ovid's text reads,

> Te quoque mutatum torvo Neptune iuvenco
> Virgine in Aeolia posuit. tu visus Enipeus
> Gignis Aloidas, aries Bisaltida fallis.
> Et te flava comas frugum mitissima mater
> Sensit equum . . . . (vi.115-19)

("You also, Neptune, she pictured, changed to a savage bull with the Aeolian virgin. As Enipeus, you beget the Aloidae, deceive Bisaltis as a ram. And the golden haired and most gentle mother of the corn knew you as a horse . . . .")

[29]See Sabinus, for example, 191[r].

[30]Abraham Fraunce 36[r].

[31]See *The Faerie Queene* 3.11.30-45.

[32]Golding writes of Philemon and Baucis' cottage that "The roofe therof was thatched with straw and fennish reede" (8.806), and Don Pedro's line not only echoes the translation but is also a fourteener which is Golding's metre.

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

Satire and Subversion: Orwell and the Uses of Anti-climax

BRENDAN WILSON

Orwell criticism has at least a good excuse. The failure to define Orwell's specifically literary achievement is perhaps even a fortunate fault, in view of the genuine interest of his politics (described by Crick as "original and heterodox"), the strength and quirky appeal of his character ("this strange and saintly man"—Lord Ardwick), and the battle with compromise that marked his adventurous life. Philip Rieff sums up the situation when he says, "For liberals, Orwell's virtue as a man has obscured his significance as a writer."[1] And even apart from all these virtuous distractions, explaining the special effects of Orwell's prose is, naturally, very difficult. We can make the routine genuflection in the direction of the "plain style," but thereafter, we find ourselves embarrassed for an answer to the simplest questions. What *is* it that makes the plain style plain? Certainly, no such definition as "simple grammar and familiar words" can be adequate. As Orwell himself says, the crucial thing is "to let the meaning choose the word." But in this case, we are frustrated by the still-surprising fact that, even moving up in search of evidence from sentence-level to larger structure, Orwell's meaning is often far from clear. Indeed Orwell's work has become surrounded by what Raymond Williams describes as a "turbulent, partisan and wide-ranging controversy." Here, for example, is Alan Sandison on provenance:

> Critics have for some time sought to establish a satisfactory provenance for George Orwell so that his moral and creative vision could be more properly understood, but independence and variety rather than agreement characterise their solutions. Malcolm Muggeridge for example, in his introduction to *Burmese Days*, describes him as 'a throwback to the late Victorian days,' while John Weightman reviewing the lately-published *The Collected Essays, Letters and Journalism of George Orwell*, suggests that his natural society is that of Samuel

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debwilson00403.htm>.

Johnson and the Augustans. In *The Crystal Spirit* (1967), George Woodcock places him somewhere between these two extremes as 'the last of a nineteenth-century tradition of individualist radicals which bred such men as Hazlitt, Cobbett and Dickens'. In a more recent work on Orwell *The Makings of George Orwell*, Keith Alldritt sees him as the dialectical product of his attraction to, and reaction against the *symbolistes*.[2]

The same difficulties plague the interpretation of individual works. The essay on Dickens is deservedly a classic, for example, but what exactly is Orwell's argument? That Dickens stands condemned as an apolitical writer who never writes about work, whose ideal is moneyed idleness, who ignores the working class; or that Dickens is a liberal spirit, a free intelligence, generously angry with the harsher orthodoxies of his time? At least in terms of large-scale argument structure, Orwell's method as an essayist is, here as elsewhere, profoundly dialectical, involving unsignalled changes of direction, and unresolved contradictions between competing voices and perspectives. There is nothing plain about this.[3]

There are, then, three principal areas of difficulty for readers of Orwell, concerning the nature or function of the plain style, concerning the tradition within which Orwell thinks and writes, and concerning Orwell's "message" or purpose.

The present essay offers no account of what makes the plain style plain, that being too difficult a question. It does attempt, however, to illustrate one of its principal functions, a function which, I believe, requires us to give Orwell credit for a degree of rhetorical originality which a complacent or casual citation of the plain style could lead us to overlook. And it attempts to relate this rhetorical originality to Orwell's "meaning" and provenance, locating these within a philosophical rather than literary tradition. My first claim, in brief, is that fundamental insights into Orwell's prose style, purposes and provenance will emerge from close attention to his distinctive use of anti-climax.

I. Cases

Definitions of anti-climax in the reference literature, it seems to me, seize on superficialities. According to the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and*

Poetics, the term can be used either "1) to designate an ineptly expressed idea meant to be superlatively grandiose or pathetic . . ." or "2) to designate a deliberately ironical letdown of this kind." This surely places too much stress on contexts where the author intends or the reader expects something either grandiose or pathetic: is it impossible to experience anti-climax in going from the merely interesting to the banal?

J. A. Cuddon defines anti-climax as "a bathetic declension from a noble tone to one less exalted. The effect can be comic and is often intended to be so," showing the same preoccupation with bathetic collapse, and the same limitation to contexts now described as "noble."[4] *The Harper Handbook* places still greater emphasis on the power to amuse, holding anti-climax to be "a sudden descent from the impressive to the trivial, especially at the end of an ascending series for ludicrous effect."[5] And Holman's Handbook advises us that "anti-climax is both a weakness and a strength in writing; when effectively and intentionally used it greatly increases emphasis through its humorous effect; when unintentionally employed its result is bathetic."[6] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* rightly downplays the comic element, defining anti-climax as "an abrupt lapse from growing intensity to triviality in any passage of dramatic, narrative, or descriptive writing, with the effect of disappointed expectation or deflated suspense." Though this is an improvement, it is still seriously misleading. It is quite possible to construct an anti-climax in which the descent is from growing triviality to an intense reality, as my first two examples below will demonstrate.

Perhaps most readers will admit some feeling of dissatisfaction with these definitions, but charitably put their dissatisfaction down to the obvious impossibility of defining living practice in three or four sentences and a stock illustration or two. I believe, however, that the above definitions are not just forgivably approximate, but critically disabling. In particular, as I hope to show, the prevailing associations between anti-climax and "ludicrous effect" or "disappointment," (in the most common sense of the word, implying the legitimacy of the expectations which are not met), prevent us from seeing how effectively anti-climax can be used for serious, and in fact subversive, purposes.

Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, so often cited, is a good place to begin:

> Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,
> Or some frail china jar receive a flaw;
> Or stain her honour, or her new brocade;
> Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade;
> Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball. (2.105)

This shows a clearly *satirical* edge. The repeated comic "descents" insinuate that, for the nymph, chastity is just another commodity, and faith a form of fashionable show. Now it could be argued that anti-climax can be called *subversive* on just these grounds; that it is typically satirical, or humorous, or carnivalesque. Against this view, I want to suggest that satirical anti-climax is almost necessarily a conservative device, and that the later Orwellian form is perhaps the first which really deserves the epithet "subversive."

In 1931, Orwell wrote "The Spike," describing his confinement with almost fifty other tramps in an official hostel. The final four short paragraphs of the essay, which deal with the tramps' release on Monday morning, unobtrusively establish an extended contrast with the "gloomy, reeking spike." The road is quiet and deserted, following the vivid noise and crowding of the spike. There is blossom on the trees; "Everything was so quiet and smelt so clean."[7] One of the tramps comes up to Orwell with "a friendly smile," speaking "cordially" after the complaints and bad temper of the spike. Orwell point by point establishes that the spike and all it stood for has been left behind, encouraging us to picture freedom, fresh air, countryside and comradeship. But this escapist picture of tramping is cruelly brought up against reality in the final sentence of the essay. The tramp, repaying Orwell's loan of some tobacco, puts "four sodden, debauched, loathly cigarette ends into my hand." There is nothing either comic or trivial about this anti-climax, as the piling-up of disgusted adjectives makes clear. Our experience is not one of deflated suspense or the collapse of grandiose or pathetic expectations. Rather, in addition to our sense of a return to reality, we are left with unanswered questions and irreconcilable reactions. Is the tramp's gratitude for Orwell's casual kindness heart-warming or disgusting? Does Orwell's acceptance of the cigarette ends spring from hypocrisy or fraternity? And what is our reaction as readers to a narrator who leads us to believe we have escaped from the squalor of the spike, only to

drag us back again in the decisive final sentence? We are in each case torn in two directions, between what we would *prefer* to believe, and what we are forced by the rhetorical device to internalise and accept as true. Just as the tramps cannot after all escape the degradation of the spike, so citizens and readers are not to be permitted to avert their gaze from the social conditions they condone.

A very similar anti-climax ends "A Hanging," also written in 1931. The last page or so, after the hanging has been carried out, reports the increasing good humour of the execution party. Orwell says he felt "an impulse to sing, to break into a run, to snigger" (23-24). Francis the gaoler tells an "extraordinarily funny" story and everyone laughs. The previously irritable superintendent "grinned in a tolerant way." Everyone, "native and European alike," is invited for a drink. After the horror, there seems a prospect of good fellowship, of escape. Until, again, the remorseless final sentence: "The dead man was a hundred yards away." As in "The Spike," the ugly truth re-emerges, conclusively destroying any illusions we had begun to entertain. We have an anti-climax whose energising contrast lies not between the noble and the trivial, but between illusion and what, within the text, has been established as the truth.

In this case, various distancing devices have been used to undercut the apparent good humour, and the idea of the hanged man has been partly kept before us, so that the "drop," when it comes, does not confound our innocent hopes, so much as demonstrate our complicity in Orwell's nervous reaction. Orwell-as-policeman, like the others, would prefer to forget what has happened. But Orwell-as-narrator refuses to let himself, or us, forget. The Podsnap tendency to sweep unpleasantness behind us is given brief encouragement, in order that its final refutation may be more complete.

In these two cases, anti-climax is not the comic or ironic descent of textbook definitions, from the lofty to the low: it is a complex and decisive *tour de force*, defining the writer's stance and the meaning (however complex) of the essay. Yet it properly deserves to be called anti-climax, because its essential *modus operandi* is the raising and sudden meaningful disappointment of certain expectations in the reader, ("disappointment" now in its less common sense, which, precisely, does

not imply the legitimacy of the expectations which are not met). Understood in this way, we can see that anti-climax also acts to subvert the naive reader's trust in the narrator, *not* as a truth-teller since the narrator in both these examples insists again on what we "know" from the body of the essay to be true. Rather, the narrator is seen to be influenced by all-too-human hopes and preferences, which the reader becomes alerted to. And since these hopes and preferences—for freedom and friendship, cleanliness and good humour—are also probably the reader's own, we find ourselves compelled to "factor these out" before Orwell, shockingly, does the job for us. To wish not to be deceived by a narrator so humanly like ourselves, is to begin to wish not to be self-deceived. And this attack on specific self-deceptions, by directly exposing complicit notions of, for example, tramping or Empire-building, is only the first level at which Orwellian anti-climax works its subversive effect.

The second level consists not in this explosion of received opinions, but in their gradual erosion. In this connection, it would be valid to interpret litotes as a form of anti-climax, since it too is something "lower" than expected, in quantity, explicitness or emphasis. It too acts as a corrective to high hopes. But I leave to one side Orwell's superb control of understatement, and instead present a few examples of unarguable anti-climax, which function not as decisive confrontations with the truth, but as those lesser "prickles," to use Forster's term, which constantly prevent us from "nestling up" to Orwell's prose.

Near the beginning of "Shooting an Elephant," Orwell describes his violent and confused emotions as an enforcer of imperialism. He writes, "I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. Feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism" (25). Here the word "normal," where we might perhaps expect "terrible" or "appalling," punctures our shocked reaction to the extreme violence of the preceding sentence. The anti-climactic use of "normal" cruelly reveals how unthinking and how much in need of thought both the emotional reaction and the comfortable assumptions which sustain it, really are.

In "Such, Such Were the Joys," Section Three ends with the following wonderful sentence, describing Orwell's emotions as a schoolboy of thirteen or less: "And yet all the while, at the middle of one's heart, there

seemed to stand an incorruptible inner self who knew that whatever one did—whether one laughed or snivelled or went into frenzies of gratitude for small favours—one's only true feeling was hatred" (441). This clearly *is* a kind of anti-climax, building up expectations about the innocence of childhood, about the nobility of an "incorruptible inner self," about the cool objectivity of a narrator who can observe his own actions without fear or favour, only to "disappoint" them in the final word. Yet it is certainly neither comic nor trivial. Nor is it *ironic*. On the contrary, Orwell's directness and honesty startle deep-seated and powerful assumptions into consciousness, where they can be questioned.

Later in the same essay, the same technique, and even the same word, is used again. "Take religion, for instance. You were supposed to love God, and I did not question this. Till the age of about fourteen I believed in God, and believed that the accounts given of him were true. But I was well aware that I did not love him. On the contrary, I hated him, just as I hated Jesus and the Hebrew patriarchs" (450). There is here a challenge to our ordinary expectations about religious belief, and to our expectations about the narrator, whose confession of hatred, as above, conflicts starkly with the apparent objectivity of his descriptive powers and matter-of-fact tone. But there is also a disturbing implied question for the reader: if we too were to look steadily into "the middle of the heart," how much hatred would we find? Once we have identified with the narrator, the unpleasant possibility arises, "If I am like him, and he is like that, then perhaps without knowing it, *I* am like that."

In these ways, anti-climax functions not merely to challenge specific beliefs but to provoke a more general self-examination. The same thing can be seen in the following passage from "Looking Back on the Spanish War." A soldier who had been publicly accused of stealing from Orwell, later stands by him loyally. Orwell, deeply impressed by this un-bourgeois behaviour, writes,

> Could you feel friendly towards somebody, and stick up for him in a quarrel, after you had been ignominiously searched in his presence for property you were supposed to have stolen from him? No, you couldn't; but you might if you had both been through some emotionally widening experience. That is one of the by-products of revolution, though in this case it was only the beginnings of a revolution, and obviously foredoomed to failure. (228)

We see here Orwell's very characteristic juxtaposition of belonging and detachment: they had *both* been through the experience of revolution, but only *he* thinks it is going to fail. In the context of the essay, this sudden detachment (an anti-climactic polarisation between involvement and objectivity) poses various questions unwelcome to the Left of Orwell's time; is there any necessary link between the fleeting human experience of fraternity and the larger political process, the revolutionary millenium they are fighting for? But it also provokes questions of a more personal and moral nature. Is Orwell's perseverance, believing the cause to be lost, nobly self-sacrificing, or is it Quixotic, or stubborn, or in some way, self-indulgent? For Orwell, and for the reader, the anti-climactic descent from hope to pessimism, and from belonging to detachment, is an occasion for self-examination.

Orwell does, of course, occasionally use anti-climax humorously, but even here his fundamental purpose is to raise doubt, not laughter. In "Confessions of a Book Reviewer," picturing the reviewer as a broken-down hack, he says, "If things are normal with him he will be suffering from malnutrition, but if he has recently had a lucky streak he will be suffering from a hangover" (373). The real target of the joke, as of the whole essay, is not the apparently harmless drudge of a reviewer, but our unthinking respect for what we see in print, and for the "experts" who produce it. Orwell makes us laugh, and the word "ironic" from the Princeton definition will serve nicely in this context if not elsewhere. But he makes us laugh only in order to make us question.

These examples illustrate a cumulative effect of subversive anti-climax: it is subversive in this second sense, not because it attacks specific hopes and beliefs, but because, as a kind of epistemological ambush, it makes us nervous about taking anything for granted. This obviously connects (as a rhetorical means to a broadly political end) with Orwell's principled refusal to conform to *any* of "the smelly little orthodoxies now contending for our souls," a refusal on which he believed his existence as a writer depended (84). The "descent," in Orwell, is typically from some illusion sanctioned by an "orthodoxy" to grim reality. But submission to an orthodoxy is not merely a matter of belief—the deeper springs of personality are also involved.

The growing pessimism of Orwell's general outlook finds clear and typically frank expression in "Benefit of Clergy": "any life," he says, "when viewed from the inside is simply a series of defeats" (254). Anti-climax too has the dynamics of defeat, the defeat of expectation or of hope. As Orwell uses it, anti-climax can deliver almost as unpleasant a buffet as some of the defeats of real life, and a kind of "structural defeatism" is, I want to suggest, the third and most general level at which anti-climax can produce a subversive effect.

Perhaps the best illustration of this sense of defeat is the conclusion of "Shooting an Elephant" (30-31), where the last paragraph, a more extended anti-climax than we have seen so far, perfectly expresses the narrator's emotional exhaustion and surrender. After the terrible paragraphs describing the elephant's protracted death, after pouring "shot after shot into his heart and down his throat," we surely expect some great gesture of rebellion or self-disgust. Instead, the narrator merely goes back to "the Europeans" and lets it be thought that he shot the elephant because it had trampled a "coolie." After the highly-emotional language of the elephant's death ("devilish," "terrible," "frightful," "agony," "tortured" and so on, reducing the narrator in the end to the impotent repetition of "dreadful . . . dreadful"), there is only a burnt-out flatness and cliché ("of course," "endless discussions," "a damn shame"). After the vivid physical and moral awareness of the killing, there is only pragmatism and hypocrisy. The defeat of our best expectations in this bitter anti-climax perfectly matches the narrator's moral defeat. Anti-climax makes us *taste* defeat.

Anti-climax is, in the same way, the most structurally apt vehicle for Orwell's *historical* pessimism, his dread of the power of twentieth century states, using the means of mass communication, to organise themselves for purposes dictated from the top. He describes "No orchids for Miss Blandish" as "a header into the cesspool" after the world and values of Raffles, and in this it is symptomatic, for Orwell, of the transition to a genuinely twentieth century form of life: it is "a day-dream appropriate to a totalitarian age" (273). Many of the cases of anti-climax we have looked at have something of this quality, rousing the reader to a shock awakening from the various day-dreams, whether collusive or escapist, of a totalitarian age.

(Orwell himself never confused either "life as a series of defeats" or historical pessimism, with despair: his was a fighting defeatism, as can be seen from "Looking Back on the Spanish War." Another false impression I may have given, by concentrating on this single aspect of Orwell's style, is that anti-climax in these essays is laboured or too calculated. In context, Orwell's use of anti-climax works marvellously well. The sparsity of other forms of rhetorical structuring, the unadorned sentences, seemingly without artifice or persuasive design, give Orwell a background of restraint from which a rhetorical device can inherit tremendous power. My aim is to explain why Orwell's choice of device fell distinctively—both for him and, I believe, for the device itself—on anti-climax.)

In this section, I have tried to illustrate three main uses of anti-climax: to attack specific falsehoods and illusions, to undermine the habit of acquiescence, and to express the individual's confrontation with defeat. It is no accident that these correspond so exactly to three very characteristic features of Orwell the writer: his power of facing unpleasant facts (such as the facts of Empire-building) his profound unorthodoxy, and his determination (understandable in the victim of a long-term incurable disease), knowing that the cause is lost, to persevere.

II. Analysis

To appreciate the originality of Orwell's use of anti-climax, it is necessary to locate more precisely the differences between bathetic collapse and the satirical anti-climax on the one hand and Orwell's subversive anti-climax on the other.

There is certainly a difference in felt effect. Each of the three uses listed undermines both belief and relationship, acting not only on the reader's epistemological identity but on his or her faith in the narrator. The satirical anti-climax on the other hand, is essentially conservative. It targets inverted or non-standard beliefs, and by identifying them as Other, gives the reader a sense of belonging with the majority. The very fact that we as readers *feel* the satirical anti-climax guarantees that we are not among its targets. Victims such as Pope's Nymph are blind to

satirical anti-climax, because it simply reports what they unselfconsciously say or think. Thus the surprise *we* share at the inverted order of the anti-climax serves in the end to re-affirm the "naturalness" of the order we accept, and to reinforce our solidarity with the narrator. In Orwell, however, to feel the anti-climax is to feel a hit in some tender place of our beliefs: it is to feel oneself a target. How is this difference in effect produced?

In the example from *The Rape of the Lock*, our expectations about the uniformity of discourse imply that a stain on a piece of brocade is uniform in importance with a stain on a person's honour, and this obviously conflicts with our normal beliefs. The conflict is resolved by projecting the narrator's words into the mouth of someone who does not share our beliefs about morality and for whom an apparent uniformity of discourse is therefore preserved. Failure to preserve uniformity of discourse has, of course, a highly disruptive effect. In cases of bathos, we find ourselves moved to laugh at the perpetrator's inability to preserve uniformity of discourse, and indeed a single lapse of this kind can damage a text or character beyond redemption. Alfred Austin's celebrated lines *On the Illness of the Prince of Wales*, "Along the electric wires the message came / He is no better, he is much the same," have outlived what was intended as a serious work. Shylock's bathetic vacillation between his daughter and his ducats is a defining moment, establishing his greed for money as stronger than his grief for Jessica. In the subversive anti-climax, however, neither laughter nor the resolving act of projection is possible, partly because no scapegoat is available, and partly because the "descent" is presented as undeniable truth, either because it re-asserts what we have already seen to be the case, or because it is the testimony of a plain speaker or an "incorruptible inner self." In the same way, the expectations which are disappointed in the subversive anti-climax are the genuine beliefs and hopes of most readers, not the eccentricities of a satirical target. (It has been claimed, for example by Northrop Frye, that satire essentially involves, "at least a token fantasy, a content which the reader recognises as grotesque,"[8] which if true, is alone sufficient to show that Orwell's use of anti-climax is not satirical.) In this context, then, how is the reader to respond to or resolve the lapse in uniformity of discourse? The satirical anti-climax reinforces

the solidarity of the in-group (including the narrator) by projecting inverted beliefs onto a (usually exaggerated) stereotype or narrator. But subversive anti-climax denies us both these forms of exculpation. The dissonance it creates is turned against the reader and can only be resolved, if at all, by painful self-examination.

At this stylistic level, therefore, Orwell can be called a "moral" writer. If Dickens' regular invocation of the kindly old gentleman distributing guineas, indicates to Orwell a belief in individual decency and kindness as the fundamental requirement for a good society, so Orwell's trademark use of the subversive anti-climax, by provoking a many-layered self-examination in the reader, reveals his belief in individual cognitive responsibility as the pre-requisite of any worthwhile political advance. Epistemologically, we must be anarchists before we can be democrats.[9] It is worth stressing this point because Orwell is still quite widely regarded as a satirist (a view which has given comfort to right-wing readers of *Animal Farm,* for example). At best, this label obscures or neglects the distinction between satirical and subversive uses of anti-climax. Satirical anti-climax resists the pull of shared belief only playfully, to make our final surrender all the more conclusive. Subversive anti-climax genuinely aims to destroy the sharing of belief: we must each take responsibility for our own cognitive identity. It attacks communal responsibility, not for the sake of carnival, but in the name of a generated epistemic subject.

To sum up: anti-climax should be understood, I contend, not as a descent from the sublime to the ridiculous, but as an *insult,* however constructive, to expectations which have been tacitly or otherwise encouraged. Anti-climax is seriously underestimated if regarded as a comic figure, or a mannered one, since it is capable of profoundly serious literary, moral, and (in Orwell's broad sense of the term) "political" effects. Orwell's originality was to take a comic or mannered figure and by turning its inherent dissonance back upon the reader, by preventing the reader from deflecting the insult onto someone else, to create a device peculiarly apt not only for his own personality, but for his concept of the writer's function. Orwell found the right trope for his purposes, and made it very much his own.

In this context, George Woodcock's comment in *The Crystal Spirit*[10] deserves remark. Woodcock says "it is interesting to observe that while Orwell is always anxious, like the good journalist he was, to provide an opening that will immediately involve the reader, he is so little concerned about his endings that more often than not he goes out with an anticlimax." While splendidly alert to the figure's frequency in Orwell, this seems imprisoned by the concept of anti-climax as a "let-down" in the colloquial sense. The result is Woodcock's bizarre claim, all the more strange for the emphasis he elsewhere places on Orwell's craftsmanship, that anti-climax in Orwell merely shows a kind of habitual carelessness about endings. I hope I have done enough to show that Orwell's use of anti-climax is far from careless or accidental: only a genuinely dissonant device could properly express Orwell's dissident and solitary voice.

III. Perspective

The word "anti-climax" receives its first official mention in Johnson's *Dictionary* where he expressly says the figure was "unknown to the ancients," and indeed the new term was perhaps coined for a phenomenon which was in some ways new, at least in English. (Montaigne's *Essais*, which date from 1580, derive some of their characteristic detachment from the use of anti-climax.) Ancient, mediaeval and even Renaissance rhetorical texts such as *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (c. 86 BC), Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova* (c. 1200), or Wilson's *Arte of Rhetoric* (1553) make no mention of anti-climax, perhaps the nearest approximation being the descending *gradatio*, a late and elaborate example of which is De Quincey's, "If once a man indulges himself in murder, very soon he comes to think little of robbing; and from robbing he comes next to drinking and sabbath-breaking, and from that to incivility and procrastination."[11] Descent here is by a series of steps, not by a rise and fall. Zeugma can of course be used to produce an anti-climactic effect (as in two of the lines from Pope, cited above), and there is no doubt that the comedy of bathetic collapse is very old. In closing, however, I would like to take as a working hypothesis the idea that anti-

climax is in some sense new in English, from approximately the end of the seventeenth century. Only from this time onwards, I shall conjecture, does anti-climax really emerge to take its place within the rhetorical canon.

Anti-climax always has the nature of an insult, a provocation to revolt: its *first* effect is to disturb the reader's naive trust in the narrator. In the satirical anti-climax, this alienation is quickly projected onto the scapegoat (so that the narrator is taken only to have reported what the scapegoat said or thought). But in other uses, it creates an altered relationship with the narrator, and perhaps we can trace a line of historical development in this respect. Here for example is Hume (from "My Own Life"), describing the trials of a young author:

> In the same year was published at London, my *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*: which, in my opinion (who ought not to judge on that subject), is of all my writings, historical, philosophical or literary, incomparably the best. It came unnoticed and unobserved into the world.[12]

This is satire, as in Pope, but now directed against an earlier, more optimistic self, and it serves to detach the present narrative voice both from the earlier disappointment *and* from the reader's present opinions: if the reader fails to notice and observe the present essay, Hume can smile at that too. Anti-climax is here satirical, but it also quietly asserts the narrator's independence.

Mark Twain's essay, "Thoughts of God," begins as follows:

> How often are we moved to admit the intelligence exhibited in both the designing and the execution of some of His works. Take the fly, for instance. The planning of the fly was an application of pure intelligence, morals not being concerned. Not one of us could have planned the fly, not one of us could have constructed him; and no one would have considered it wise to try, except under an assumed name.[13]

This wonderful descent from preacher to policeman, from Bible to booking sheet, defines the narrative voice for the remainder of the essay, at once iconoclastic and hilarious. The reader is jolted from one relationship to quite another, and this serves to assert the narrator's freedom of role. As in the example from Hume, anti-climax creates a

distance between the narrator and the reader, but now without even the affectionate scapegoating of an earlier self. Twain's anti-climax is essentially subversive, a precursor of Orwell's more characteristic, serious and systematic use.

These examples illustrate (but do not prove of course) an increasing narrational independence, kept engaging or acceptable in Hume by an at least partial projection onto an earlier self, in Twain by humour, and in Orwell, by the plain style. Searching for an explanation for the "newness" of anti-climax, we may perhaps take a hint from this new readiness to inflict a dissonance or insult on the audience. Various possible explanations suggest themselves: escape from the protocols of patronage, resistance to capitalism's commodification of the written product, tension between the writer's traditional purpose of "instruction" and the rise of a mass culture. Perhaps the process of secularisation has a role here too, since from the perspective of lost Christian faith, the whole pattern of human life (ending "not with a bang but a whimper") is that of anti-climax.

My own suggestion is that anti-climax, or a heightening of interest in it, is perhaps a product of the scientific revolution, surprising as that may at first appear. The reification of ideas, a fundamental strategy of classical empiricism, is a consequence of applying the methods of the new sciences to the operations of the mind. Hume, for example, is quite explicit about the status of associationism in psychology as "the application of experimental philosophy to moral subjects," an internal counterpart to Newton's unifying and explanatory force of gravity.[14] It seems to me no coincidence that just as Hume was analysing our fundamental beliefs in terms of the imagination's propensity to carry us from one impression or idea to another, in accordance with non-rational principles of association, writers in English were discovering the power of *thwarting* normal associations of ideas, a technique which in its developed Orwellian form, is used to startle reason from the line of least cognitive resistance. In this view, the same forces which led to Hume, Hartley, and the birth of modern psychology, with its methodological preference (to put it no stronger) for causal over reason-giving explanations of mental phenomena, led not only to a new vocabulary (the terms "independence," "autonomy," "spontaneity," along with the

splendidly period distinction between "volitions" and "velleities," are all seventeenth century creations),[15] but also to anti-climax as an assertion of our freedom *not* to follow the most obvious or most strongly conditioned line of thought. Anti-climax, thus understood, would function as an assertion of the libertarian precondition of rationality, the ability to do or think otherwise. It would be a practical form of resistance, a rhetorical reaction to the triumph of efficient causality, proclaimed by Hume, in the moral sciences. And as that triumph of efficient causality becomes increasingly accepted, increasingly the dominant scientific attitude, so the individualism proclaimed in anti-climax becomes increasingly embattled, and therefore increasingly explicit. The figure inherently defies the most strongly conditioned line of thought, but in its satirical form it is overtly performing quite other functions. Orwell's special achievement is to purify it of these adventitious functions, turning it entirely to epistemological defiance. The unifying theme of the three essays of *Inside the Whale,* to take one example, is the writer's relationship to conventional opinion, spinelessly promulgated by the more or less anonymous writers of the boys' weeklies, and defied in their very different ways, by individualists like Dickens and Miller. The corollary of this libertarian defiance is the writer's duty of readiness to stand alone.

If this perspective on anti-climax is correct, Orwell's use of it connects with lifelong philosophical concerns of his which find their final expression in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In that work, Smith is all along the subject of a psychological experiment, whose purpose is precisely to destroy his capacity for epistemological self-determination. Suitably conditioned, and suitably demoralised, his causal revulsion from the rats overpowers his human feelings for Julia, just as the causal imprinting of O'Brien's voice overcomes his ability to see and judge for himself. (Thorndike's term for conditioning, "stamping in," surely connects with O'Brien's "boot stamping on a human face"). This is to approach *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as centrally concerned with human plasticity to causal influence, as opposed to an account like Sandison's, in which Smith shows from the beginning a genuine if only half-understood desire to submit.[16] And there is a corresponding difference in our views of Orwell's provenance. The hypothesis sketched here locates the origin

of Orwell's world-view (or part of it) in a Protestant cleric whose conservative nostalgia led to revolution, George Berkeley, and specifically in Berkeley's grasp of the sceptical and anti-teleological consequences of a Lockean philosophy of science. Both of these consequences are very clearly present in O'Brien's ideology of power: Crispin Wright has noted the Party's "forthright" anti-realism about the past, for example,[17] and a flat Skinnerian rejection of teleology ("There is no current goal, incentive, purpose, or meaning to be taken into account")[18] finds its echo in O'Brien's assertion that the Party does not seek power for the sake of happiness, or wealth, nor of course to benefit the people. The Party seeks power merely as the iron filing seeks the magnet, and Winston's attempts to find a teleological explanation are therefore dismissed as self-deluding. This sceptical and anti-teleological nightmare is what Berkeley saw, and hated, in Locke. It may not be too far-fetched, therefore, to conjecture that Bishop Berkeley is the clergyman from two hundred years before, whom Orwell said he "might have been."

If anti-climax is a distinctively modern artefact, then, I suggest, it is Orwell who brings it fully into the postmodern age. To find beauty in what is *not* reinforced, truth in what is *not* reposeful, comes to seem a—fragile—proof of human freedom. And even if the historical perspective of this concluding section proves in the end to be untenable, I nevertheless hope that something of the importance of anti-climax for Orwell's style and vision has emerged from it.

University of Tokyo

NOTES

[1]Philip Rieff, "George Orwell and the Post-Liberal Imagination," *George Orwell: Modern Critical Views*, ed. H. Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986) 46.

[2]Alan Sandison, *George Orwell: After 1984* (1974; Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986) 3.

[3]As John Rodden says, "His clear style implied a clear message. . . . But the plain style can mask a submerged complexity," *The Politics of Literary Reputation* (Oxford: OUP, 1989) 24.

[4]J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Doubleday, 1977) 44.

[5]Northrop Frye, Sheridan Baker and George Perkins, *The Harper Handbook to Literature* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985) 38.

[6]Clarence Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972) 31.

[7]All references to Orwell will be taken from *The Penguin Essays of George Orwell* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1984). References to "The Spike" will be found on pages 19-20. Page references to *Essays* will be made parenthetically in the text.

[8]Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957) 224.

[9]Irving Howe wrote of Orwell, "He wasn't a Marxist or a political revolutionary. He was something better and more dangerous: a revolutionary personality" ("Orwell as a Moderate Hero," *Partisan Review* [Winter 1954-55]: 105-06).

Taking the word "revolutionary" in an epistemological sense, I am happy to agree that Orwell was a revolutionary personality, and part of my contention in the present essay is that his principal weapon in the revolutionary struggle was a historically new development of anti-climax. Two qualifications might be entered, however. The first, to be pedantic, is that "anarchic" might be more accurate than "revolutionary," and the second is that Orwell's epistemological anarchy, if implemented, would obviously have profound political consequences.

[10]George Woodcock, *The Crystal Spirit* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967) 268.

[11]Thomas De Quincey, "On Murder," vol. 13 of *The Collected Writings*, ed. D. Masson (London: A. and C. Black, 1897) 56.

[12]David Hume, "My Own Life," *Essays Moral Political and Literary*, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London, 1886; rpt. Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1964) 4.

[13]Mark Twain, "Thoughts of God," *The Oxford Book of Essays*, ed. J. Gross (Oxford: OUP, 1991) 266.

[14]Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: OUP, 1968) Introd. xx.

[15]Raymond Williams' book *Keywords* (Huntington, NY: Fontana, 1976), charts the seventeenth century creation and subsequent development of such words as "determination" (in its scientific sense, leading to the nineteenth century "determinism"), "individual" (in the modern sense of a single distinguishable person), "matter" (as contrasted with "idea," and hence the term "materialist" in its modern sense), and "mechanical" (in the sense of unthinking or routine). The word "conscious" also seems to be a seventeenth century coinage. Against this background, some matching rhetorical innovation almost begins to seem inevitable.

[16]Winston's release at the end of the novel is itself a grand anti-climax of course, whose function is to make us analyse what it is exactly, if not his life, which Winston has lost. The answer, I claim, is that he has lost his capacity to determine his own thoughts and feelings, the very capacity which Orwellian anti-climax exists to stimulate and defend.

Winston's release, like the example from "Shooting an Elephant," is an anti-climax at the level of narrative structure: it is, we might say, chapter-sized (or even novel-sized) rather than paragraph- or sentence-sized, and some readers may feel that tropes on such a different scale cannot possibly be identical in effect. My argument, on the contrary, is that once we grasp the subversive nature of Orwell's use of anti-climax, unities of theme, tone and rhetoric such as this become apparent.

[17]Crispin Wright, "Anti-Realism, Timeless Truth and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*," in *Realism, Meaning and Truth* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986) 176-77.

[18]B. F. Skinner, *Science and Human Behaviour* (London: Macmillan, 1953) 89.

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

Herman Melville and Christian Grabbe: A Source for "The Godhead is Broken"

ELEANOR COOK

The correspondence between Melville and Hawthorne includes a number of remarkable letters, written at the time of the publication of *Moby-Dick*. One of them contains the following sentences:

> Whence come you, Hawthorne? By what right do you drink from my flagon of life? And when I put it to my lips—lo, they are yours and not mine. I feel that the Godhead is broken up like the bread at the Supper, and that we are the pieces. Hence this infinite fraternity of feeling. ([17?] November 1851)[1]

Words like these are not easily forgotten, so that when I read in Edgar Wind's *Art and Anarchy*, "There was a god, but he was dismembered—we are the pieces," I seemed to hear Melville's own voice. But no: this was Christian Grabbe's Faust speaking, in Grabbe's play of 1829, *Don Juan und Faust*. Here is the passage:

> Faust: . . . es gab einst einen Gott, der ward
> Zerschlagen—Wir sind seine Stücke—
> Sprache
> Und Wehmut—Lieb' und Religion und Schmerz
> Sind Träume nur von ihm.
>
> Der Ritter: Du Gottesträumer!
>
> Faust: Der bin ich!
>
> (*Don Juan und Faust*, IV.iii)[2]
>
> [There was once a God, he was
> dismembered—we are his pieces—
> speech
> and sadness—love and religion and pain
> are only dreams of him.
> You God-dreamer!
> That's what I am.]

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debcook00403.htm>.

Wind relates Grabbe's lines to the dismemberment of Dionysus:

> Brutal aphorisms on fragmentation abound in Grabbe, *Don Juan und Faust* (1829) I, ii, "Aus Nichts schafft Gott, wir schaffen aus Ruinen"; or IV, iii: "Must one tear in shreds in order to enjoy? I almost believe it . . . Whole pieces are unpalatable." A pretentious and rather histrionic Titan, Grabbe recalled ancient Dionysiac rites of fragmentation: "There was a god, but he was dismembered—we are the pieces" (IV, iii).[3]

There is certainly little sign that Grabbe had in mind the sacrament of communion or of the eucharist. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-25, a form of *brechen* is used in the Luter Bible, not *zerschlagen*. ["Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you" (Authorized Version).] *Zerschlagen* is used in Psalm 2:9, a passage familiar from Handel's *Messiah*. ["Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron" (AV).] It is Melville who implicitly connects Grabbe's words with "the Supper."

Not that Melville's Supper is an orthodox communion. "My flagon of life" is a common enough metaphor not to startle us, even when Melville shifts the flagon back to his own lips. And even the intense momentary identification ("my lips—lo, they are yours and not mine") does not startle unduly. But suddenly the strong sense of identification wants a stronger metaphor of communion, and makes a leap to the language of Christian sacrament, causing us to reread the "flagon of life." At the same time, it leaps to the language of Grabbe's Dionysiac or Orphic dismembering. Just how are these two different contexts of "breaking up" intertwined in Melville?

Melville's knowledge of German writing is well known, though I have found no mention of Grabbe among the authors he read.[4] A few months before the "Godhead is broken" letter, Melville wrote to Hawthorne the following remarks on Goethe:

> In reading some of Goethe's sayings, so worshipped by his votaries, I came across this, '*Live in the all.*' . . . What nonsense! Here is a fellow with a raging toothache. 'My dear boy,' Goethe says to him, 'you are sorely afflicted with that tooth; but you must *live in the all*, and then you will be happy!' . . . This 'all' feeling, though, there is some truth in it. You must often have felt it, lying on the grass on a warm summer's day. Your legs seem to send out shoots into the earth. Your hair feels like leaves upon your head. This is the *all* feeling. But what plays the mischief with the truth is that men will insist upon the

> universal application of a temporary feeling or opinion. ([1 June?] 1851, pp. 193-94)

Lynn Horth, editor of the recent *Correspondence*, notes that the immediate source for Melville's discussion of Goethe has not been found, though the "idea is general in Goethe; the particular thought is presumably a translation of a phrase in stanza four of 'Generalbeichte'" (189).

Christian Grabbe's play treats two figures of legendary force, at least one of whom, Faust, haunts Melville's great novel. We rightly think first of Goethe when we think of Faust stories, but there are others. This one might repay attention.

University of Toronto

NOTES

[1]*Correspondence*, ed. Lynn Horth, vol. 14 of *Writings of Herman Melville* (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern UP and the Newberry Library, 1993) 212.

[2]Christian Dietrich Grabbe, *Werke und Briefe*, 6 vols., ed. Alfred Bergmann (Emsdetten: Verlag Lechte, 1960-73) 1: 499.

[3]Edgar Wind, *Art and Anarchy*, 3rd ed. (London: Duckworth: 1985) 140n69.

[4]See Morton M. Sealts, Jr., *Melville's Reading*, revised ed. (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1988), for example, 53, and also: "His further reading in the summer and fall of 1850, as he continued work on his manuscript [of *Moby-Dick*] deserves special comment. . . . The growing fascination with German literature and thought . . . was shown once more by his purchase of Goethe's *Auto-Biography* . . . and his subsequent borrowing of both Richter and Carlyle from Duyckinck; Carlyle along with Coleridge was largely responsible for introducing many English-speaking readers of the day to contemporary German writers" (61).

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

Of Fountains and Foundations: An Elaboration on Åke Bergvall*

PATRICK GRANT

Åke Bergvall offers a careful and interesting assessment of Thomas Starkey's treatment of freedom in the *Dialogue Between Pole and Lupset*. Bergvall summarises the main theories by which Starkey was likely influenced, and proposes that Augustine's "synthesis of sacred and secular values" (223) is the best candidate for explaining Starkey's position. Augustine's mature thinking "saw reason and faith as necessary and complementary categories, operating within distinct spheres" (216), and, as "a humanist with evangelical sympathies" (221), Starkey thought much the same thing. This places him closer to Luther than to Ficino, though we cannot rule out Ficino's influence.

Bergvall's article belongs with a great amount of scholarship on English Humanism that tracks genealogies of ideas, assessing their effects on politics and culture. But when we are assured that Starkey's position is Augustinian, a question immediately arises about what then are the differences between Starkey and his sources. If there are none, then why read Starkey instead of Augustine, and why have scholars missed the point for so long? And if there are differences (as I assume is the case) how do we describe them and why are they important?

There are two main approaches to this question about how to describe the differences. The first would provide a further, more subtle kind of genealogy, claiming, for instance, that Starkey combines Augustine's main ideas with concepts drawn from Ficino, or Marsilio of Padua, or John Colet, and so on, and this network of influences then accounts for the particular texture of the Starkey fabric. A second approach would

*Reference: Åke Bergvall, "Reason in English Renaissance Humanism: Starkey, More, and Ascham," *Connotations* 3.3 (1993/94): 213-25.

be to say that Starkey adds something of his own to the materials he receives. For instance, he might develop new concepts, or confirm his position by a distinctive use of figurative language.

Here I want to concentrate on the second of these possibilities, and to consider Starkey's figurative language, by which I mean, simply, some of the basic images his speakers deploy to confirm their main arguments. Starkey's imagery is interesting not only as an indicator of his originality, but also because it implies a set of values relevant to the political ideas set out in the *Dialogue* at large. My attention to imagery stands then in relation to Bergvall's interest in ideas, rather as Starkey's own imagery stands in relation to the political theories he propounds.

For convenience, given the scope of this brief essay, let us consider Starkey's frequent allusions to fountains and springs. Mainly, these suggest spontaneity; thus, the "fountayn of al natural powarys" (32)[1] "spryngeth out of the hart" (33). But this image is everywhere qualified by Starkey in two main ways. First, fountains are consistently represented in tandem with an equally persistent emphasis on the image of a "foundation" or "ground" and Starkey is endlessly preoccupied with the notion that strong foundations are needed for freedom and growth. Thus, a sound body is "the ground and foundatyon of the wele of man" (24); Pole insists on establishing the "ground and foundatyon" (31) of the debate before proceeding with a free exchange of conversation; Lupset worries that changes in inheritance laws will "take away the foundatyon and ground of al our cyvylyte" (74). There is a great deal of this, and the *Dialogue* as a whole is much concerned that the reformed state will have a set of secure bases in law, policy and other institutions as a prerequisite for a growing and flourishing culture. In short, stability is the *sine qua non* of a good or free society.

Clearly, the spontaneity represented by fountains needs the security represented by foundations. Thus, a good education is "the fountayn and the ground" (140) for the making of preachers, and as a commonwealth "stondeth" (46), so it "floryschyth" (46). In one sense, then, freedom operates within constraints, but we cannot easily surrender either the idea of spontaneity or of the limitations which, paradoxically, make freedom possible—in short, we need both the fountains and the foundations.

But there is a further complexity in Starkey's use of these images. As he says, humans have a curious proclivity for turning things "up so downe" (46), and although the fountain springing up fruitfully does indeed suggest freedom, there is also a wellspring of evil or "ruin" about which Starkey is much concerned. On the one hand, God is the "fountayn of al gudnes" (34), and goodness always comes "as out of the fountayn" (109); on the other hand, ignorance is "the fountayn of al yl" (22), and vice springs up also "As out of a fountayn" (21). Sadly, in the "up so downe" world of bad government, fountains look the same as they do anywhere else, even though they bring ruin rather than fruition, chaos rather than growth. And so it is also with foundations, for although there is a "ground of al abundance and plenty" (115), there is also a "ground of al ruyne" (104).

Starkey's answer to how we might distinguish between the fountains of ruin and of fruition initially seems simple—they are known by their results. That is, the first leads to disaster, indicated by Starkey especially through images of blindness and drowning. By contrast, the second leads to a thriving commonwealth where people do not act for selfish ends, but for the good of the community which is marked by strength, beauty and prosperity. Yet such a community is a far cry from what we have to build on at the present moment, and, consequently, we find ourselves relying largely on imagination to depict the better society to which we aspire. Surprisingly, then, Lupset at one point castigates Plato for indulging his imagination in just this way, and for allowing his aspirations to fly too far ahead of what is possible to realise here and now: "wherfor hyt ys reputyd of many men but as a dreme, and vayne imagynatyon whych never can be brought to effect" (18). His interlocutor, Pole, agrees.

The warning is of course quite sensible—we ought not to let our imaginations run away with us. But this caveat presages a remarkably negative attitude to imagination ("fancy") throughout the *Dialogue* as a whole. Thus, "fansy" (8) leads us to ignore the true distinction between virtue and vice; those who refuse to follow civil order are "lyke wyld bestys drawen by folysch fantasy" (35); "frayle fantasy" (35) upsets the rule of reason; "vayn plesurys & folysch fantasye" (58) lead to a dangerous "commyn frenesye" (58). Also, the pursuit of private

gratification that Starkey consistently says leads to the ruin of good societies is at one point explicitly linked to indulgence in fancy ("theyr pryvate plesure & fantasy" [2]), and the result is that people behave like "wylde bestys" (2). In short, Starkey does not have anything good to say about imagination, but instead depicts it as the main overthrower of reason. In this, he joins the long line of his predecessors, and Plato is their grand progenitor. Yet, as with Plato, we can now quickly point to Starkey's own imagination as an example of the very thing to which he objects. Although Starkey might well have appreciated that imagination can be deployed both well and badly, he does not choose to praise it, but rather to hold it in suspicion. Thus, there is no sense in his work, nor is there in Plato's, that imagination is inherently ambivalent, and Starkey, like Plato, does not thematise the trickiness of the relationship in his own work between imagination and ideas.

Nonetheless, as we see in the images of fountains and foundations, Starkey's figurative language does help him—however unselfconsciously—to express and disclose something of the ambivalence and elusiveness of freedom. Because the society he would reform remains the ground of his own spontaneity, it both enables and confines his free thoughts and actions. The fact is that human beings caught up in history find themselves inevitably standing on insecure foundations of one kind or another, and the spontaneous energies by which reformers would make things new are more confused in this topsy-turvy, "up so downe" world than the reformers themselves think or can easily imagine.

In such a situation, Starkey sought as he could for the elusive dialogical balance between sound ideas and imaginative energy—between foundations and fountains. Not surprisingly, he chose the dialogue form to express his interest in equilibrium, and in the end he produced his own paradoxical brand of aristocratic republicanism. As Bergvall says, he trod an equally tricky path between Ficino and Luther. But whereas Bergvall approaches Starkey's treatment of freedom through a discussion of ideas, I have considered his use of images. Clearly, a just estimate of the *Dialogue* needs both approaches. Finally, although I am confident that Starkey understood he was using certain images in a patterned way, I am not so sure he saw the implications of his own imaginative practice, or of the ambivalence of imagination, for his theory of a free, reformed

society and how it might emerge from our fractured history. At the end of the day, Starkey's interesting *Dialogue* is less than the great book it might have been had its imaginative reach measured up to its seriousness of purpose.

University of Victoria
British Columbia

NOTE

[1]All quotations from Starkey are from T. F. Mayer's edition of *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset*, Camden fourth series, vol. 37 (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1989). Page numbers are cited in the text.

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

Who is Speaking in Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland?* A Response to John Breen*

ANDREW HADFIELD

In his article on Spenser's *View*, John Breen not only presented a perceptive overview of recent critical debate on a notoriously problematic text, but also intervened to make a number of salient comments about reading—for want of a better word—Renaissance texts. Breen's principal target was the inability of numerous modern readers—many of them historians—to bother about the business of close reading and desire to use documents to further an argument without attending to the complexities of texts and contexts. Breen argued that too many readings of the *View* wanted to take the figure of Irenius as identical to that of Spenser himself, when, in fact, the Renaissance dialogue was a slippery genre which refused to allow such correspondence between fictionalised character and author: "Spenser is the authority removed from the text as Erasmus was in *The Praise of Folly* and More in *Utopia*" (126). Using Sidney's distinction between the "historiographer" and the "Poet historical," Breen concludes with the claim that "Spenser belonged to a historiographical school governed by poetry, not empiricism" (128), a skillful rhetorician rather than a fact grubber, whose text foregrounds history as a series of lessons based on the ancient principle of mimesis, a revelation which means that one has to attend to the whole narrative of the text and interpret that and not loot it for snippets of information to bolster an argument.

There is little in Breen's analysis that I would wish to challenge and, if I read my own work aright, I have independently been making a

*Reference: John M. Breen, "Imagining Voices in *A View of the Present State of Ireland*: A Discussion of Recent Studies Concerning Edmund Spenser's Dialogue," *Connotations* 4.1-2 (1994/95): 119-32.

similar case (albeit not always as directly or eloquently) in some of the work which Breen cites. For far too long certain historians especially, have been allowed to conduct an argument amongst themselves without attending to the doubts and questions about the nature of the text and problems of reading arising in other quarters.[1] After Breen's intervention this *should*—which is not to say *will*—no longer be possible.

Needless to say, I have some reservations about facets of Breen's article, despite my general agreement with his overall argument and sense of gratitude to him for having put numerous important matters in such a persuasive manner.

First, whilst I have no qualms about agreeing with statements that the *View* "is a staging of the self by Spenser" (123-24), and "The author's voice is always refracted through that of a fictive polyvalent speaker" (124), it does not seem to me to *necessarily* follow—although, of course, it might—that one should never try to read the *View* as a "policy paper" and that "Spenser's 'I' elides (is never fully present)" (130). It seems to me that, like the readers he so accurately criticises, Breen is in danger of attempting to set up a generic category and then pigeonhole the *View* within a tradition and style of writing he has marked out without allowing for the fact that it might well have belonged to other traditions as well. To recognise that the *View* is a text which joins together different categories of writing—the aesthetic and the political, poetry and history—should not force the reader into accepting that there was therefore a fixed category in the English Renaissance which combined the two in a stable manner, as Breen seems to me to assume. It is not obvious to me that "Spenser *belonged* to a historiographical *school* governed by poetry, not empiricism" (128) [my emphases], but, rather, that he was able to employ a range of ideas, styles and genres which explored the relationship between poetry and history. Spenser was undoubtedly influenced by the ideas of Sir Philip Sidney and George Puttenham, as Breen claims (128-29); exactly how that influence manifested itself is another matter entirely. Puttenham and Sidney can hardly be described as a "school," although they do ask similar questions and are clearly relevant to the intellectual milieu of the composition of the *View*, nor is it clear that anyone had any fixed ideas on how a "Poet historical"

was supposed to write in the late sixteenth-century, as Breen appears to be claiming.[2]

After a discussion of the cultural genealogy of the Irish which concludes with a comparison of the forms of cannibalistic blood-drinking practised by ancient, savage peoples, Irenius comments:

> So allsoe they write that the owlde Irishe weare wonte And so haue I sene some of the Irishe doe but not theire enemyes but friendes blodd as namelye at the execution of A notable Traitour at Limericke Called murrogh Obrien I sawe an olde woman which was his foster mother take vp his heade whilste he was quartered and sucked vp all the blodd rvnninge theareout Sayinge that the earthe was not worthie to drinke it and thearewith allso steped her face, and breste and torne heare Cryinge and shrikinge out moste terrible/[3]

This description, with its obvious rhetoric of the eye-witness, has been used by some commentators to argue for the presence of Spenser in Ireland as early as 1577 rather than the usually accepted date of 1580 when Spenser travelled over as secretary to the Lord Deputy, Arthur Lord Grey de Wilton.[4] Obviously, it is dangerous to take such "eveidence" at face value as Breen, I suspect, would argue; but, what exact signal does such a passage send to the reader? Is it beyond dispute that we must discount Spenser's voice and note that it is mediated by the aesthetics of the textual form and, therefore, meant to be fictive? Or are there even more complex games at work whereby the fictively constructed "I" lends weight and authority to a political/anthropological analysis in an attempt to persuade the reader? To put it another way, given the mixed and unstable form which the *View* would appear to have—who knows exactly what was intended by the narrating of this incident—is it not just as dangerous to discount the obviously political reading and privilege the elided literary voice?

Breen cites James Ware, the editor of the first published edition of the work in 1633, as a naive reader of the work—"an early representative of an interpretative community which disregards the generic complexity of the *View* and insists upon reading Spenser as Irenius"—and constructs instead an ideal reader, "attentive to the author's poetic strategies and the text's generic complexity" (119). One should perhaps bear in mind that early readers of *The Faerie Queene* whose notes survive also appear

to have been rather naive readers, *which is not to dismiss them as wrong.*[5] Not all of Ware's comments are straightforwardly ridiculous or easy to decode: Ware doctored the *View* (see *Variorum* 10: 519-23 for details) and commented in his preface, had Spenser lived in the 1630s when, as Ware saw it, Ireland had been pacified, "he would have amitted those passages which may seeme to lay either any particular aspersion upon some families, or generall upon the Nation" (532). He also represented the *View* to the reader as a tract about ancient Irish customs and published it with the work of three other writers, Meredith Hanmer, Edmund Campion and Henry Marleburrough, as *The Historie of Ireland*, when it clearly deals more thoroughly with the political situation of the 1590s (in the *View* Irenius says that he will deal with the question of Irish antiquity elsewhere and at greater length [230]), all of which would imply that Ware's preface is not quite as it seems and his reasons for publishing the *View* by no means straightforward. The problem of sorting out even how readers read is a thorny one.

It should also be borne in mind that a large part of the second half of the *View*, after both interlocutors have accepted that Ireland needs to be reinvaded, is concerned with empirical detail, describing the means of munitioning and victualling an increased army in Ireland, where forts need to be positioned, which sections of the population need to be transplanted, where regional governors should be stationed, how to establish colonies and plantations, and what has been wrong with previous government tactics. It seems unsurprising to me that many readers read at least parts of the *View* as a "policy paper" (perhaps this is what caused Ware's nervous disclaimers?) and, pace Breen's sophisticated ideal reader, were tempted to read Irenius's proposals as Spenser's own. Vast sections of the text are complex and generically indeterminate; but, equally, other passages are not, which would appear to complicate matters further rather than simplifying things.

Breen makes use of Virginia Cox's recent book, *The Renaissance Dialogue*, in order to point out how negligent of form most readers of the *View* have been.[6] Breen comments: "Cox refuses to simplify the role of the speakers: the authentic voice of the author oscillates between absence and presence for the voice of the dramatic character is never wholly coterminous with the voice of the author" (121, Cox 7). What Breen does

not point out is Cox's conclusion of the development of the history of the *literary* dialogue, that the dialogic form eventually became engulfed in a typographical culture which produced the *Essais* of Montaigne in his "lonely tower" (113) and all too often the dialogue degenerated into a genre "whose conversational form is no more than an awkward and cumbersome decorative veneer" (112).

Cox's ideas are questionable and certainly owe a great deal to the psychological speculations of Walter Ong regarding the onset of the Gutenberg galaxy; but it is quite clear that Cox views the history of the literary dialogue as a battle between those who used the form to espouse a genuine dialogue—Breen's ideal reading community—and those who used the dialogue as a more obviously didactic form.[7] Perhaps it is relevant that the View was prepared for print, but one suspects that it was never really intended by its author to be reproduced in that medium.[8] What needs to be stated is that the *View* is by no means obviously a literary dialogue, which is what Cox is discussing, and even if we assume it is, it is not clear that Breen has cited Cox's conclusions accurately. There are a number of other dialogues dealing with Ireland which date from approximately the same period as Spenser's: Richard Beacon's *Solon his Follie* (1594), which clearly does lead the reader in certain directions, being heavily indebted to Machiavelli's political thought (Machiavelli wrote a dialogue, *Arte della guerra* [1521]); Barnaby Rich's "Anatomy of Ireland" (1615), perhaps modelled on the *View*; and the "Book on the state of Ireland, addressed to Robert, Earl of Essex, by H. C.," in the form of a dialogue between Peregryne and Sylvyn, the names of Spenser's two sons, to name but three.[9]

When Breen demands that the *View* be read in terms of Erasmus, More, and the tradition of the humanist dialogue, he is clearly right that such a context is relevant and needs to be considered in a way that Ciaran Brady's dismissal of the "dialogue form . . . as a decoy" fails to recognise.[10] But, I would suggest, the tradition of the dialogue is more complex and contradictory than this, containing from its early Socratic forms onwards, a mixture of the didactic, the playful and the open-ended.[11] Breen points to Spenser's "playful delight" in addressing readers beyond the text when Irenius tells Eudoxus that he is really only addressing him (124-25), a point that might be considered alongside

Patricia Coughlan's suggestion that there is an element of comedy in Eudoxus's "slightly patronizing air" and attitude towards Irenius, as well as Irenius's over-enthusiasm, inability to stick to the subject and need to be kept in line by his interlocutor.[12] Whilst this may be true of parts of the *View*, it is arguable that it provides a satisfactory overview of the whole. Not only does it appear that we are supposed to endorse Irenius's plans for the reinvasion of Ireland in the second half of the text, and his speculations on the predominantly Scythian origins of the savage Irish, but he is represented as the man of Ireland who is informing the well-meaning and rational but ignorant (English) outsider exactly what conditions are like in Ireland so that Eudoxus constantly has to modify his ideas and accept Irenius's judgements.

In the crucial discussion regarding the means to be used to reform Ireland, Irenius insists that drastic measures are necessary. Eudoxus suggests that the establishment of good, English laws in Ireland will solve the problem, but Irenius has to explain to him that the sword will have to be used to establish the possibility of government, so lacking in civilisation is Ireland (2910 ff.). At first Eudoxus asks quite challenging questions and appears shocked at Irenius's suggestions, "Howe then doe ye thinke is the reformacion thereof to be begonne yf not by Lawes and Ordinaunces/" (2954-55); "did ye blame me even nowe for wishinge kerne Horsboyes and Carrowes to be cleane cutt of as too violente a meanes, and doe youe your selfe now prescribe the same medicyne? Is not the sworde the moste violent redresse that maye be vsed for anie evill//" (2961-64); and when Irenius suggests that a "stronge power of men" will have to "bring in all that Rebellious route of loose people" (2986-87), Eudoxus exclaims "Yea speake now *Irenius* of an infinite Chardge to her maiestie" (2990). However, this section of the argument culminates in Irenius explaining the need for "obstinate Rebells suche as will neuer be made dutifull and obediente nor brought to labour or civill Conuersacion" (3238-39; presumably, the dialogue form), "to be cutt off" (3242). By now, Eudoxus is agreeing with Irenius: "Surelye of suche desperate persons as will willfullie followe the Course of theire owne follie theare is no Compassion to be had" (3243-44). Irenius's next speech contains the most notorious passage in the *View*, the description of the effects of such policies in Munster:

> Out of euerie Corner of the woods and glinnes they Came Creeping forthe vppon theire handes for theire Leggs Coulde not beare them, they loked like Anotomies of deathe, they spake like ghostes Cryinge out of theire graues, they did eate the dead Carrions, happie wheare they Coulde finde them, Yea and one another sone after, in so muche as the verye carkasses they spared not to scrape out of theire graves. . . . that in shorte space theare weare non allmoste lefte and a moste populous and plentifull Countrye sodenlye lefte voide of man or beaste, yeat sure in all that warr theare perished not manie by the sworde but all by the extreamitye of famine which they themselves had wroughte/ (3259-70).

Irenius argues that all these deaths are not actually caused by the sword of state but by the rebels' own violence: in effect, they consume themselves. Eudoxus now agrees and leads the discussion off onto the question of false pity and how it can mislead the English court into pursuing misconceived policies in Ireland as happened with the slanders against the hard-line tactics of Spenser's erstwhile patron, Arthur Lord Grey de Wilton (3289-317).[13]

This whole passage, I would argue, is a *tour de force* of manipulative rhetoric: the English reader, ignorant of conditions in Ireland, is put in the position of Eudoxus, who makes reasonable but erroneous judgements, until he is given all the necessary facts by Irenius. I do not see how this passage can be read as a piece of balanced, playful dialogue between two equals, as the opinions of the one speaker seem to be privileged so clearly over the objections of the other. Breen is right to urge caution to those who wish to see a clear link between Irenius and Spenser throughout the *View*; however, some passages would appear to have the author's endorsement.

To conclude: despite my rather lengthy riposte to John Breen, I find little to disagree with in his excellent article. My only real caveat is that he has moved too swiftly to reject a position by stating its opposite and thus fixed the text within another genre whereas, like so much writing produced during the sixteenth-century, *A View of the Present State of Ireland* is a text which contains a whole series of mixed generic marks demanding different readings. It might be helpful to see the work as a combination of a sophisticated humanist dialogue—in itself a "mixed" genre caught between manipulating the reader and allowing the reader the means to educate him or herself—and a political treatise arguing

a specific position. Sorting out such differences is obviously easier said than done, but if the *View* did not have a particular message, identifiable as its author's, it is hard to imagine that it would have found its way into the state papers as a treatise purportedly offering advice. On the other hand, the complex history of its reception would seem to indicate that different readers interpreted the text in markedly different ways.[14]

The University of Wales
Aberystwyth

NOTES

[1]See Breen's comments on Nicholas Canny's attempts to distinguish between the methodologies of historians and literary scholars (123). Breen rightly points out that such distinctions are no longer tenable. I would also add that Canny's rhetorical strategy is to suggest that historians are superior to literary critics because they, as he believes, do more work.

[2]See my *Literature, Politics and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994) 122-43 for further comment.

[3]Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, *The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition*, ed. Edwin Greenlaw et al. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1932-49), vol. 10, *The Prose Works*, ed. Rudolf Gottfried, ll. 1935-42, at p. 112. Future references to this text in parentheses.

[4]See, for example, Willy Maley, *A Spenser Chronology* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994) 6-7; *Variorum*, 10: 344. On the status of the eye-witness see Elaine Y. L. Ho, "The Rhetoric of the 'I'-Witness in Fulke Greville's *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney*," *Literature and History*, second series, 2.1 (Spring 1991): 17-26.

[5]See Graham Hough, ed., *The First Commentary on* The Faerie Queene (London: Privately Printed, 1964); John Manning, "Notes and Marginalia in Bishop Percy's Copy of Spenser's *Works*," *N&Q* 229 (1984): 225-27; R. M. Cummings, ed., *Edmund Spenser: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1971), *passim*.

[6]Virginia Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary Dialogue in Its Social and Political Contexts, Castiglione to Galileo* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993).

[7]For Ong's ideas see *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (New York: Columbia UP, 1958); *Orality and Literacy* (London: Methuen, 1982).

[8]See Jean R. Brink, "Constructing the *View of the Present State of Ireland*," *Spenser Studies* 11 (1994): 203-228, pp. 209-216; Andrew Hadfield, "Was Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland* Censored? A Review of the Evidence," *N&Q* 239 (1994): 459-63.

[9]See Sydney Anglo, "A Machiavellian Solution to the Irish Problem: Richard Beacon's *Solon His Follie* (1594)," Edward Cheney and Peter Mack, eds., *England and the Continental Renaissance: Essays in Honour of J. B. Trapp* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1990) 153-64; Edward M. Hinton, ed., "Rich's *Anatomy of Ireland*, with an Account of the Author," *PMLA* 55 (1940): 73-101; *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, Elizabeth, 1598, January - 1599, March* 505-07.

[10]Ciaran Brady, "Spenser's Irish Crisis: Humanism and Experience in the 1590s," *Past and Present* 111 (May, 1986): 17-49, p. 41.

[11]For recent analysis of this see Arne Melberg, "Plato's Mimesis," *Theories of Mimesis* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995) 10-50; Tom Cohen, "*P.s.*: Plato's Scene of Reading in the *Protagoras*," *Anti-Mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995) 45-86.

[12]Patricia Coughlan, "'Some secret scourge which shall by her come unto England': Ireland and Incivility in Spenser," Patricia Coughlan, ed., *Spenser and Ireland: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Cork: Cork UP, 1989) 46-74, at p. 67. See also Andrew Hadfield, "Briton and Scythian: Tudor Representations of Irish Origins," *Irish Historical Studies* 112 (1993): 390-408, pp. 402-03.

[13]On Grey, see the entry in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A. C. Hamilton et al. (London: Routledge, 1990) 341-42.

[14]See Nicholas Canny, "Edmund Spenser and the Development of an Anglo-Irish Identity," *YES* 13 (1983): 1-19; Willy Maley, "How Milton and Some Contemporaries Read Spenser's View," Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley, eds., *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993) 191-208; Sir James Ware's comments cited above.

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

A Response to Lisa Hopkins*

NANCY A. GUTIERREZ

In her brief but suggestive essay, "The False Domesticity of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," Lisa Hopkins reminds us that the domestic context and description in Thomas Heywood's play are in fact self-conscious authorial inventions, providing us the opportunity to examine an apparently familiar landscape with new eyes. No longer are the homey details of Frankford brushing crumbs off his doublet, or the servants dancing the "Shaking of the Sheets," or the social strategies of playing cards to be examined as the *donée* of the genre; rather, these parts of the play are perceived as Heywood's care in his craft, as integral aspects that shape audience response. The incremental layering of detail is something we can see in operation.

Perhaps more useful than this reminder about the fictional nature of the play is Hopkins's focus on "reading" as an integral part of the play's meaning. What Hopkins does in her essay is to link the accretion of "factual" details with the activity of "reading"—how Heywood "reads" the previous "true" examples of the genre of domestic tragedy so to create his own fictionalized version; how the seventeenth-century audience would contextualize cultural mores, both general and specific, in its experience of the play; how the various audiences of the play, whether viewers or readers, whether Renaissance or twentieth-century, "read" it against other, more "celebrated" plays. This emphasis on reading is truly a crux in Heywood criticism, for this play, seemingly so transparent and lucid, has provoked and still provokes distinctly polar interpretations from its commentators: depending upon one's point of

*Reference: Lisa Hopkins, "The False Domesticity of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Connotations* 4.1-2 (1994/95): 1-7.

view, the play's marriage is patriarchal in nature from beginning to end, or it is a patriarchal entity subverted by a wife's self-assertion; Frankford is a generous and forgiving husband, or he is an unbending and unfeeling monster; Anne is a stereotypical woman who is fated to fall, or she is a woman pushed by her husband to accept his best friend as her lover; Anne is saved by her act of self-contrition, or she is damned as a suicide; the play is straightforward domestic tragedy, or it displays the irony of topical commentary. How is a scholar to locate herself in this increasingly complicated chronicle of critical views?[1]

Hopkins's explicit answer to this question is to locate "aesthetic value" within the reader, not in the product: "the kind of reading processes [*A Woman Killed with Kindness*] requires are substantially the same as those called for by tragedies such as *Hamlet* or *Othello*, which have, notoriously, been traditionally interpreted as dealing with concerns universally applicable" (6). By defining art as process rather than as product, Hopkins insists that only "right reading" will result in an evaluation of literary excellence.

While Hopkins might seem to eschew historicist analysis by this assertion that aesthetic value is a valid ground for criticism, her theoretical approach rather argues explicitly for the incorporation of these two seemingly disparate methods of interpretation. The emphasis upon right reading reveals Hopkins's discussion of the topicality of the northern setting as the negotiation between historicist and reader-response methodologies. Hopkins notes that an early seventeenth-century audience would identify Yorkshire as a location of Catholic opposition. While structurally part of her argument regarding the invention of domestic minutiae and Heywood's careful manipulation of audience response, Hopkins provides evidence for an assumption shared by most recent commentators on the play's theme: this is a play about resistance, either overt or sublimated. Since I have recently published a piece where I argue that the play participates in a kind of (culturally myopic) Puritan discourse of dissent, it would seem that Hopkins and I disagree about a substantive aspect of the play's topicality.[2] However, I am relatively sure that we do not. If, as readers, we follow Hopkins's lead and think about the *experience* of the play, rather than the *play as product*, then the topical details of the play coalesce into a general depiction of the

individual's struggle for autonomy and identity in an impersonal, even hostile world. (These topical details include such particulars as Anne's apparently humanist education; the depiction of Wendoll as a "second son," a member of the gentry or the aristocracy but without the inheritance of the firstborn; the taunt of "puritant" that Wendoll throws at Anne; the consistent associating of Wendoll with the devil, with the corollary that Anne has been possessed by a demon.) That Hopkins identifies the northern setting of Yorkshire as a widely-recognized site of Catholic opposition in the sixteenth century is yet again one more piece of evidence that the play, in general, explores issues of authority.

A Woman Killed with Kindness deliberately calls into question conventional attitudes, whether about the nature of (revenge) tragedy, the cultural attitude toward adulteress and cuckold, or the inherent tension between the Christian principle of forgiveness and the human desire for revenge and restitution. As part of the culture's discourse about obedience and rebellion, the play is an accretion of diverse local details, fitting together incrementally to suggest an attitude, a question, a concern: what are the nature and the consequences of human responsibility? By locating meaning in "reading," Hopkins grounds art in the rhetorical relationship between writer, subject, and audience, thus mediating the intersection between issues topical and universal, between concerns ideological and aesthetic. Such negotiation clarifies the grounds upon which this play has been so widely and disparately "explained," and I would suggest, provides a useful starting point for future examination of *A Woman Killed with Kindness* and of other domestic drama of the period.

Arizona State University
Tempe

NOTES

[1]See, for example, Bonnie L. Alexander, "Cracks in the Pedestal: A Reading of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Massachusetts Studies in English* 7.1 (1978): 1-11; Nancy A. Gutierrez, "The Irresolution of Melodrama: Adultery in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Exemplaria* 1.2 (1989): 265-91; Peter Ure, "Marriage and the Domestic Drama

in Heywood and Ford," *English Studies* 32 (1951): 200-16; John Canuteson, "The Theme of Forgiveness in the Plot and Subplot of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Renaissance Drama* n.s. 2 (1969): 123-41; Hallet Smith, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *PMLA* 53 (1938): 138-47; Frederick Kiefer, "Heywood as Moralist in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 3 (1986): 83-98; Roland Wymer, *Suicide and Despair in Renaissance Drama* (Brighton: Harvester P, 1986) 81-83; Jennifer Panek, "Punishing Adultery in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *SEL* 34 (1994): 357-78; Henry Hitch Adams, *English Domestic or Homiletic Tragedy 1575-1642* (New York: Columbia UP, 1943) 144-59.

[2]Nancy A. Gutierrez, "Exorcism by Fasting in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*: A Paradigm of Puritan Resistance?" *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 33 (1994): 43-62.

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

A Comment on Roy Battenhouse's "Shakespearean Tragedy: Its Christian Premises"*

CECILE WILLIAMSON CARY

Professor Battenhouse's summary of the premises on which he has based his criticism of Shakespeare and his account of how he came to articulate those premises raise questions about the theory and practice of the kind of criticism which may be broadly called "Christian." Harold Bloom's attack on "outside" approaches (including Marxist, New Historicist, etc.) in his recent book, *The Western Canon*, further highlights the problems involved.

From a theoretical point of view it might be questioned whether this approach should be taken at all since Shakespeare was a dramatist, not a theologian. When Battenhouse describes the tragic dilemma of *Romeo and Juliet* as the "inevitable result of sin plucking on sin in a series of defective actions, by which human beings diminish their natural goodness" (237), he will have on his side few besides Lily B. Campbell, to whom Shakespeare's tragic heroes were slaves of passion and therefore deserved to be tragically (meaning morally) punished. To those of us who agree with Sidney "that moving is of a higher degree than teaching," *Romeo and Juliet* is one of the foremost examples of this highest possible impact of poetry, "For never was a story of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo" (5.3.309-20). Professor Battenhouse comments that the Friar "overlooks his duty to cultivate grace to prevent rude will from becoming predominant" (234), but the Friar's motives are good; they are meant to "To turn your households' rancor to pure love" (2.3.92), and, indeed, the Friar's motive is realized for there is "a glooming peace" at the play's end. If forced to discuss *Romeo and Juliet*

*Reference: Roy Battenhouse, "Shakespearean Tragedy: Its Christian Premises," *Connotations* 3.3 (1993/94): 226-42.

from a perspective of "Christian" moralism, I would say the play is theologically muddled, for good comes from the suspect loves and deaths of the young lovers. But, to counter what seems to me a one-sided argument with a simplification, I really think we are supposed to sympathize with the overwhelmingly beautiful love-poetry—and with the two young lovers— and to lament with Juliet that "heaven should practice strategems / Upon so soft a subject as myself" (3.5.209-10). The "star-crossed" lovers motif in the play acts against seeing them as morally responsible sinners, and there is no focus on the "sin" of suicide, but rather references to "true Romeo" (5.3.259) and "heaven" finding means to kill the Capulet-Montague joys with love (5.3.293). At any rate, imposing a paradigm of Christian morality on this play raises more problems than it solves. As those Marlowe critics implicitly criticized at the beginning of Battenhouse's article, I would continue to "rely on Romantic premises" because *Romeo and Juliet* seems irreducibly "romantic." As for Marlowe, "Romantic" or "Christian" premises seem to war with each other in such a play as *Dr. Faustus*. I have never had a class that did not react to the beauty of the famous speech on Helen even though the destructive aspects of Helen's influence are clearly in the speech.

Even if one were to grant a Christian approach as being relevant, one might want to argue with a Christian approach applied in so doctrinaire a manner. Professor Battenhouse applies Augustine, Dante, and Aquinas (as opposed to Calvin) to Shakespeare's plays, and says Shakespeare is more like the former. Calvin preaches a "God who punishes," who enacts "double predestination" and he scants "God's activity in redeeming mankind" (227, 228) whereas Shakespeare is interested in a more complex idea of individuals and in "Christianity's distinctive answer to the problem of human sin"—a "ransoming of sinners" (232). I would submit that Lancelot Andrewes (who did *not* agree with Calvinistic double predestination according to Battenhouse) and Richard Hooker, for instance, would be the appropriate theologians to read for an understanding of Christianity in Shakespeare. The ransoming of sinners by grace is an idea not neglected by such Elizabethan Protestants as Spenser ("In heavenly mercies hast thou not a part" exclaims Una, reproaching the Red Cross Knight for his despair—*Faerie Queene* 1.9.53).

It is known that Shakespeare used Hooker for his great description of the "Great Chain of Being" in *Troilus and Cressida* (1.2.75-137), why not for the tracing of the beginning of evil to the neglecting of eternal good for some lesser good? (Whitaker 208). Hooker, and Andrewes, and Spenser, for that matter, would be more believable sources for Shakespeare than Augustine, Dante, and Aquinas. That said, there seems to be in some of Shakespeare's plays the working out of a Christian idea of sin and of redemption, but one should wait for the text to indicate whether such an idea is in operation. Battenhouse's account of *Measure for Measure* seems to fit the play.

The stress on repentance and forgiveness in *Lear* also seems to indicate a Christian sensibility (when Cordelia says, "O dear father / It is thy business that I go about"—4.4.23-24, the Christian allusion is inescapable). On the other hand, *Lear* is set in pre-Christian Britain; its end seems focused on "deep anguish" and whether that anguish is "analogous to the anguish of Christ's disciples when their saviour was crucified" (238) seems doubtful.

According to Professor Battenhouse, "all of Shakespeare's tragedies tell of the downfall of the hero through his inordinate love of some self-pleasing good" (238). I would be hard put to justify that—or any other generalization— for *all* of Shakespeare's tragedies. To make such a statement about *Antony and Cleopatra*, for instance, would be to impose some "better good" than Cleopatra for the hero—like *Romeo and Juliet*, this play seems based on "Romantic" rather than "Christian" premises. But Battenhouse does not discuss this premise with respect to *Antony*—he discusses *Hamlet*. One might be willing to go along with the idea that Hamlet has idealized his father, but it is hard to see Claudius as an exemplar of "human kindness," or driven "against his wishes" to plotting the murder of Hamlet (239). These comments read as if the critic has to vilify Hamlet and whitewash the other characters. The characters in *Hamlet* do exist in a Christian world; if truth be told, they are all sinful—as Hamlet himself would, so to speak, be the first to admit (indeed, he does admit it frequently). But to say "he lacks Christian hope" (240) seems to go against the text. After all, we have a Prince who explicitly rejects suicide because God has "fixed his canon 'gainst self slaughter" (1.2.131-32). So much for Hamlet at the play's beginning. And

against the wildness of Hamlet's words and actions in the body of the play, by the end he is saying "There's a divinity that shapes our ends / Rough-hew them how we will" (5.2.10-11) and "There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow" (5.2.219-20). Horatio's words on the dead Hamlet are explicitly Christian: "Good night, sweet prince, / And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!" (5.2.359-60). The iconography here is traditional for the soul dying in grace. If that were not enough, Hamlet is given a hero's burial. But Hamlet is a notoriously complex character. How do we place Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's deaths or what Battenhouse calls the "shameful shouting match" with Laertes? The "Christian premises" that Professor Battenhouse applies so strictly do not seem to help that much when forced on to such intransigent texts as *Hamlet* or even the apparently simpler *Romeo and Juliet*.

Christianity was the religion in force when Shakespeare was writing. The official Christianity of Elizabethan England was Anglican—not the Christianity of Calvin, nor that of Augustine, Aquinas and Dante (although Hooker did make use of Augustine, as well as of Calvin). Not surprisingly, many of Shakespeare's plays use Christian allusions, and even seem predominantly Christian in theme. But it is a difficult and unrewarding approach to try to fit all the plays into a particular mold. Some, like *Macbeth*, fit fairly well; others, like *Romeo*, *Hamlet*, and *Lear* fit less well. Others, like *Antony and Cleopatra* or *Julius Caesar*, should not be bent into a Christian pattern. Shakespeare as an artist was attempting to dramatize exceedingly various stories in the most effective way possible. Different stories lent themselves to different themes, and not all the themes were Christian, nor were all the stories amenable to Christian presentation. To judge by Professor Battenhouse's article, the results of applying Christian premises to all of them are less than compelling. No single pattern can fit works which are in themselves so "rich and strange."

Wright State University
Dayton, Ohio

WORKS CITED

Bloom, Harold. *The Western Canon*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994.

Shakespeare, William. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Atlanta: Houghton Mifflin, 1974. [All quotations from Shakespeare are taken from this edition.]

Spenser, Edmund. *The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser*. London: OUP, 1912.

Whitaker, Virgil K. *Shakespeare's Use of Learning*. San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library P, 1953.

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

The Scarus-Episode in *Antony and Cleopatra*: A Response to Roy Battenhouse, *Shakespearean Tragedy*[*]

INGE LEIMBERG

When this short piece was ready for the press I heard that Professor Battenhouse had passed away. This is very sad news. I have always admired Professor Battenhouse as a scholar and, in the short period of our cooperation in *Connotations*, I have learned to know him as a senior colleague with whom it was a pleasure to enter into critical debate. Always amiable and completely unassuming, he gave me the impression of a man who did not only study the Christian premises of Shakespeare but lived according to them. I had been looking forward so much to discussing the contents of this paper with Professor Battenhouse. But for that it is now, sadly, too late.

* * *

My response will begin with some objections to the way in which criteria and sources of Christian morality are applied to Shakespeare in Battenhouse's book. I will then plead for an interpretation of Shakespeare on Christian premises, proceeding from two reviews of *Shakespearean Tragedy* which contain some especially controversial points. In one of them, Battenhouse's suggestions concerning *Antony and Cleopatra* 4.7.7 are quoted as a paradigm of his inability "to resist excess." This is discussed in the second part of my paper.[1]

Regarding "Shakespearean Tragedy" in the light of "Christian Premises" implies that there is such a thing as "Shakespearean Tragedy." But is there? Does not, rather, each single tragedy in the canon belong

[*]Reference: Roy W. Battenhouse, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Its Art and Its Christian Premises* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1969; 2nd ed. 1971).

to an essentially different type within the tragic genre as seen in Shakespeare's day and is, accordingly, different in tone and purpose? Moreover, there is no reason why Shakespeare should have been content with the traditional types (as, for instance, revenge tragedy, or Senecan tragedy, or tragical history . . .) and refrained from creating some of his own as, for instance, a metaphysical tragedy (*Hamlet*) or a Sophoclean tragedy (*King Lear*), or a problem tragedy (*Coriolanus*). Of course all Shakespeare's tragedies are in a class of their own. But regarded on their own level, mere classification only scratches the surface of their individuality. This is, I am afraid, a bit of a truism, and a somewhat outdated one at that. It had its moment in Shakespeare criticism in about 1930 when it was fashionable to judge Shakespeare's tragic heroes against the background of contemporary moral teaching. It was not yet redundant, however, in 1968 when, in a study on *Romeo and Juliet*[2] (implicitly supported by scholars like Kenneth Muir) I ventured to criticize the kind of criticism which subjected the poetic genius to the moralistic teaching of the period and did not see that Shakespeare's protagonists make such a universal impact just because they are (like every man or woman in the audience) absolutely and irreplaceably individual.

It seems to me that there are no such things as "Shakespeare's tragic heroes" in general, much less that they are all "slaves of passion," warning examples to be presented on the stage in a tragedy meant to effect a predominantly (or even exclusively) moral catharsis. Even in the *Apology for Poetry*, with all Sidney's emphasis on virtuous action, the didactic purpose of poetry is clearly subordinated to commiseration and admiration.[3] The problem of moral teaching—Christian or otherwise—in the rapidly changing scene of Elizabethan theory and drama was given attention to by Madeleine Doran in 1954.[4] Her short but elucidating description gives an impression of the enormous complexity of this subject which, of course, increases when it comes to its being considered in a study of Shakespeare.

To my mind, *Romeo and Juliet* is indeed "a story of more woe" than ever was or will be, not of moral offence and retribution; in *Antony and Cleopatra* the indeed "fallen" condition of the protagonists is surpassed by their loving metamorphosis, and King Lear, though certainly

"sinning," is "sinned against" even more. If a rough and ready formula concerning Christian moral teaching as a criterion of Shakespeare's plays is permitted: a Christian-moralistic standard can be very useful when applied to a villain-hero like Richard III or Macbeth but gives a distorted view of Shakespeare's "middle" men (or women), let alone those who, not in spite but rather because of their "mere" humanity are felt to be transcendently charming and deeply moving and, therefore, capable of making a cathartic impact which is not merely moralistic but existential. While disagreeing, therefore, with Battenhouse's views on *Romeo and Juliet*, I am greatly impressed with his reading of *Coriolanus*, a play with perhaps not a downright villain but a problem-figure with more than one tragic flaw for a protagonist. I consider this interpretation as perhaps the best documented and most ingenious as well as congenial one I have read.

From the criticism with which *Shakespearean Tragedy* has met I select for my purpose Harry Levin's review which, true to its title, "Evangelizing Shakespeare,"[5] raises some basic questions concerning an interpretation of Shakespeare in the light of religious premises. According to some of his critics, Battenhouse tends to go just a little too far, but, to my mind, so does Levin, although in the opposite direction. To give an example: Levin thinks it abstruse that to Battenhouse "Antony's gaudy nights are sinister parodies of the Last Supper."[6] This seems to me an inadequate paraphrase of Battenhouse's statement: "Antony's farewell supper in Act IV . . . has a tantalizing similarity to Christ's Last Supper."[7] Furthermore, Levin cannot have reread this scene which has nothing of Cleopatra's "gaudy night" about it and is, indeed, rich in allusions to the prototypical farewell supper of world literature.

To make his own attitude to an interpretation of Shakespeare on Christian premises quite clear, Levin remarks that "the last word on the subject" ought to remain R. M. Frye's dictum that "Shakespeare's works are pervasively secular, in that they make no encompassing appeal to theological categories and in that they are concerned with the dramatization (apart from distinctively Christian doctrines) of universally human situations within a temporal and this-worldly arena."[8] This conclusion, which Levin, astonishingly, terms "well-tempered," calls for comment.

As to Shakespeare's delineation "of universally human situations within a temporal and this-worldly arena," this might be a description of certain parts of the Bible, too. And as to his works being "pervasively secular" this is either a definition of some kind of "social realism" or a mere generalization. Surely, any "secular" poetry worth reading is more than just one-dimensional, no matter how the various kinds of dimensions may be defined. There is no music (apart from the electronic variety) which works without overtones, similarly language deprived of symbolic meaning is not poetic language. But where symbolism comes in, metaphysics are not far away. In the English Renaissance, this meant, to a great extent, Christian metaphysics because, however strong the classical influences, the Christian ones where still basic.

Where the world of words is concerned there must have prevailed in a man or woman of the Renaissance a kind of anamnesis of the biblical canon. Shakespeare, at Stratford grammar school had learned to regard the Psalter as "an englishe booke"[9] which had to be translated into Latin in daily instalments, that is from Monday to Saturday. On Sundays, however, he officiated as a choirboy (like Sir John Falstaff, who on his deathbed "babbled of green fields") and in this capacity will have been very careful not to miss his lines but know his Collects, Epistles, and Gospels by heart. Then there was the sermon which, however dreary, could not but refer to some biblical stories as ravishing as any in Ovid, and to parables leaving an imprint of at least some worldly wisdom in any but a complete dullard's mind. The strongest impact on an ear like Shakespeare's must, however, have been made by the musical quality of the English Bibles of his day as well as the Vulgate. If it comes to the writings of St. Augustine on which Battenhouse (to many of his critics' dismay) so largely draws, they were not part of the curriculum of Stratford grammar school but they are such an important part of the tradition leading up to the Reformation that some of their main tenets may be regarded as common knowledge. And if a critic happens to realize that in *De libero arbitrio* parts of the intellectual pattern of *Hamlet* are surprisingly clearly foreshadowed, it would be an omission not to refer to the work.

Another question that comes up concerning the description of Shakespeare's stage as a "temporal and this-worldly arena" is whether

any stage ever was? (Think of the "genealogy" of the clown.) Shakespeare chose the stage, not like the late Donne (a master of "dramatic" language if ever there was one) the pulpit. But it is a mere truism that, from Aeschylus onwards, the stage, the forum, and the pulpit have always been closely related. Surely Elizabethan drama made no exception from this rule. To quote someone who "has authority" in this field: "The secularity of Elizabethan drama is obvious. It cannot in any possible sense be called a sacred drama. But a secular drama is not necessarily irreligious. It may still expound religious ideas and express religious attitudes and feelings."[10] To take a more modern and much more provoking example than the great Elizabethans, Bertolt Brecht, the Marxist partisan. What is *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*[11] if not (apart from Brecht's other sources) a dramatized version of the Judgement of Solomon in 1 Kings 3:27? Brecht's method is direct and sentimental and not in any way as revealing as Shakespeare's in that wonderful parody of the Last Supper in *Antony and Cleopatra* but on its own level it testifies to the essential religious potentiality of the stage, if not to that Judeo-Christian anamnesis mentioned above, which was obviously still working in the communist emigrant from Hitler's Germany in 1944.[12]

In Shakespeare's "secular" drama parody rules supreme. "The King's a beggar when the play is done" but as a beggar he goes on playing his part as one of the men and women acting their seven ages on the stage of life. "All the world's a stage" and "the truest poetry is the most feigning." The mirror held up to a distorted world by the dramatist has to be, at least partly, a distorting mirror, especially where it is meant to show that it is not manners and good taste but the most vital issues of human existence which have got out of focus. Great dramatists of all ages have resorted to persiflage as a means of conveying religious truth. In Shakespeare's age (the early dawn of the Enlightenment) in particular, tragedy began to replace the morality and mystery play, entering into the heritage of both, be it in form, or contents, or message. *Doctor Faustus* and *Measure for Measure* are cases in point.

If Professor Frye rejects Battenhouse's theory of a Christian tragedy because it does not apply to "the one universally acknowledged example of Christian tragedy, Milton's *Samson Agonistes*,"[13] this example, to my mind, helps to refute rather than prove his statement. *Samson*

Agonistes is a unique neo-classical experiment, and an unbelievably successful one at that. *Samson Agonistes* is a very gem. But it stands alone in literary history and is quite as unqualified to serve as an example of classical as of Christian tragedy.

Last but not least there are some considerations of literary style which make it appear all the more probable that religious themes when brought on the stage induce the audience to follow Polonius' advice: "by indirections find directions out." I am sorry to disagree with Ben Jonson but Shakespeare though, surely, "for all time" was "of an age," too. In the English Renaissance it would be difficult to find a text untinged with analogy, or allusion, or periphrasis, or antonomasia, or paronomasia, or ambiguity, or irony, and, above all, tropical inversion, from simile to catachresis, and from *allegoria permixta* to *allegoria tota*, the latter being preferred by Shakespeare. This means that the surface of dramatic probability or "secularity" remains intact. Macbeth can indeed be appreciated as a drama of crime and passion, a "pervasively secular" spectacle. On the other hand, it may also be regarded as the middle link of a chain reaching from *Doctor Faustus* to *Paradise Lost*.[14] Marlowe quite openly parodies the Everyman play and Milton appeals to the heavenly muse for inspiration to write a religious epic, his scene being laid, true to the hierarchical tripartite order of the miracle play, in hell, in heaven, and in the newly created world. Shakespeare, however, "copies" what he reads in the book of life as it lies open in this world (including its written books), and he does so in a style never obvious but always suggestive of the metaphysical substrata which have been our dearest concern since God made man in his image, that is, as a being aware of images, trying to read them as they appear on the back wall of his cave.

Turning from Professor Frye's review of Battenhouse's *Shakespearean Tragedy* to his own study, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963), the reader is due for a surprise: Frye proceeds exactly along the lines followed by Battenhouse though, instead of turning to St. Augustine, he goes to Luther, Calvin, and Hooker for instruction on religious undercurrents in literature:

> . . . literature as one of the liberal arts, was understood by leading theologians as free from theological dominion and, indeed, as freed from theological infiltration. Literature was thus understood, approached from this perspective of theology, as being independent of any specifically Christian theology and as being endowed with its own integrity—a major point which has escaped the attention of the theologizers. (7-8)

Professor Frye's logic seems unconvincing to me. The very fact that the great theologians regarded literature as "free from theological dominion" confirms that, seen from this angle, religious subjects in literature were a poet's own concern. Moreover, in seeking and finding his standards in Luther, Calvin, and Hooker, Professor Frye implicitly contradicts his own tenet that "literature was thus understood . . . as being independent of any specifically Christian theology . . . ." This means succumbing to the same fallacy as L. B. Campbell's and F. M. Dickey's that *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes* had to be regarded as *Slaves of Passion* because of the standards previously set by some moral teachers.[15] Surely, great poets do not set pen to paper in order to provide *exempla* for the moralists of their times. Neither do they consult the works of the theologians for special permission to probe the religious depths of the second nature they are about to create. And Shakespeare was not the first great Elizabethan to do that. But Marlowe is not even mentioned in Frye's index.

The kind of theological reference in Shakespeare which Frye does admit is of a clearly denotative type, for instance "Sin of self-love" in Sonnet 62. This he comments: "'Self-love is always sinful . . .,' Luther writes" (249). Shakespeare, when he uses his "utmost skill" (*Pericles* 5.1.76) is not always as obvious and didactic as that but challenges us to use our "utmost skill" so that we may see some of the magic in his web including the theological strands hidden at the surface of his *altera natura*.

* * *

The Scarus-episode in *Antony and Cleopatra* has been brought to our attention by Roy Battenhouse. The passage is quoted by R. M. Frye in his review of *Shakespearean Tragedy* (which, however sceptical, is always moderate or even amiable in tone):

> "Perhaps even the detail of Scarus' scar has an emblematic significance. It formerly, we are told, had the shape of a "T" (which suggests true sacrifice, prefiguratively that of the cross), whereas now it has the shape of an "H" (which suggests, besides the pun on "ache," an upended and overdone "T," perhaps a "Hades' wound")."
>
> Such comments abound in this book, and I must protest, in the words of Horatio, "'twere to consider too curiously to consider so," to which Roy Battenhouse would surely reply, in Hamlet's words, "No, faith, not a jot."[16]

This is nicely put but it is also, I am sorry to say, little more than critical small talk. Hamlet is a dangerous person to quote, anyway, especially this remark from the *meditatio mortis* in 5.1, which is a kind of lesson for Horatio (needless to say a parodistical one) in the logical art of pursuing a causal sequence. By way of exordium Hamlet uses a well-known biblical quotation, only slightly paraphrased: ". . . not a jot" (Matt. 5:18). Not that he ever leaves off quoting the Bible (rather than Montaigne, whose acid Pyrrhonism is alien to Shakespeare's philosophy of life).[17] The whole passage is a variation on the theme "then shall the dust return to the earth" (Eccles. 12:7), and even the "bung-hole" filled by the dust of death can be traced back to the book of Genesis in a strictly Hamletian regress: a bung-hole is an orifice, and what spectator gifted with anything like "imagination" (as mentioned by Hamlet) looking at Yorick's open-mouthed skull in Hamlet's hand, would not shudderingly recall the words: ". . . dust shalt thou eat" (Gen. 3:14).

"Too curiously"? "No, not a jot." I have hardly scratched the surface of Hamlet's meditation on "dust" and "dram" and "clay" and "earth," which latter is, of course, *humus*, and this is *homo*, and this is Adam. . . . The "jot" functions as the prototypical letter which must never be lost, because of its smallness. The Latin equivalent to the Hebrew *iota*, the I, has a similar significance. Its shape resembles Euclid's straight line, which is the basic component of letters like T or H.[18] Moreover, it is identical with the mysterious number I and in English it also means *ego*, not to mention that in Shakespeare's time "aye" was still written that way.[19]

One might as well say that a composer uses a note for no expressive purpose as that a poet uses a letter without meaning his audience to "consider it . . . curiously," indeed. Shakespeare's audience, to all appearances, would have booed him if presented with some talk about

some letters (in a scene charged with great pathos, preluding the catastrophe of a great tragedy) without any palpable meaning whatsoever. But the T and H in *Antony and Cleopatra* 4.7.7-8 are intensely meaningful and thanks are due to Professor Battenhouse for having drawn our attention to their "Christian signality."[20]

To outline the dramatic as well as linguistic context to which the T-H-initials belong: in the beginning of the tragic catastrophe when Antony is deserted by gods and men, a soldier not mentioned in Plutarch enters the stage. This man remains faithful when nearly every one else turns traitor and he goes on fighting in spite of being mortally wounded. All this is signified by his name, Scarus, which firstly is nothing but a latinized form of the English noun *scar* (4.5.2).[21] But also *scare*, fear, comes in, in fact not only the fear of the enemies whom Scarus, irrespective of his death-wound, will chase like hares (4.7.12) but Antony's fear. Scarus himself brings this up, using the synonym of his name, "fear," instead of the homonym, *scare* (4.12.8-9).

Shakespeare goes on to employ these linguistic devices in order to stress the expressive energy of the name Scarus. "Let us score their backs" says Scarus when urging Antony on to follow the retreating enemy, and Antony speaks of "wounds" and "gashes" (4.8.10-11) to make it quite clear to the audience that Scarus bears his name like an emblematic *inscriptio* or an allegorical label, or a motto or device of some knightly order. But, to "make assurance double sure," Scarus' scars are outlined like the initials of a monogram: "I had a wound here that was like a T, / But now 'tis made an H" (4.7.8-9).

The pun on the name of the letter [eitʃ] and the noun *ache* (pain) is mentioned in the commentaries though without a reference to the *serio ludere* practised by sixteenth-century humanists with this name of a letter and this noun. An instance of this is provided by E. J. Dobson in *English Pronunciation 1500-1700*.[22] Referring to a grammarian he values highly, Dobson writes:

> . . . Hart, *Methode*, f. Aiiii' identifies the name of the letter *h* with the noun *ache* (formerly pronounced with [tʃ]), and goes on to say that with the names of the letters as they are, *t h r* (*te ache er*) can reasonably be held to spell *Teacher*. This does not mean that the *each* of *teacher* is the same in pronunciation as the word

ache; Hart is obviously thinking of the visual appearance of the letter-names and of the word *teacher* in ordinary orthography.[23]

According to *A Methode or comfortable beginning for all vnlearned* (1570) the cipher TH suggests teaching. This may apply to the didactic value of the Scarus episode where the initials appear not unlike a monogram of their bearer. In this context it is perhaps worth mentioning that there is a certain similarity to the abbreviated version of the Jesus-monogram, IH.[24]

This "grammatical" interpretation of TH has a historical as well as an emblematic parallel, still known to Shakespeare's contemporaries. According to Geofroy Tory, the ancients used the letters Tau and Theta in their punitive proceedings to signify pardon by Tau and condemnation by Theta or T&H.[25] There is a parallel to this in the *descriptio* of the Oleander-emblem in the *Pegma* of Petrus Costalius (1555): this plant contains, according to Pliny and Dioscorides, a poison which is salvatory for men but dangerous for animals. That holds true, too, says the *descriptio*, for the Bible, which leads the faithful to heaven but is, like the black Theta, the undoing of unbelievers: "Sed nigrum reprobis addere Theta solet."[26] In the commentary this "Theta" is explained as the first letter of Θάνατος, 'death,' used as a mark of condemnation on voting tablets, epitaphs, and lists of soldiers. From the context established by Petrus Costalius, it is fairly obvious that the Tau in contrast with the Theta stands for the *signum Tau* on the foreheads of the elect.[27] When, accordingly, in Scarus' wound the T has melted into the H it is only too clear that he is a "death-marked" man.

The pattern would fit excellently were it not for the absence of one important trait: according to the topical meaning of Tau and Theta the man branded with the *Theta nigrum* is guilty of a criminal action and deserves to be punished. This is certainly not so with Scarus. Only an error of justice can have led to his being marked with the TH. The prototype of such a misjudgement is the Crucifiction of Christ. Thus by an apparent incongruity the symbolic pattern is thrown into relief. The *miles Romanus*, Scarus, who gives his life for his friends, appears as a *miles Christianus*. This interpretation fits well into a tragedy taking place just before the beginning of the Christian era and charged by Shakespeare

with a mass of hints that the really new era is not the Augustan one but another in which Caesar Ausgutus is not cast for even a bit-part but only just mentioned as the author of that "decree . . . that all the world should be taxed" (Luke 2:1).

The parodical typology of the "stigmatized" Scarus as *miles Christianus* is made obvious when Antony, after having given his hand to the soldier bleeding from his deadly wounds, asks Cleopatra to let Scarus kiss her hand, saying: "Behold this man" (4.8.22). This is of course nothing but the translation of "Ecce Homo" and near-identical with the "Behold the man" of the King James Bible. Battenhouse has drawn our attention to this biblical allusion and very rightly described Antony's "Behold this man" as "a parody of the Ecce Homo of John 19.6" (174). I am afraid I cannot quite see how Professor Frye managed to find this "precious and recherché" (320). Shakespeare clearly quotes the Bible and if he had not wanted his audience to realize that connection he would have avoided the expression. "Ecce Homo" is exactly what the words "Behold this man" say; the analogy is self-evident and if a critic wants to reject it, the burden of proof revolves on him.

There is, however, further evidence in *Antony and Cleopatra* that Shakespeare purposely used the quotation. In the short preamble of the play, the words "behold and see" form the climax of a series of verbs denoting attention: "look . . . Take but good note . . . see . . . behold and see" (1.1.10 ff.).[28] The persons to be beheld are Antony and Cleopatra with their train. But the formula "behold and see" is a quotation from the Good Friday and Holy Saturday responsories.[29] Here again, Shakespeare makes use of parody. In the liturgy it is Christ crucified who is to be beheld and seen by the crowd. On the stage Philo, the "Chorus," claims attention for the protagonists and the "crowd" of less remarkable everymen and -women who accompany them. This stage-crowd and, on a different level, the second chorus-figure and the audience, represent all those "who pass by" in this "two hours' traffic of our stage"; they are "*omnes qui transitis*" on the stage of the world.

Are we really expected not to be mindful of this intellectual reversal and parodic perspective? It strikingly unmasks greatness and transitoriness, and it is so compellingly worded, because "behold" (like German "behalten") originally means "To hold by, keep hold of, retain" or ". . .

to appertain or belong to."[30] The scene is one to be kept hold of and the word is to be remembered when it comes up again in Act 4, ringing with even mightier overtones than in 1.1.

These overtones are, moreover, emphasized by the immediate context in the Scarus-scene. The phrase "Behold this man" is closely followed by an apocalyptic image which strengthens the impression that the Scarus-episode is charged with numinous meaning. Scarus has fought "As if a god in hate of mankind had / Destroy'd in such a shape" (4.8.25-26). This image of a revenging god (as represented in Homeric theology but also in the Bible, e.g. Rev. 11:18 or Isa. 34:2) is followed by another one denoting regal exaltation: Cleopatra will present Scarus with a golden armour which had once belonged to a king (4.8.27). Now, this applies exactly to the armour of the *miles Christianus* which is nothing less than "The whole armour of God" (Eph. 6:11). Considering the synonymy as well as homonymy of "whole" and "all," Cleopatra's gift for Scarus, "an armour all of gold," differs from the divine armour of the *miles Christianus*, "The whole armour of God," by only one letter. But just this difference between "gold" and "God" brings into play the golden radience of the godhead. Luther translates or rather metaphrases Job 22:25: "Und der Allmächtige wird dein Gold sein."[31]

It often happens in such interpretations of baroque wordplay that, when many connotations have been considered and many verbal tangents applied, the intellectual pattern which emerges is confirmed by the most obvious parallel of all: as Scarus is a latinized form of English *scar* it is an anagram of *sacrus*, the vulgar Latin form of *sacer*,[32] which means, according to Cooper's *Thesaurus* (1565), "Holy" or "consecrate" as well as "Cursed," and is, therefore, qualified to describe Christ's Passion and Crucifixion.

All this means, in the context of the tragedy as a whole, that at the very beginning of the catastrophe, when Antony's heroism finally breaks down and Cleopatra's salutation "Lord of lords, / O infinite virtue" (4.8.16-17) is felt by Shakespeare's audience to be profoundly ironic if not blasphemous, a minor part is "interpolated" in the Plutarchan narrative. It foreshadows, in tragic parody, the idea of an expiatory death and its glorification which, however, is not to be realized on the stage of this world.

By the way, has the similarity between "Scarus" and "Eros" ever been explained? Here is a suggestion: Shakespeare found Eros in Plutarch and made him the true, loving friend, who is ready to suffer death rather than see his master die. But to complete the picture of perfect friendship, Shakespeare invented a second figure, whose name he made nearly rhyme with Eros,[33] a man ready to give his life for his friends, too, but not by suffering like a lamb but by fighting like an apocalyptic avenger.

If Shakespeare had not meant us to hear such assonances and see such parallels and hold on to such scriptural and topical and emblematic patterns and follow such parodic reversals and have in mind the whole of the play when regarding each detail, his own words (as they have come down to us) in their context from the very next word to all the relevant background would be misleading. Which, of course, they aren't.

Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität
Münster

NOTES

[1]*Antony and Cleopatra* 4.5-7; commented in *Shakespearean Tragedy* 173-74. In my own reference to the play I follow the *Arden Edition*, ed. M. R. Ridley (London: Methuen, 1954).

[2]*Shakespeare's "Romeo und Julia": Von der Sonettdichtung zur Liebestragödie* (München: Fink, 1968).

[3]Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. G. Shepherd (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1965) 112.30.

[4]Madleine Doran, *Endeavors of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama* (Madison: The U of Wisconsin P, 1954) 85-100 and 350-53.

[5]*JHI* 32 (1971); repr. in *Shakespeare and the Revolution of the Times* (New York: OUP, 1976) 90-99.

[6]Levin 95.

[7]Battenhouse 173.

[8]Levin 92. The reference is to R. M. Frye's review of *Shakespearean Tragedy*, *ELN* (1971): 319-21.

[9]T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakspere's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1944) 1: 684 and *passim*.

[10]Helen Gardner, *Religion and Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 1971) 62.

[11]*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, 1944/45, first performed, in English, Northfield/Minn., 4 May 1948.

[12]Brecht was born in 1898 and still brought up on the Bible.

[13]Frye 319-20.

[14]Helen Gardner, "Milton's Satan and the Theme of Damnation in Elizabethan Tragedy," *English Studies* N.S. 1 (1948): 46-66.

[15]*Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion* (Cambridge: CUP, 1930); *Not Wisely but Too Well: Shakespeare's Love Tragedies* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1957). See my criticism of these works in *Shakespeares "Romeo und Julia."*

[16]Frye 320.

[17]This is another difference of opinion between Harry Levin and myself, see Levin 98.

[18]See Geofroy Tory, *Champ Fleury ou l'Art et Science de la Proportion des Lettres* (1529; repr. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1973) fol. XI verso ff.

[19]*OED*, "I," I.1.a., b., II.3., 4., 5. and "Aye," Forms.

[20]Sir Thomas Browne, *The Garden of Cyrus*, ch. 1, *Religio Medici and Other Works*, ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford: OUP, 1964) 133.5.

[21]Interesting material is provided by the *Mundus Symbolicus* of Philippo Picinello, which refers to the fish, Scarus; cf. the index: "caudâ rete frangit, & evadit, 6 223. Sociorum ope liberatur, 224. Piscatorum insidas arte eludit, 225. / Est symbolum Astuti, 6.- 223.225. Fugientis, 223. Orationis multorum, 224. Mortis, 225," quoted from: *Emblemata: Handbuch der Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts*, eds. A. Henkel and A. Schöne (Stuttgart: Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967) col. 2181. Surely this description is rich in fitting allusions to Shakespeare's Scarus (especially because of the IXΘYΣ acrostic). But so far no direct application of the motif in Christian iconography has been found. The fable of the Scarus breaking the fisher's net is not an sbstruse one but extensively referred to by Pliny in Book XXXII.11 and 151 of the *Naturalis historia*. Pliny, on his part, follows Ovid's (Pseudo-Ovid's to us) rendering of the fable in *Halieutica*.

[22]2 vols. (Oxford: OUP, 1968).

[23]Dobson 1:63.

[24]See *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, ed. E. Kirschbaum S.J. (Freiburg: Herder, 1970), s.v. "Christusmonogramm," and, as an example for letters "melting" and yet being characteristically preserved: T. Dombart, "Der Name Jesus," *Die christliche Kunst* 40 (1915): 257-69, esp. 264.

[25]Fol. LVIII verso to LXX [sic].

[26]See Henkel and Schöne 341.

[27]Vulgate, Ezek. 9:4: "signa tau super frontes."

[28]The onomastic significance of these words, which are all synonyms of "mark" and "note" is discussed in a forthcoming study of mine on *Antony and Cleopatra*.

[29]See R. Tuve, *A Reading of George Herbert* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1952) 33ff.

[30]*OED*, "behold," I. †1. and †3.

[31]"And the Almighty will be thy gold" (my translation).

[32]Alois Walde, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 5th rev. ed. by J. B. Hofmann, vol. 2 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1972) *s.v. sacer*, 459-460.

[33]The name Eros, well-known from mythology and Plutarch, anyway, is emphasized by repetition in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Read backwards it means *sore*. This is not only nearly a homonym but virtually a synonym of *scar*.

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

Herbert's Titles, Commonplace Books, and the Poetics of Use: A Response to Anne Ferry*

MATTHIAS BAUER

According to Theodor W. Adorno, the demands on a literary title are made manifest by the fact that modern poetry cannot fulfil them.[1] He regards the proper function of a title as paradoxical in that it is neither to be understood as being entirely rational and general nor as particular and hermetic. The title, he says, must fit the work like a name rather than openly state its purpose.[2] It must be so close to its essence that it can afford to respect its secrecy. A successful title may be like an answer to the riddle of the text but it never drags to light its hidden qualities.[3]

Even though they were submitted as remarks on Lessing, Adorno's ideas on the office of a title fit George Herbert's English poetry remarkably well. Herbert's English titles, taken as a whole, are different from most of the titles (if any) in Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry. All of them are short, in most cases comprising only one noun with or without article but always lacking the preposition which was usually part of poetic titles in Herbert's time ("Of . . ."; "On . . ."; "To . . .").[4] In spite of their apparent similarity, however, all the titles in *The Temple* have their own particular quality, which can only be understood by way of closely reading the poems to which they belong. For example, titles like "The Bag" and "The Collar" may appear rather similar, as they both denote a material object. Both, by means of the definite article, refer to a particular bag or collar or, prototypically, to *the* bag or *the* collar.[5] They neither refer to mere examples of their kind (a bag, a collar) nor a group of the same objects (bags, collars). Nevertheless, the function

*Reference: Anne Ferry, "Titles in George Herbert's 'little Book,'" *ELR* 23 (1993): 314-44.

of the two titles is not quite the same. No collar is mentioned in "The Collar" and, accordingly, the title assumes a riddling quality, inviting the reader to try and find appropriate meanings for it. In "The Bag," the title word also creates a mystery but here it is its unexpected presence in the text rather than its absence which has a puzzling effect: the wound in his side is the opening of the "bag" in which Christ carries human messages to his father.

The fact that Herbert's titles, considered as a whole as well as individually, are highly characteristic does not mean, however, that they are in every respect dissimilar to earlier literary titles. Thus, when I began studying Herbert's enigmatic titles,[6] I came to realize that they are, to a certain degree, reminiscent of the group-headings found in commonplace books or anthologies. Around 1600, several collections of quotations from English poets appeared in print, which were arranged by topic or subject-matter. Most of their group-headings are like those in *Bel-vedére Or The Garden of the Mvses*, e.g. "Of God," "Of Heauen," or "Of Conscience,"[7] obviously formed in analogy to the familiar Latin "De . . ." titles. One commonplace book or dictionary of poetic quotations, *Englands Parnassus* (1600) has titles like "Life," "Loue," or "Vertue," corresponding even more closely to Herbert's own.[8] The affinity, however, is not confined to the titles. A number of "The Choysest Flowers of our Moderne Poets"[9] bear a certain topical or verbal resemblance to Herbert's poems—which is only to be expected, as Herbert deliberately used and transformed secular poetry for sacred purposes. Under "Vertue" in *Englands Parnassus*, for example,[10] we find lines from Spenser ("Whence is it that the flower of the field doth fade") and Thomas Dekker ("Vertue alone lives still"), which are both reflected in Herbert's poem ("Sweet rose . . . / Thy root is ever in its grave," "Onely a sweet and vertuous soul . . . / Then chiefly lives").

The most detailed study of Herbert's titles is Anne Ferry's stimulating and well-documented article on "Titles in George Herbert's 'little Book.'" Ferry compares Herbert's titles with those of preceding or contemporary English poets, especially with collections of religious verse, and convincingly points out the difference between them. At the same time, she draws attention to the similarity between the characteristic one-word titles of *The Temple* and the headings of Renaissance commonplace books.

Professor Ferry's main example is the *Bel-vedére*, which has an alphabetical table of subjects or topics resembling the list of titles at the end of *The Temple*.[11] In the *Bel-vedére*, however, the actual headings are different from the list of subjects[12] while, for example, in *Englands Parnassus*, as in *The Temple*, they are identical with the table of contents.

Professor Ferry makes a distinction between the "emphasis . . . on the individually 'expressive character' of [Herbert's] titles," and the exploration of "other features," which "can tell us about what he thought a poem should be or do" (314-15). But can this implicit poetological function of the titles really be separated from their "expressive character," that is, from the title as "part of the poem's fiction"?[13] For example, Herbert's titles resemble but are not identical with those of contemporary commonplace books, and I think it is only by taking account of the difference as well as the similarity that we can fully appreciate the function of this model in Herbert's poetics. Such a discriminating stance, however, can only be adopted when the title is regarded as part of the individual poem.

Even when we do not take into account the individual expressiveness of Herbert's titles, however, we have to notice distinctions as well as similarities. Thus Ferry stresses the "consistent choice of the article *the*" (329) in titles like "The Answer," where other poets would use the indefinite article ("An Answer"). Another example is "The Rose" instead of "A Rose," or "On a Rose," or "To a Rose." The use of the definite article, according to Professor Ferry, emphasizes "the category [a title] exemplifies" and signals a tendency "toward categorization, even abstraction," which associates Herbert's titles with commonplace-book headings. Ferry obviously uses the word "category" in a wider or colloquial sense as a synonym of "species" or "class" (as distinct from the more specific or Aristotelian use of categories such as "substance," "quantity," "quality" etc.). A title indicating a certain class of things, however, under which several examples may be grouped, is not the same as an abstraction. Expressions like "the answer" and "the rose" are abstractions from specific cases, but they are by no means indications of a class or group. The distinction becomes clear when we look at comparable concrete terms in the commonplace books. In *Englands Parnassus*, for example, we find headings like "Fishes," "Satires," and

"Trees." These are indeed group-headings but they are not abstractions. The reverse is true of Herbert's "The Flower," "The Posie" etc. A heading like "The Flower" (as opposed to "Flowers") does not indicate a series of examples but an idea or essential quality. It serves to introduce a definition rather than an illustrative example. The definite article, which is regarded by Ferry as a sign of affinity between *The Temple* and the commonplace books, is alien to commonplace-book headings.[14]

Anne Ferry introduces, "for purposes of discussion" (323) a taxonomy of Herbert's titles, which is not derived from a consideration of the poems but from the titles alone. The taxonomy is useful but inevitably entails a number of simplifications. Thus, Ferry's first group of titles which "identify the poem explicitly by an aspect of its form" (323) or "identify the poem as a distinct mode of address" includes "The Answer." But the way in which this poem may constitute an answer of some kind is by no means obvious. "The Answer" may rather be called a poem about answering, whose very point seems to be that there is no answer: the speaker has to confess his ignorance.

The second and third groups comprise names for church rites, feasts, or seasons like "The H. Communion," "Easter," and "Lent" and "titles taken from biblical texts or names or events" (324) such as "The 23 Psalme," "Jordan," or "Dooms-day." In these cases, Ferry maintains, the titles "purport to identify the poem by its subject or by a key image or text associated with it rather than by its form." When we look closely, however, the exact way in which this is done is difficult to determine. In what manner, for example, does "The 23 Psalme" refer to Psalm 23? The Psalm is not exactly the subject of the poem, nor is it "associated with it"; the six stanzas of the poem rather paraphrase and transform the six verses of the psalm itself. Thus, since this poem is to be seen as a version of the psalm the title refers at least as much to the form or genre as to the subject of the poem.[15] A particularly intriguing case is "Jordan." For one thing, the biblical river cannot be said to be the subject of the two poems under that heading. It is neither mentioned nor openly alluded to. Only in the first "Jordan" poem the river image occurs ("Must purling streams refresh a lovers loves?"), inviting us to catch the sense of the title "at two removes" (l. 10). "Jordan" seems to fulfil Adorno's demand for a title which fits the work like a name rather

than state its subject. The name-like character of the title is underlined by the fact that "Jordan" is used without the definite article commonly attached to the names of rivers. Even though Herbert was not alone in doing so ("Jordan" is used, for example, without definite article in the A.V.), the usage serves to underline the personal nature of the name.[16]

The definite article characterizes Professor Ferry's fourth group of titles, which comprises "nouns referring to other than biblical persons, things or actions," purporting "to identify the poem by its subject or a key image associated with it" (324). This group includes "names for objects" such as "The Pulley" and "The Bag," which she calls "emblematic titles" (325), as titles of this kind are to be found in devotional emblem books, most of which were published after *The Temple*.[17] Titles consisting of a single noun with definite article are rather exceptional in emblem literature, which mostly follows the pattern of a *pictura* being superscribed by an *inscriptio*. Nevertheless, Herbert's titles may be called emblematic in that the complex relationship between title and text is not unlike the interplay between the different parts of an emblem, which mutually explain as well as mystify each other. "The Pulley," for example, does not refer to an object discussed or presented in the poem, as the objects of the garden in Hawkins's *Partheneia Sacra*. Its meaning is not obvious but can only be approached by way of closely following up the verbal interplay between text and title.[18]

Ferry's last type of title, which is the most frequent one, consists "of a single noun referring to an abstraction purported to be the topic of the poem, unmodified by an article, a preposition, or an adjective" (325). Professor Ferry again convincingly shows Herbert's originality here as she points out how these titles were altered in accordance with more familiar patterns by later anthologists (326). Such an "abstract" title, however, is not just "purported to be the topic of the poem" in that it indicates a certain subject matter. In its bareness, it also draws attention to itself *as a word* which may be defined, expounded, and transformed in the text.

The definition-like relationship between title and text has made Robert B. Shaw ask "how Herbert's task as a poet compares with that of lexicographer."[19] The affinity between Herbert's one-word titles and the lemmas in a dictionary is implicitly borne out by the fact that Anne

Ferry's argument for the similarity to commonplace books is mainly based upon indices or word-lists at the end of such collections. And indeed the boundaries between a *thesaurus* such as Simon Pelegromius's *Synonymorum silua* (first English ed. 1580), a hard-word dictionary like John Bullokar's *An English Expositor* (1616), and a commonplace book such as *Englands Parnassus* are fluid. In varying degrees, for example, these works all use quotations to explain or illustrate the headwords by which they are arranged.

Alphabetically arranged indices of abstract nouns could also be found in other works which were "used" (and not just read straight through). To give a continental example, a German edition of *Esopus leben vnd fabeln* (Freiburg, 1555)[20] contains "Ein Register der schönen leren so aus diesen fabeln genommen werden" [An index of the beautiful lessons taken from these fables] (a iii^{r}). In this index, terms like "Lob" [Praise], "Natur" [Nature], or "Undanckbarkeit" [Ungratefulness] are followed by relevant maxims and the titles of the fables from which they are derived. The table made it far easier to use Aesop's fables for didactic or rhetorical purposes.

The fact that the titles in *The Temple* are not arranged alphabetically need not detract from their index- or dictionary-like character, as the alphabetical order was by no means the only one in Herbert's time. John Withals's popular *Short Dictionary for Yonge Begynners*, for example, which was first published in 1553 and repeatedly reprinted until 1634,[21] has a topical arrangement "going from the broad, general subjects to the specific but less well known."[22] Just as titles may resemble entries in a dictionary, dictionary headwords could be regarded as titles. In the "Address to the Reader" of his *Alveary* (1573), John Baret explains that work on this English-Latin dictionary began with having his pupils take the Latin-English *Bibliotheca Eliotae* (1548) and "write the English before ye Latin, and likewise to gather a number of fine phrases out of Cicero, Terence, Caesar, Liuia &c. and to set them vnder seuerall Tytles, for the more ready finding them againe at their neede."[23] The statement underlines the affinity between the dictionary and the anthology or commonplace book while it also stresses the usefulness of such a form of collection. It may be remarked in passing that the title of Baret's dictionary, *Alveary* (beehive) links up with the speaker's wish in Herberts

"The H. Scriptures (I)": "OH Book! infinite sweetnesse! let my heart / Suck ev'ry letter, and a honey gain" (1-2). Both poems on "The H. Scriptures" emphasize that the reader of the Bible is a collector or anthologist (a word that is of course related to the flower and bee imagery) who strives to know "how all thy lights combine," "Seeing not onely how each verse doth shine, / But all the constellations of the story" ("The H. Scriptures [II]," 1, 3-4). The poem is cited by Ferry as a comment on Herbert's own method of choosing the same title for widely "dispersed" poems (331) and on the common practice to create "harmonies" such as the "famous concordances of biblical texts . . . prepared at Little Gidding" (336).

* * *

Why did Herbert, by means of his titles, present himself in the role of anthologist, concordance- or dictionary-maker? Professor Ferry suggests that to Herbert the role of compiler or copyist was a sign of humility.[24] She regards his choice of commonplace-book titles as "a means of escaping poetry associated with human invention and entwined with self" (337) since it enabled him to introduce personal experiences under impersonal topics (342). But setting aside the question whether introducing a personal experience under an impersonal heading is *per se* a sign of humility, I wonder whether Ferry's own reference to "The H. Scriptures (II)" does not already show that the commonplace-book or dictionary model served other purposes as well.

I do not think that Herbert's titles are afterthoughts, instruments "for achieving the qualities of 'transparency or self-effacement'" which "were not part of Herbert's original program for sacred verse."[25] The tension between titles and texts is so much part of the poems' effect that it seems highly improbable that the titles were affixed at a later stage. On the contrary, quite often the title word with its different layers of meaning, its paronomastic and anagrammatic connotations seems to be the seed from which the poem develops.[26] The fact that Herbert occasionally altered the title of a poem cannot be used as evidence to the contrary. The change from "Perfection" to "The Elixer," for example, goes along with a substantial revision of the text.

As the subtitle of *The Temple* points out, "Sacred Poems" and "Private Ejaculations" go together and sometimes they do so in the very same poem—when the title, for instance, appears to introduce a general, "sacred" subject while the text speaks of "private" experience.[27] An example is "Justice," where in twelve lines the personal and possessive pronouns "I," "me," and "my" occur no less than nineteen times. Herbert's practice thus points to the general significance of individual experience—not as a celebration of "self" but as a recognition of the divine likeness of the human soul which makes even its fallen state a matter of universal import.[28] Thus, paradoxically, Herbert's "general heads" are signs both of "Humilitie" and "Assurance." This concept is such an essential feature of Christian belief that its expression in Herbert's title-poem relationships hardly seems to be the result of a change of mind at a later stage.

Quite convincingly, however, Ferry refers to the psalter as a parallel to the union of the abstract or general and the personal in Herbert's titles and poems: "To aid private use of the psalter as 'a harmony of holy passions' . . . it was often printed with some sort of *'Table, shewing whereunto euery Psalme is particularly to be applied,'* where the reader could find psalms collated like passages in a commonplace book."[29] Even though the entries on such a table were different from the titles in *The Temple,* the idea of "private use" links them with the names of Herbert's poems as well as with the lemmas of a dictionary, the *topoi* of the *ars memorativa,* or the headings of a commonplace book. Moreover, Herbert was certainly aware of the fact that the headings of the Psalter were the prototypes of titles in a collection of poetry and that his own titles, however different in detail, would inevitably evoke this background.

Herbert himself stresses "use" as a central feature of his poetics in "The Quidditie," a poem which, as its title ("quid dittie?") says,[30] is concerned with the *quidditas* of poetry: ". . . A verse // . . . is that which while I use / I am with thee" (1, 11-12). "I use" is the essential part of the definition as it forms the condition of being close to God. The speaker is with Christ not when he makes a verse (the poet as maker) nor when he is inspired by it (the poet as prophet) but when he *uses* it. The poet's material or talent is all there (in the Book of Books) but must be employed; the Lord must receive his own "with usury" (Mt 25:27).[31]

The truth of Herbert's statement becomes evident in the very act of making it, for when the poet says "I use" he uses the letters of the Word to express his being with "Iesu." (This corresponds exactly to the idea of a *verse* being used to *serve* him.) The "literal" use of the Lord's name is a prototypically poetic one, as Herbert makes explicit in the poem "JESU." Herbert's "christological" understanding of the letters I-E-S-U is confirmed in "The Banquet," where the speaker sees "What I seek, for what *I sue*" (46, emphasis added), as well as in "The Sonne," where the son who is "parents *issue*" (6, emphasis added) is of course Jesus.[32] In his "Briefe Notes on Valdesso's *Considerations*," Herbert emphasizes that the Holy Scriptures do not just incite faith and are then "to be left." They

> have not only an Elementary *use*, but a *use* to perfection, neither can they ever be exhausted, ... Indeed he that shall so attend to the bark of the letter, as to neglect the Consideration of Gods Worke in his hearte through the Word, doth amisse; *both* are to be done, the Scriptures still *used*, and Gods worke within us still observed, who workes by his Word, and ever in the reading of it.[33]

The right use of the Scriptures does not consist in a dismissal of the letter but in concerning oneself with more than its bark. The core of the letter must be grasped and employed and (to continue Herbert's seed image) become fruitful.

Herbert's poetics of use is related to idealist concepts familiar to readers of Renaissance literature. His "use" is not utilitarian but functional; he shares, so to speak, Pamela's (as opposed to Crecropia's) view in Sidney's *New Arcadia* (III.10), who holds that the "use" of beauty does not consist in making it serve a specific purpose but in doing it justice as the most perfect state of that which it adorns.[34] In a comparable sense, Herbert uses the words of the Bible not, for instance, as proofs in an argument about religious dogma but, poetically, as an end in themselves, as the never-to-be-exhausted subject of his own work. This is a highly appropriate use since, as the quotation from Herbert's comments on Valdesso's *Considerations* has shown, "to work" is the very essence of the Word. In *The Country Parson*, Herbert employs the simile of the successful farmer and his "well inned" harvest to point out that the "use" of God's word means utterance: ". . . yet if God give him not the Grace to *use*, and *utter* this well, all his advantages are to his losse."[35] This

goes together with the meaning of the verb *use* itself as a synonym of *to say, utter* (*OED* 16.b.).

The use of the word in the poet's utterance brings us back once more to the commonplace book. Apart from the printed examples of the genre, the commonplace book was a very personal or individual kind of work. We remember that Herbert recommended the country parson to compile "a book, and body of Divinity" out of his reading of "the Fathers . . . and the Schoolmen, and the later Writers," which was to be used as "the storehouse of his Sermons. . . . For though the world is full of such composures, yet every man's own is fittest."[36] On an even more basic level, humanist educators recommended their students to make a collection of their own which contained both quotidian and rare or exquisite words, as well as idiomatic expressions, sayings, proverbs, or difficult passages from authors, and could be used for purposes of *inventio*. Thus Ludovicus Vives recommends:

> Compones tibi librum chartae vacuae, iustae magnitudinis: quem in certos locos, ac velut nidos partieris. In uno eorum annotabis vocabula usus quotidiani, velut animi, corporis, actionum nostrarum, ludorum, vestium, habitaculorum, coiborum: in altero vocabula rara, exquisita: in alio idiomata & formulas loquendi.[37]

Vives metaphorically refers to the heads or titles under which linguistic material is to be grouped as "nidos," nests. This expression is obviously taken from Erasmus, who recommended a similar use of the (classical) authors in *De copia verborum ac rerum*:

> Postremo vtcunque postulat occasio, ad manum erit dicendi supellex, certis veluti nidis constitutis, vnde quae voles petas.[38]

Certainly Herbert regarded the Scriptures as more than just *supellex*, equipment, but the concept as such plays a central part in his poetics. He verbally echoes Erasmus and Vives in "Longing," where the world not only appears, in the traditional metaphor, as God's book but is more specifically described in terms that characterize the commonplace book:

> Indeed the world's thy book,
> Where all things have their leafe assign'd:
> Yet a meek look
> Hath interlin'd.

Thy board is full, yet humble guests
Finde nests. (49-54)

The expression "nests," which comes as a surprise in the sacramental context of the board as communion table, can now be identified as a term connected with the practice of commonplace-book making (where there are, of course, "tables," too). The "nest" signifies the *topos* or title under which related entries are grouped together. The speaker thus literally hopes to be anthologized, to be (s)elected and find a place between entries already made ("yet a meek look / Hath interlin'd"). The poet who longs to be called to the table of *communio* or common place, prays, in the words of "Sighs and Grones": "O Do not use me / After my sinnes" (1-2)—words which are themselves an example of how the Book of Books may be "used."[39]

"The Table" (or "A Table of . . .") was the most frequent heading of an index or list of contents in Herbert's time,[40] a usage which is related to the tablet on which an inscription is made (such as the ten commandments). In the contemporary climate of increasing denominational dispute, however, *table* was also a highly controversial term; it was preferred by dedicated Protestants to that of *altar*. John Williams's pamphlet on *The Holy Table, Name and Thing, More Anciently, Properly, and Literally Used under the New Testamant, then that of an Altar* (Lincoln, 1637) is only one of a flood of publications concerned with the question.[41] Herbert does not take sides in the dispute but, so to speak, strives to transcend it poetically. In the light of a heightened public awareness to the meaning of *table* and *altar*, the first title in "The Church," "The Altar," becomes the heading of all other headings: it is "The Table" on which the poet presents the offerings of his work, indicated by their names.

Herbert's combining the images of the communion table and the index or commonplace book points to the fact that in *The Temple* the use of the Word does not merely serve didactic purposes but is seen as a sacred event. Herbert's model in this respect is the rite of the communion itself, in which the consecration of the bread and wine takes place through the use of the Scriptures. The priest performs the sacramental act not, for instance, by speaking a magic formula but by *quoting* Christ's words at the Last Supper ("Take, eat, this is my body . . .").[42]

Both Herbert's titles and the poems themselves indicate that the commonplace book and the dictionary as aids to poetic or rhetorical invention are of considerable influence on Herbert's poetics. *Inventio* to Herbert means what the word says: finding. Accordingly, one of the characteristically "original" features of Herbert's poetry, his titles, point to an "imitative" technique. What Herbert refers to, however, is not so much the imitation of a genre, style, or subject matter but the "use" of exemplary linguistic material, the fruitful employment of the Word. This goes together with the dialectic of enigmatic or hieroglyphic titles simultaneously pointing to "common" places, or "private ejaculations" becoming "sacred poems."

Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität
Münster

NOTES

[1]Theodor W. Adorno, "Titel: Paraphrasen zu Lessing," first published in *Akzente* (1962) no. 3, repr. in *Noten zur Literatur* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974) 325-34.

[2]Adorno 326: "Titel müssen wie Namen es treffen, nicht sagen."

[3]Adorno 327: "Der gesuchte Titel aber will immer das Verborgene hervorzerren. Das verweigert das Werk zu seinem Schutz. Die guten Titel sind so nahe an der Sache, daß sie deren Verborgenheit achten; . . . ." Adorno prefers titles given by a reader to those made by the author: ". . . mit dem Titel antwortet er auf die Rätselfrage."

[4]The only exception is Herbert's "To all Angels and Saints." George Herbert is quoted from F. E. Hutchinson's edition of his *Works* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1941; repr. 1945).

[5]On the individuating function of the definite article as it was recognized by seventeenth-century grammarians, see Ian Michael, *English Grammatical Categories and the Tradition to 1800* (Cambridge: CUP, 1970) 358-59.

[6]In a paper for the quatercentenary conference at Groningen in 1993, now published as "'A title strange, yet true': Toward an Explanation of Herbert's Titles," *George Herbert: Sacred and Profane*, ed. Helen Wilcox and Richard Todd (Amsterdam: VU University P, 1995) 103-17.

[7]These are the first three headings of the *Bel-vedére* (1600); reprinted by the Spenser Society (no. 17, 1875) under the title *Bodenham's Belvedére Or The Garden of the Mvses* (rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, 1967).

[8]*Englands Parnassus* (London, 1600; repr. Menston: The Scolar P, 1970).

[9]*Englands Parnassus*, title page.

[10]*Englands Parnassus* 290-93.

[11]See Ferry 332-35.

[12]Ferry points out that later editions of *The Temple* beginning with the seventh in 1656 "were printed with the table of titles moved to the front and in back what the title-page announces as 'an Alphabetical Table for ready finding out chief places' in the text" (338). This fact, however, also shows that a list of subjects, such as the one in *Bel-vedére*, was not regarded as quite the same as a list of titles.

[13]Ferry 315, quoting John Hollander, "'Haddock's Eyes': A Note on the Theory of Titles," *Vision and Resonance: Two Senses of Poetic Form* (New York: OUP, 1975) 223-24. For other discussions of Herbert's titles see Ferry 314n3 and Bauer 113n3, 116n35.

[14]Professor Ferry's overlooking the difference may be due to the fact that the *Bel-vedére* is confined to abstract topics. The great number of concrete objects in Herbert's titles ("Church-lock and key," "The Collar"), on the other hand, indicates that the commonplace book is not the only model for Herbert's titles.

[15]This view is supported by the fact that in the Great Bible of 1539, each psalm has a heading which includes the definite article ("The . xxiii . Psalme").

[16]See Bauer 122-23 on Herbert's titles as personal names.

[17]Ferry does not give examples but refers to Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948). Two of the emblem books discussed by Freeman have titles of this kind: Henry Hawkins's *Partheneia Sacra* (1633) and E. M.'s *Ashrea* (1665).

[18]On "The Pulley," see Bauer 108; on the emblematic interplay of mystification and explanation 106-07.

[19]"George Herbert: The Word of God and the Words of Man," *Ineffability: Naming the Unnamable from Dante to Beckett*, ed. Peter S. Hawkins and Anne Howland Schooter (New York: AMS Press, 1984) 81-93, here 84.

[20]The title continues: ". . . *mit sampt den fabeln Aniani Adelfonsi vnd etlichen schimpffreden Pogij.*"

[21]See DeWitt T. Starnes, *Renaissance Dictionaries: English-Latin and Latin-English* (Austin: U of Texas P; Edinburgh: Nelson, 1954) 168.

[22]Starnes 168.

[23]Quoted from Starnes 185.

[24]Not to be ignored is the didactic function of the genre, both formally (as an aid to the composition of orations and sermons) and thematically (as a collection of exemplary sayings, morally and otherwise), which may well be a hint to the catechizing elements in Herbert's poetry.

[25]Ferry 337, quoting Helen Vendler, *The Poetry of George Herbert* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1975) 138.

[26]A case in point is "The Collar"; see Dale B. J. Randall, "The Ironing of Herbert's 'Collar,'" *SP* 81 (1984): 473-95 and the discussion of the poem's title in my forthcoming study on *The Mystical Linguistics of Metaphysical Poetry*.

[27]See the chapter on "Die Signalwirkung des Titels," especially "Der Untertitel," in Inge Leimberg's book on *Die geistliche Lyrik der englischen Frühaufklärung*, which is now being published (Münster: Waxmann).

[28]Cf. Chana Bloch's critical response to Stanley Fish in her interpretation of "Coloss. 3.3." *Spelling the Word: George Herbert and the Bible* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1985) 35-36.

[29]Ferry 338 and n47, referring to *The Psalmes Of Dauid, Trvely Opened . . . To the VVich is Added A briefe Table, shewing wherevnto euery Psalme is particularly to be applied,* tr. Anthonie Gilbie (1580).

[30]Bauer 107-08 (with thanks to Inge Leimberg for first pointing out the word-play).

[31]The parable of the talents provides a fitting context to the poem, especially when the last line ("I am with thee, and *most take all*") is seen against the background of Mt 25:29 ("For unto every one that hath shall be given"). Not the servant who is "afraid" (Mt 25:25) but he who ventures all will be the one who "shall be given" (Mt 25:29). Herbert, by means of wordplay, succeeds in expressing this idea in one short formula: the speaker realizes that he *must stake all* in order to be with the Lord.

[32]In "Unkindnesse," Herbert dwells most explicitly on "use" as the touchstone of the speaker's relationship to Christ (cf. line 5: "I would not use a friend, as I use Thee"; cf. also ll. 10, 15, 20, and 25). Thus the rejection of "Jesus" is reflected by the use of anagrams: "Buth when thy grace / *Sues* for my heart, I thee displace" (18-19, emphasis added).

[33]Hutchinson 309-10; emphasis added.

[34]Pamela's beautifully embroidered purse is done greatest justice not when it is used to impress a prospective husband but when it is used as a purse. On the subject, see Lothar Černy, *'Beautie and the use thereof': Eine Interpretation von Sidneys* Arcadia (Cologne: Böhlau, 1984) 275-300, especially 282-86.

[35]Hutchinson 272; emphasis added. Herbert plays here on the commercial (*OED* I.) and the verbal or acoustic (*OED* II.) meanings of the verb "utter."

[36]Hutchinson 229-30; cf. Ferry 330.

[37]Joan. Ludovicus Vives, *De ratione studii puerilis* (Basel, 1587) 6; quoted from Edgar Mertner, "Topos und Commonplace" (1956), repr. in *Toposforschung: Eine Dokumentation,* ed. Peter Jehn (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1972) 20-68, here 52.

[38]Part II, under the head "Ratio colligendi exempla," *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami,* 1st series, vol. 6, ed. Betty I. Knott (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1987) 258-69, here 261. Cf. Mertner 40.

[39]Ps. 103:10: "He hath dealt with us after our sins."

[40]*OED* "table" 10.†b.; a more or less random example is Francis White's *A Treatise of the Sabbath-Day* (London, 1635) where the index is simply called "The Table." See also n29 above.

[41]*STC* 25724; see also, for example, *STC* 13267 and 13270 (Peter Heylin), 20075 (John Pocklington), 20474 (William Pryme), 20830 (E. Reeve), and 22400 (M. Shelford). Although most of these pamphlets were written in the years 1635-37, the question of *altar* vs. *table,* which was disputed in the Reformation, never ceased to be discussed in the meantime. See, for example, *OED* "altar" 2.b., quoting the mediatory definition of Lancelot Andrewes: "The Holy Eucharist being considered as a Sacrifice, the same is fitly called an altar: which again is as fitly called a Table, the Eucharist being considered as a Sacrament."

[42]This is again confirmed by the meaning of the verb *to use.* The oldest meaning documented in the *OED* (I.1.a.) is "To celebrate, keep, or observe (a rite, custom etc." (cf. the first example from about 1240, where *use* refers to the sacrament). See also *OED* 11.a.: "To take or partake of as food, drink, etc." and †b. (last example c. 1450): "To partake of (the sacrament); to take or receive (the eucharist)."

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

Reflections on Jürgen Wolter's "Metafictional Discourse in Early American Literature"*

TERENCE MARTIN

After a strategic acknowledgement of self-reflexive characteristics in the work of Sterne, Richardson, and Fielding, Jürgen Wolter sets the context for his discussion with a review of the American case against the imagination virtually institutionalized by Scottish Common Sense philosophy in the early decades of the nineteenth century and proclaimed more colloquially in warnings to youthful female readers about the dangers of reading fiction. Against such a conceptual and moralistic backdrop, as we know, many early American novels struggled into apologetic and didactic existence.

But not all: Wolter's emphasis is on works that relinquished the assurances of common-sense orthodoxy and introduced an early form of metafiction to American literature. Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798) is his primary example, and although Wolter's analysis is necessarily succinct, it is worth the price of admission (or of *Connotations*). Beset by trauma, Clara Wieland, Brown's narrator, not only becomes unsure of what is happening around her; she reflects on her uncertainty, broods over the authenticity of what she is writing, and gradually identifies her *self* with her narrative. Wolter concludes perceptively that Clara "reaches the climax of her self-reflexive, metafictional discourse when she states: 'my existence will terminate with my tale.'" It is an observation I wish I had made.

As he develops the terms of his inquiry, Wolter moves from the tortuous metafiction of Brown's *Wieland* to the puckish reflexiveness

*Reference: Jürgen Wolter, "'Novels are . . . the most dangerous kind of reading': Metafictional Discourse in Early American Literature," *Connotations* 4.1-2 (1994/95): 67-82.

of Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." In these texts the problem for narrators and readers alike is one of ascertaining the "truth" as the tales are filtered through a succession of frames and further conditioned by reports of native-American legends. Quite rightly, Wolter sees the "multiplicity of genres and narratives" in *The Sketch-Book* (1819-20) as foreshadowing "the complexity of narrative techniques in some twentieth-century texts." His laudable focus on postures of self-reflexiveness and uncertainty in that salmagundi of a book, however, leads him to look past what happens *in* the tales themselves, specifically in the making and unmaking of Irving's best-known protagonists, Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane. It is a consideration that could serve the dimensions of Wolter's argument well—for it would recognize Irving as a writer who acknowledged even as he challenged the assumptions of his culture.

Rip and Ichabod are childlike protagonists, one with an "insuperable" aversion to labor and a love of play, the other with a comprehensive gullibility and an addiction to ghost stories ("No tale," as Irving writes, "was too gross or monstrous for [Ichabod's] capacious swallow"). Amid the narrative postures and protestations in *The Sketch-Book,* these characters stand as would-be heroes of the imagination whom Irving brings to comic (and touching) defeat in a society that could be entertained by (and even sympathize with) such models without fundamentally endorsing them. Portentously, Rip sleeps through the American Revolution. Ichabod loses the hand of the fair Katrina Van Tassel and the largesse of the Van Tassel farm to Brom Bones, "hero of the country round" (in Irving's words), who has the temerity to impersonate a ghost. What these protagonists represent—a penchant for play, a vulnerable orality—has no part in the making of a nation intent on forging its identity.

In his Preface to *The Marble Faun* (1860), Nathaniel Hawthorne explains that the setting of Italy served him as "a sort of poetic or fairy precinct, where actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon, as they are, *and must needs be,* in America" (my italics). What Hawthorne recognized, with characteristic ambivalence, was that the common-sense realism that constrained the imagination in the early decades of the American republic also bred a sense of assurance and stability necessary to a non-feudal,

non-aristocratic, non-fabled, hopefully burgeoning democracy. It is a lesson that scholars engaged in American literary/cultural studies (certainly including the writer of these reflections) need to keep in mind. Wolter's article bristles with implication: not only does he bring us to a fresh understanding of the genesis of metafiction in American literature; importantly, he sees the ways in which a sense of crisis engenders narrative self-reflexiveness, the imagination turning back upon itself (as in *Wieland*) in an attempt to express the elusiveness of reality. Moreover, he writes in a style fashioned for insight and (a welcome bonus) is thoroughly responsible to previous scholarship. It makes a strong package.

But his argument would be even stronger, I believe, if he did not choose sides and cast champions of the imagination in the role of good guys, liberators, and admonitors of fiction in the role of bad guys, despots (as James Fenimore Cooper once termed common sense). Both were necessary parts of a society still concerned about a quest for nationality in its various forms; both were aspects of a cultural dialogue that sought to bring a national identity into being. Hawthorne said that a "common-place prosperity" inimical to the imagination was "happily the case with my dear native land." Happily, too, as Wolter demonstrates, there were those (including Hawthorne) who transcended the boundaries of the commonplace.

Indiana University
Bloomington

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

Faulkner's Racism: A Response to Arthur F. Kinney*

PAMELA KNIGHTS

Given the sheer volume of material on Faulkner, Race and Racism, Professor Kinney has shown a refreshing courage in offering an overview of the topic within the confines of a single article, and in taking the decision to ground his account firmly in humanist terms, based on his own personal encounters with Faulkner's writing and Faulkner's region. His article revisits familiar scenes, but encourages us to look at them again, to take a broad view. Over the last fifteen years or so, in contrast, critical discussion of this topic has become ever more specialized: Faulkner's writings have been scrutinised for their fissures and fractures, rhetorical tropes and narrative strategies, their ideological manoeuvres, their gaps, their voices, their silences. Every new theory seems to have romped over the Faulknerian landscape like kudzu over Mississippi, making it hard, even impossible, to discern any original contours. Many critics would argue, indeed, that there are no "original" contours to see: the texts and the re-readings of texts are all we can ever have. However, while Professor Kinney has himself made a distinguished contribution to these re-readings in his discussions of Faulkner's narrative poetics, the fact that texts are also "works" with writers behind them has remained important to him and he clearly believes it should continue to matter to a reader. His scholarly investigations have traced in detail some of the bye-ways which have brought Faulkner and his writings before the public,[1] and here, returning to the best known books, he seems to distance himself from the more theoretical, speculative, studies of Faulkner to suggest an approach to the man, to his problems and

*Reference: Arthur F. Kinney, "Faulkner and Racism," *Connotations* 3.3 (1993/94): 265-78.

to the fiction, which is based more directly on his personality and heritage.

From the opening sentence, Kinney emphasises that, despite the subsequent theoretical overgrowth, there are, after all, firm, inerasable, things to say: Faulkner's "persistent concentration on observing and recording the culture in which he was born" is an "indelible fact"; so too is "the enormous courage and cost of that task"(265). Here, the central energies of the fiction arise out of empirical responses to empirical questions; writing is a form of praxis, not a self-reflexive, self-regarding enterprise, obsessed by its own problematics. While biographers and critics have continued to produce more and more complex figurations of the man and the writer, Kinney's account as a whole reclaims Faulkner as a controlling consciousness, placing a coherent (through troubled) self at the centre of the inquiry. He offers us a heroic narrative, of a struggle, a series of battles and a kind of peace, which implicitly counters some of the alternative constructions of Faulkner in recent years: the misogynist, the man of masks, the victim in a family romance, the irredeemably divided subject and so on. Given the restrictions of space and the necessary simplifications, it is hardly surprising that in outlining an entire writing career, Kinney tends to give the impression that one can refer, without too much difficulty, to Faulkner's intentions, wishes and fears. His article is a clearly-stated reminder that the texts were rooted in time and place; and it successfully brings attention back to author and region in an era of postmodern dissolutions of these anchors. I have no wish here, then, to respond to this survey by reimporting wider theoretical challenges to the category of the subject, or raising yet again the problems of regarding the texts as directly expressive forms; but, while recognising these complexities, I should prefer to think about Kinney's account in its own terms, and take up its invitation to reflect upon some of the questions it raises.

Kinney rightly sees racism as a contagion throughout Faulkner's fiction. Although in this article he concentrates largely upon its symptoms at a thematic level, his argument could be extended to include the ideology implicit in other aspects of the texts: the radical distortions of form or

the strains of syntax that witness to the pressures of so "debilitating" (265) a force. Here, in uncovering the theme, he puts before us a sequence of powerful images, within the texts and beyond: the stories, the sermons, the confrontations (Granny and Loosh, Henry and Bon, Gavin and Aunt Mollie) which give voice to what seem ineradicable differences. In Faulkner's culture, all sources bear the marks of this infection. The hideous memory of the murder of Nelse Patton, with its terrifying evasions—"Someone (I don't know who) cut his ears off. . ." (271)—surfaces out of the blandly, even cosily, entitled *Old Times in the Faulkner Country*; in the 1990s, the traces of an erased slave balcony, a missing newspaper or a ban on a movie still speak of a suppressed history. Kinney reads these signs, in relation to Faulkner's career, as part of a narrative of increasing recognition, of a private consciousness struggling with its own heritage to make this history public, to suggest, even, that white culture might begin to dismantle its own structures.

As he rereads Faulkner and tracks his texts back to the culture they sprang from, Kinney's own journeys and experiences bring to mind others' stories: among them, Robert Penn Warren's *Segregation* (1956), Paul Binding's *Separate Country* (1979), and V. S. Naipaul's *A Turn in the South* (1989). Written from a variety of perspectives, all, no matter what else they talk about, return again and again to the questions Kinney raises here. How do we read the South? How do we read its writers? How much can the South change, and how can writing affect that process? And in their interviews, voices speak in all the different tones that Kinney identifies in Faulkner's texts: from the unthinking racist, to the concerned liberal, from the radical to the Citizens' Council. For Robert Penn Warren, an exiled Southerner, a girl in Mississippi summed up his own feelings in the stir of 1956: "I feel it's all happening inside of me, every bit of it. It's all there."[2] In Faulkner, as Kinney makes clear, these voices, echoing through one man's head, or through a life-time's texts, set up tensions that never resolve themselves, even as they generate some of the most exciting and challenging narratives. For many white Southerners, those narratives contributed too vocally to the upheaval. Penn Warren in 1956 records, like Kinney, the controversy caused by a movie made in Mississippi, where then, too, people's silences spoke more loudly than their words:

> "Didn't they make another movie over at Oxford?" I ask.
>
> The man nods, the woman says yes. I ask what that one had been about. Nobody had seen it, not the woman, neither of the men. "It was by that fellow Faulkner," the woman says. "But I never read anything he wrote."
>
> "I never did either," the man behind the desk says, "but I know what it's like."[3]

Yet, for some visitors to the South, Faulkner presents a less radical voice. Paul Binding warns of the danger that for many throughout the educated world, "Faulkner *is* the South—in literature and life" and that his myths determine the way we see its history.[4] Some commentators, then, re-emphasise Faulkner's privileged position in that culture and record how, for them, his work has become part of what keeps its sign-systems in place; and these readings, too, need some acknowledgement.

One of the most powerful remains, for me, Alice Walker's reflective account of her own journey back to the South in 1974 to visit two writers' houses in Georgia: her own and Flannery O'Connor's. Alice Walker, too, offers us images of southern history, written on the surface of the region: the "large circular print" of the electric chair which had once stood on the floor of the state prison that became her segregated school, or the daffodils her mother planted in the family yard, outlasting the rotting sharefarmer shack.[5] For Walker, visiting white antebellum homes dramatises the difficult and divided passage travelled by the African-American writer: "I stand in the backyard gazing up at the windows, then stand at the windows inside looking down into the backyard, and between the me that is on the ground and the me that is at the windows, History is caught."[6] Her essay brings home the degree to which, in the twentieth century, too, the part played by the white writer, no matter how individual and inspiring, further complicates this history, one that the white outsider could all too easily overlook. Contemporary guidebooks in all countries, after all, tactfully present the visitor with the "front yard" view.[7] For Walker, however, O'Connor's house becomes in an instant the symbol of her own disinheritance, just as the shadow of the caretaker of Faulkner's house falls over her writing and her reading: "For years, this image of the quiet man in the backyard shack stretched itself across the page. . . . For a long time I will feel Faulkner's house,

O'Connor's house, crushing me. To fight back will require a certain amount of energy, energy better used doing something else."[8]

Walker's trope is many-layered. For the southern writer it suggests, highly specifically, an image of the House Divided: a reminder of all the complexities of negotiating one's own position with respect to that past and, in a further turn of the image, of the writer's own internal rifts and repressions as subjectivity divides against itself in the process. For Faulkner, as many critics have remarked, the "Dark House" was the working title for both *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!*,[9] and in his texts, the plantation house with its shadows and ghosts, holds deep internal contractions that the narratives can never either resolve or contain: the topoi of the blocked threshold and the sudden destruction of the house in flames repeatedly frustrate the reader from seeing into its depths and produce the endless retellings, which can never arrive at single meanings.

For general readers, Walker's image may evoke Bloomian battles for literary dominance: Faulkner's own relation, perhaps, to the great European cultural narratives, as he rewrote the stories of Oedipus, Faust, the House of Atreus or of King David within Yoknapatawpha history; or the difficulty for younger writers, black or white, of extricating themselves from Faulkner's own mythic constructions of Southern history.[10] The image suggests, too, the further problems for women writers and for African-American writers of entering the House of Fiction. Here, the discourses of patriarchy, additionally weighted by the history of slavery and the paternalistic rhetoric of the plantation masters, are enmeshed with the discourses of racial difference, and to establish a voice within their terms is both impossible and undesirable. Within that house, women (and black men) have been written as the muted Other. Caddy, Miss Quentin, Dilsey, Clytie, Eulalia, do not narrate their stories.[11] Dilsey and Clytie, indeed, guard the houses of the Fathers, which hold the secrets of the white families. As Arthur Kinney says, this is a "profoundly subtle and profoundly deep" form of racism (266), and even if "wholly unintended" these tragic revisions perpetuate the hierarchies and the exclusions. (It is as hard for the reader as it is for Quentin to get beyond the legacy of the fathers' word, enacted in the "Father said" that punctuates these narratives.)

Kinney suggests that Faulkner's career represents a life-long attempt to look into his own racism and dismantle the house from within. No matter how broadly we endorse this view, however, from the perspective of the 1990s (unless we adopt extreme formalist positions) others' histories must perhaps inevitably impinge on our readings.[12] For white non-Southern readers, then, like myself, Walker's image may not devalue Faulkner's own struggle, but it may shed yet another cross-light over a re-reading, making it a little harder to type his work unequivocally as the record of a hero. It brings uneasily to mind the more ambiguous documents of that career: not simply the literary texts, but all the shifting constructions of the self that biographers have brought to light and which, whether rightly or not, have become part of the public meaning of "Faulkner," making it ever more difficult to conduct purely "textual" readings. In Ishmael Reed's memorable formula, "words built the world and words can destroy the world";[13] writing under that shadow and out of those silences, African-American writers bring into the foreground Faulkner's contribution to the house as well as his efforts to escape it. We may not want to read the agonies of *Absalom, Absalom!* or *Go Down, Moses* alongside Faulkner's own pleasure in playing the gentleman farmer, with a particular delight in chalking up his share tenants' trades in the commissary ledger; but they cast their own shadow.[14] And how quickly can we turn away from those notorious interviews, gradualist admonitions, and talk of the Negro having to "earn" his privileges, which as Kinney reminds us emerged in the 1950s, even as Faulkner "spoke up" for black people? How do we relate the image of Faulkner in retreat from public initiatives to our vision of the writer who antagonised his home town by his progressive stance?[15] Do we sweep aside non-literary, but public, texts, like the letter in which Faulkner refused to help Paul Pollard with his subscription to the NAACP?[16] Or do such documents take us back into the uncomfortable occlusions of the fiction? To what extent can authors overcome the wider cultural texts through which, as some would argue, they themselves are "written"; and what should we expect of them?

As Kinney makes clear, there are no easy resolutions. Walker's essay, too, has itself now become a historical document, a landmark in African-American women's writing. Like early texts in many movements,

it draws its much of its own energy out of opposition, offering a meditation on difference, on the experience of being silenced, before moving on. A few years later, in *The Color Purple* (1982), Walker takes her own stand in the territory, struggling to rework language and find a form, and, as Eric Sundquist has suggested, "recast[ing] the classic tradition represented by *The Sound and the Fury*" to give the black Southern family a narrative voice.[17] Even in this essay, by the end, Walker has chosen other, more oblique and equivocal images, to register the complexities: the wry jokes she shares with her mother about O'Connor's peacocks, who, in a series of puns, stand in for the white writer. They "lift their splendid tails for our edification"; one in the "presentation of his masterpiece . . . does not allow us to move the car until he finishes with his show"; peacocks are "inspiring" but "they sure don't stop to consider they might be standing in your way."[18]

A decade after Walker's essay, at the annual "Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference" in Oxford, Mississippi in 1985, Toni Morrison in the acknowledged position of a distinguished speaker, could emphasise the impact rather than the obstruction. Looking back to her own readings of Faulkner in 1956, as she worked on him for her Cornell thesis, she recalled his meaning for her then in terms that closely anticipate those of Professor Kinney, speaking of Faulkner's "power and . . . special kind of courage," of his help to her in finding out about her country and "that artistic articulation of its past that was not available in history": "And there was something else about Faulkner which I can only call 'gaze.' He had a gaze that was different. It appeared, at that time, to be similar to a look, even a sort of staring, a refusal-to-look-away approach in his writing that I found admirable."[19]

Morrison did not say how she would read Faulkner thirty years later, but gave the audience instead a reading from her own manuscript then in progress. She could not have made a more powerful response. As Alice Walker suggests, "Each writer writes the missing parts to the other writer's story."[20] In a form still more intense than *The Color Purple*, *Beloved* speaks out of the silences in white stories, making readers look again at Stowe, at Cather, at Faulkner. What swept Morrison's readers away might be almost exactly described in the terms of her own tribute to Faulkner: the courage to reclaim an unwritten history and the

"refusal-to-look-away approach" to what *Beloved* represents as "unspeakable thoughts, unspoken."[21] In Morrison's Harvard lectures in 1990, she made it even clearer that we should re-read classic American writing with a version of this "gaze." Within the larger attempt to free language from its "racially informed and determined chains," readers and writers need to look hard at the processes of signification that construct "blackness" within white fiction. It is all too easy to naturalise the reader of American fiction as white, to accept a black presence produced according to white psychic or social needs, and to step from there to assuming that "American means white".[22]

How easy is it to do this when reading Faulkner? Perhaps because race is so much at the centre of his fiction, criticism for a long time has seemed in little danger of falling into the mode Morrison laments: "too polite or too fearful to notice a disrupting darkness before its eyes."[23] (She recommends, indeed, as a template for reading, a set of categories adapted from one of the most notable books on Faulkner and Race: James Snead's influential *Figures of Division*.) When we turn back to Faulkner's texts themselves, the questions persist. How are black characters coded? to which spaces are they assigned? There seems little doubt that, as Morrison argues so forcibly, Faulkner's major fiction subordinates the African-American presence to the driven narratives of white figures, and that appearances of black figures frequently signal white lack, or an impasse in the white imagination. Arthur Kinney's account of Dilsey supplies a telling example: in the final movement of his novel, Faulkner produces a "traditional mammy" (266), an image of reassurance and consolation for the broken and debilitated white family, and perhaps for the white reader, after the disturbances of the previous sections. Though the reader overhears fragments of the Gibson women's conversation and is present in the black church for Shegog's sermon, the narratorial focus remains largely outside the black community, entering it largely where the white world touches it: "In the midst of the voices and the hands Ben sat, rapt in his sweet blue gaze."[24] Kept at a distance from this community, and altogether outside the black consciousness, a white reader might indeed find it possible to read *The Sound and the Fury* with a gaze equally unperturbed by its tacit racial codes. In Philip Weinstein's phrase, the blacks are a "tranquilizing

counterpoint . . . a calm black lens" to the disease of the "sound and the fury" of the white Compsons.[25]

Versions of this charge lie behind many of the accounts that view Faulkner, at least in the 1920s, as being unthinkingly and unknowingly racist. However, for a white writer, to stay out of an African-American consciousness may not necessarily imply the assumption that there is no life there to characterise. Alice Walker praises O'Connor's restraint in this: by limiting her treatment of black characters to observation, she avoids the dangers inherent in colonising the inner beings of people whom she did not and could never know.[26] Richard Gray and others have argued, similarly, that, as his career proceeded, Faulkner's "external" approach comes to demonstrate his increasing awareness of his own ignorance and the structure of his own inherited beliefs.[27] As he becomes more self-conscious about his own cultural assumptions, he increasingly articulates the processes of signification which have produced them. They are dramatised, as Kinney reminds us, in the desperate attempts of the white characters to stabilise those most ambiguous figures of Charles Bon or Joe Christmas, and in the readers' dissociation from the most strident acts of definition. Whether in Gavin Stevens' variant or Granny's, these and other passages Kinney puts before us are among the most graphic in enacting the ways white voices construe racial differences, and impede the processes of change.

Although I am in broad agreement with this model, I am a little wary of its neatness.[28] If we pursued this logic of an ever-increasing clarity of vision, we should expect the most luminously aware novels to arrive at the end of Faulkner's career, tidily in place just in time for the new Civil Rights movement. Instead, we find *The Reivers*, Faulkner's final novel, setting stereotypes back in place through a narrative of comic nostalgia, anchored, in its opening words, firmly in the authority of what "GRANDFATHER SAID."[29] "Written at the end of one South, published on the threshold of another," as one critic has remarked, this "mellow reminiscence beams the very loud political message that Jim Crow was not so bad."[30] It is hard while reading this novel to see Faulkner's "coming to terms" with his culture as anything but an escape into a set of reassurances that at the heart, life was still very much as it always had been.[31] Kinney's account, wisely, stops in 1942 with *Go Down*,

Moses, avoiding the problems presented by the late career. Many readers have felt uncomfortable both when Faulkner directly represents racial issues in this phase (in *Intruder in the Dust*, for instance), and when he does not. The model of Faulkner's development, then, is perhaps altogether more uneven.

Philip Weinstein theorises the difficulties succinctly, suggesting that, during his last twenty years, "Faulkner exhausts his (Modernism-inspired) capacity to invent new fictional voices, to see and vocalize the Other within the Self, the Self within the Other. . . ."[32] Weinstein's interesting formula is applicable even to some of Faulkner's very earliest writings. In some of his verse and in *The Marionettes*, Faulkner already shows a sense of the interdependencies that contribute so forcefully to his presentation of the dynamics of black-white relations. Here, through *fin-de-siècle*, rather than Modernist modes, he begins to construct some of the central images of his later fiction: the garden, the virgin, the male dreamer, the divided voices that offer competing versions of what they see. While he did not represent these within racial terms (although there are moments when he glimpses the division), the patterns he sketches out persist into the major fiction: there is always a sense that a "pure" lyric is an arrested moment in a complex narrative, and that "pure" subjectivity is always complicated by the sense of the Other. Later, Faulkner learns to open up some of the historical processes within these white cultural myths, tracing the complex networks of dependency. But even in the most deliberately aesthetic exercises of Faulkner's apprenticeship, nothing is ever simply itself; the poetic tragedy at the heart is often qualified by the sense of darker figures at the margins, and it is only a short step to the realisation that these figures may have a cultural identity.

In the later novels of the 1920s, African-American figures frequently serve Faulkner conventionally as friezes in the background of the white dramas. Yet the part played by some of the black characters points to more active sub-plots which carry less stereotypical histories. For Kinney, *Flags in the Dust*, for example, reveals a writer still trapped in the culture that formed him. Yet, much of the interest (and the difficulty) of this novel could be said to lie in the way it is not homogenous: alongside the kind of racist assumptions like the infamous "mule analogy" Kinney

quotes, certain strands of the narrative allow considerable space to some of the more marginal characters. The Strother family, whom Kinney reads as a patronisingly drawn set of black ne'er-do-wells, exhibit some of the text's internal contradictions. The casually embedded racist rhetoric, in Simon's case, coexists with a different kind of discourse that types him not merely as a dishonest swindler, but, for a while, as a more contemporary and sociologically acute figure: a black banker within a text more generally fascinated by economic and social changes, and their meaning for the southern white landowner.[33] Caspey's tall-tales about his war-service (mild, one might submit, next to some of Faulkner's own) deflect back into racist comedy a potentially more significant figure representing the black American who has escaped the bounds of white paternalism. Like Kinney, many commentators have highlighted what is racially deplorable in the characterisation, sharing the view, for example, that Caspey is "a vicious parody of the black American's wartime heroism and postwar aspirations."[34] However, alongside, even within, this rhetoric, the text voices through Caspey some far more serious bids for attention, which for some readers may remain just as long in the memory.[35] Caspey's claim that "War unloosed de black man's mouf. . . . Give him de right to talk"[36] presents readers with a more sharply historical plea than the merely generalised protests of the plantation stereotype of the "uppity nigger." Caspey's presentation emerges from this stereotype (a structurally consequential one in the white Southern imagination); but here, focused as the black turned soldier, turned talker, the figure admits into the text some of the threats to the Sartorises' world, in ways that anticipate, say, the ironic confrontations Kinney analyses in *The Unvanquished*. Faulkner places him in a family whose men are honed by wars, and tried by their conduct in the aftermath, as preservers of domestic and class interests. However, it is old Bayard—the one Sartoris who has had no war to fight—who with a stick of stove wood parries Caspey's compressed campaign.

The episode is a powerful one, easily as strong as the meeting of Granny with Loosh and Philadelphy; and the signs of a system under pressure are as insistent as in the later novel. In Caspey's resistance, Faulkner brings to the surface all the white plantation's old fears—of

the black insurrectionary, or the freedman—and shows the planter facing the threat of his own extinction in the changes of the postwar world. In Old Bayard's violent response, Faulkner acknowledges the force lying beneath the more sentimental discourses of family and community which underpinned much of the self-interested white racist rhetoric. Although *Flags in the Dust*, finally, returns Caspey to his ordered place in the white household, the novel gives some form to the historical forces that were offering a different role to black Southerners in the 1920s, and, in so doing, it allows readers, even if briefly, a critical glance into the processes of power in that culture. Caspey is a strategic figure who, like Loosh, exemplifies, if only in part, knowledge that the Sartoris myths may be subject to revision. Critics have seen other characters, in similar terms, unravelling their sub-textual histories.[37] Encountering such figures suggests that Faulkner was attuned to workings of the racist imagination and the social forms it might take, long before the issue surfaces as an explicit theme in the foreground of the texts.

In the final works, Faulkner seems to collude with the definitions of white culture; his fictional narratives follow his biography, in the attempt to extricate himself from the entangled world of Mississippi, to build his house elsewhere: in an idealised past, or in the self-constructed aristocracies of Virginia.[38] However, as Kinney makes only too plain, even if a writer resists flight, there are wider problems. These questions might be framed as the more general problems of writing across a social divide. They have been asked too, again and again, in other theories —feminist, gender, post-colonial—that take on the discourses of difference. In a racist culture, what stories is it possible for a white writer to tell? How does a writer engage with what is repressed in his or her culture? Can we expect any text, even an oppositional one, ever to extricate itself entirely from the legacy of a discourse? Can any text ever address itself to both sides of the hierarchy? How does one unwrite the divisions of Self and Other?

Even after the Civil Rights movement, equipped with new knowledge and linguistic awareness, white authorship in the South remains a problematic enterprise. To take a more recent instance, Ellen Douglas's *Can't Quit You, Baby* (1988) might seem an exemplary instance of what a highly literary, theoretically and politically sensitive, white Southern

woman might write when she's read the rest.[39] The novel acknowledges political events (King's murder, Vietnam); it shares its textual space between the white employer and her black servant, giving the latter an extended chance to tell her own story; it parades its own narrrative assumptions through metafictional breaks which draw attention to the partiality of all fictions, the provisionality of all selves, the cultural colouring of all metaphors. It is actively self-conscious about its silences, its ignorance, its pretensions to liberalism, and attuned to the way it positions its readers. At the same time, it fails to get itself free; in the "tangle of snakes,"[40] the urgent and desperate racial question, there is always another false motive lying at the base of the most transparent confession. The novel provokes many accusations—some it invites of itself, some it does not: it cannot shed words of their historical memories; it can neither ignore the political nor take it on without the context of specific people in specific places; it colonises the black woman's voice, but cannot enter the black world when a white person is not present. It imprisons its white and black figures in different, stereotypical, worlds, in segregated genres: the white mistress exists in the realm of canonical written texts, mediated through realism, her consciousness explored with Jamesian attentiveness and metaphoric elaboration; the black servant is heard in a narrative of cunning and resistance, checks and reversals, in an oral tale, a piece of dialect fiction out of the tradition of Joel Chandler Harris. In a reprise of older myths, the African-American woman's wise voice, in touch with other forces, heals the damaged white consciousness, but cures its own distresses through rhythms beyond speech. In this intelligent, self-divided narrative, then, the narrator's twists and turns demonstrate that a writer can't just take up the old Modernist injunction to "make it new"; there are deeper cultural pressures that prevent the total freedom to rewrite and purify the text. The text fractures itself to face itself, but any new position for the author always remains elusive; outside the discourse, it seems, there is no obviously stable point for fresh kinds of representation.

The end of Ellen Douglas's novel reaches a kind of resolution in the tentative space of a song, Willie Dixon's "Can't Quit You, Baby," in lines that echo the passage of Faulkner with which Arthur Kinney closed his essay. In Douglas, it is the black woman who sings, "Oh, I love you,

baby, but I sure do hate your ways."[41] In Faulkner it is the white writer who records "Loving all of it even while he had to hate some of it . . . ."[42] Where does this inter-racial cross-fire (or accommodation?) leave the reader? No one, looking at Faulkner or his South, can hope to remain outside the context of a specific history. It is a history that refuses abstract readings, one that does not lend itself to simple moral positions. In Kinney's journey back to Mississippi, he saw a society still closed, still hiding the texts which indict it. He felt, very pessimistically, that there had been no change. Alice Walker, in 1975, taking her mother to a Holiday Inn in Georgia felt differently.[43] So, too, did the participants—white and, though thinner on the ground, African-American—in the "Faulkner and Race" conference in Oxford, Mississippi, in 1986, celebrating a chance to discuss this writer and this topic across old divisions. The conference, after all, was taking place on the very site of the battles over James Meredith's university registration in 1962. Visiting Mississippi myself for that conference, I recall feeling moved by the testimonies to social change; remember the pleasure of hearing young African-American students talk optimistically of their academic ambitions. Yet, as I write now, re-reading Mississippi, or Yoknapatawpha, from England, with its own peculiarly enduring legacies of racism, it is difficult to ignore the signs that white power structures are more difficult to dislodge.[44] Perhaps, in these circumstances, it is time to reaffirm above all the spectrum of literature: to make sure that we read Faulkner alongside others' fictions, other cultural documents, that we hear of struggles from both sides of the racial divide. This seems particularly important when introducing new readers to literature. University curricula, course anthologies, critical editions, publications of African-American auto-biography, poetry, children's fiction, are, of course, increasingly emphasising the multiple voices of a culture, allowing readers to track the difficult journeys for themselves. There is a danger, however, that laying texts side by side may just become an academic exercise in turn, just as in the minutiae of scholarly debate, exploring one man's canonical words may take the eye off wider questions. But to place these words, as Kinney does, within the texts of the times may help, in the end, to keep understanding out in the open,

and destroy for ever any sense that writers, or groups of people, each have their ordered place.

University of Durham

NOTES

[1]See, for example, his useful articles: "Ben Wasson and the Republication of Faulkner's *Marionettes*," and "*Count No 'Count*: Ben Wasson's Long Homage to Faulkner," *Faulkner Journal* 5.1 (Fall 1989; published Spring 1992): 67-80.

[2]Robert Penn Warren, *Segregation: The Inner Conflict in the South* (New York: Random House, 1956) 4.

[3]Penn Warren 21.

[4]Paul Binding, *Separate Country: A Literary Journey through the American South* (New York: Paddington Press, 1979) 146.

[5]Alice Walker, "Beyond the Peacock: The Reconstruction of Flannery O'Connor" (1975), *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (London: The Woman's Press, 1984) 44. See, too, Craig Werner's comments on this essay: "Minstrel Nightmares: Black Dreams of Faulkner's Dreams of Blacks," *Faulkner and Race*, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1987) 41.

[6]Walker 47.

[7]In a description I have before me, Faulkner's Rowan Oak, for example, is characterized primarily in terms of rhetoric of "sanctuary"—"a place of refuge, privacy, and peace." The cook's house and kitchen in the grounds are mentioned in an aside late on: Bob Vila, *Bob Vila's Guide to Historic Homes of the South* (New York: Lintel Press, 1993) 176.

[8]Walker 57-59.

[9]On this, see especially Eric J. Sundquist, "Faulkner, Race, and the Forms of American Fiction," *Faulkner and Race*, ed. Fowler and Abadie 26-27. Sundquist has brilliantly canvassed the image of the house in his *Faulkner: The House Divided* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1983), and in my own thinking on the matter I am considerably in his debt.

[10]Before Alice Walker, Flannery O'Connor, in turn, found her own image for being "crushed" by Faulkner: "Nobody wants his mule and wagon stalled on the same track the Dixie Limited is roaring down." See "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction," *Collected Works* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1988) 818.

[11]For more extended commentaries, see for example, Ikuko Fujihera, "The Black Mask: A Double Consciousness in Faulkner's Novels," *The Artist and His Masks: William Faulkner's Metafiction*, ed. Agostino Lombardo (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1991) 245-54; Philip Weinstein, *Faulkner's Subject: A Cosmos No One Owns* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992); John T. Matthews, *The Sound and the Fury: Faulkner's Lost Cause* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991) 89-93.

[12]See, for example, Alice Walker on reading the Brontës, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* 8. Weinstein comments that he has "rarely known a black student to enter uncritically into [*The Sound and the Fury*]'s morass of white male subjectivity" (*Faulkner's Subject* 120n14).

[13]I am indebted to Sundquist's essay for drawing this to my attention: *Faulkner and Race* 30.

[14]See Joel Williamson, *William Faulkner and Southern History* (New York: OUP, 1993) 272. For interesting accounts of Faulkner's manoeuvres with his "private" identity see also Michael Grimwood, *Heart in Conflict: Faulkner's Struggles with Vocation* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1987), and Richard Gray, *The Life of William Faulkner* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

[15]Even in 1982, visiting Oxford, Mississippi, I met an older resident, who after warm recollection of Faulkner's brother, John, closed in tight-mouthed disapproval of William: "That other one. The writer. He didn't have anything to say."

[16]William Faulkner "To Paul Pollard," 24 Feb. 1960, *Selected Letters of William Faulkner*, ed. Joseph Blotner (London: The Scolar Press, 1977) 443-44.

[17]Sundquist, *Faulkner and Race* 31.

[18]Walker 59.

[19]Toni Morrison, "Faulkner and Women," *Faulkner and Women*, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1986) 296-97.

[20]Walker 49.

[21]Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (London: Picador Pan Books, 1987) 199.

[22]Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* [1992] (London: Pan Macmillan, 1993) xiii, 47.

[23]Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* 91.

[24]William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (New York: Norton, 1987) 177.

[25]Weinstein 48. Weinstein witnesses here to having been such a reader himself. The issue is taken up, too, but with an eye to the way the smoothness may be disrupted in Matthews 86-6.

[26]Walker 52-54.

[27]Gray 33.

[28]As Lothar Hönnighausen warns, it is too easy to slip into the "simplistic generalization that Faulkner's drawing of black characers develops from antiblack stereotype to more individual, lifelike and therefore problack characterization": *Faulkner and Race*, ed. Fowler and Abadie 207n5.

[29]William Faulkner, *The Reivers: A Reminiscence* (New York: Random House, 1962) [3].

[30]Walter Taylor, "Faulkner's *Reivers*: How to Change the Joke without Slipping the Yoke," *Faulkner and Race*, ed. Fowler and Abadie 128.

[31]See Richard Gray's excellent discussion of the disappointments of this novel: Gray 358-71.

[32]Weinstein 150.

[33]I have argued this at fuller length elsewhere. See, Pamela E. Rhodes, "Who Killed Simon Strother, and Why? Race and Counterplot in *Flags in the Dust*," *Faulkner and Race*, ed. Fowler and Abadie 93-110.

[34]Walter Taylor, *Faulkner's Search for a South* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1983) 33. See also Thadious M. Davis, *Faulkner's "Negro": Art and the Southern Context* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1983) 67; Esther Alexander Terry, "For 'blood and kin and home': Black Characterization in William Faulkner's Sartoris Saga," *Critical Essays on William Faulkner: The Sartoris Family*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1985) 312-13; and Grimwood 244-45.

[35]Lothar Hönnighausen, too, believes Caspey to be "authentic" in literary and sociological terms: *Faulkner and Race* 207n5.

[36]William Faulkner, *Flags in the Dust*, ed. Douglas Day (New York: Random House, 1973) 53.

[37]In *The Sound and the Fury*, they are present in all the white Compson imaginations. Luster, for example, searching for his quarter has been re-read, by John T. Matthews, as a "disquietingly enigmatic" reminder to the white brothers of financial, even sexual, challenges to their "very sources of their authority" (101), directing readers to a strong economic strand within the poetic text. Deacon, Richard Godden argues, faces Quentin with the shadow of black politization and labour relations very different from those of the faithful retainers complacently pictured by Southern white masters: "Quentin Compson: Tyrrhenian Vase or Crucible of Race?" *New Essays on The Sound and the Fury*, ed. Noel Polk (Cambridge: CUP, 1993) 113-19.

[38]On this, see for example, Gray 364-65; and Williamson 315-50.

[39]Douglas, a Mississippi author, published her first novel, *A Family's Affairs* in 1962, the year Faulkner died. (A collection of stories, *Black Cloud, White Cloud*, had appeared in 1961.)

[40]Ellen Douglas, *Can't Quit You, Baby* [1988] (London: Virago, 1991) 240.

[41]Willie Dixon, "Can't Quit You, Baby" [1965], cited in Douglas 256. Born in Mississippi in 1915, Willie Dixon composed blues notable for their impassioned political awareness. For a brief overview, see obituary tributes in *Living Blues* (May/June 1992): 46-49.

[42]William Faulkner, essay for *Holiday* magazine, 1954, cited by Kinney 278.

[43]Walker 45.

[44]See, for example, Stephen Bates, "Ghosts of Old South Rattle Chains," *Guardian* (20 May 1995): 23, on the restoration of chain gangs (largely black); and Doris Y. Wilkinson, "Gender and Social Inequality: The Prevailing Significance of Race," *Daedalus* 124.1 (Winter 1995): 167-78.

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

Faulkner, Race, Fidelity*

JOHN COOLEY

> They were as close to me as a reflection in the mirror;
> I could touch them, but I could not understand them.[1]
> —Claude Levi-Strauss

Writing in response to Arthur Kinney's essay "Faulkner and Racism" I will both endorse his general position and extend it through readings of texts and characters he did not discuss at length. In the process I will identify some strengths and achievements as well as some limitations in Faulkner's African American portraits.

As Kinney argues, Faulkner is unavoidably a part of his white Southern heritage. He does not openly reject or exile himself from this culture, but chooses to inscribe its stories, myths and dreams, its nightmares, and the many skeletons in its closets. Nor does he fail to inscribe the black South and its interactions with his own culture. Because of the historical and sociological sweep of his fiction from European settlement to the 1940s, Faulkner displays a panorama of peoples, including many Black Americans. He also engages his fictive world with a poignant, often tragic, awareness of the impact of racism on American life. Kinney expresses it this way: "racism spreads contagiously through his works, unavoidably . . . . The plain recognition of racism is hardest to bear and yet most necessary to confront" (265). Faulkner's writing not only reproduces the social and political institutions based on racism in the South, it frequently undercuts that racism, demonstrating its corrosive impact on both races.

---

*Reference: Arthur F. Kinney, "Faulkner and Racism," *Connotations* 3.3 (1993/94): 265-78. This response was written with support from a Western Michigan University Faculty Research Grant.

Not only has Faulkner written extensively about African Americans, his racial portraiture and writing about race has attracted a large body of critical studies, some of which I will note.[2] A number of critics would agree with Arthur Kinney's conclusion that "Faulkner struggled with this culture, and this heritage [of racism and violence against blacks] all his life" (277), and would equally recognize the dues he paid in loss of friendships, including relatives, because of his "outspoken" letters against injustice and for school integration. Yet, while Faulkner's struggle to rise above the racism of his culture and times was commendable (as Kinney puts it "... he never stopped trying" [277]) his achievement was also flawed, in part because of the very racism that shaped and shackled his thinking about race.

Claude Levi-Strauss would perhaps argue that Faulkner's vision of African American life is inevitably flawed by the distortion that occurs when a writer (or an anthropologist) attempts the impossible task of knowing and describing the "Other." After years of painstaking anthropological work at understanding various Brazilian tribal peoples Levi-Strauss concluded it is impossible to "know" very different people, individually or collectively, except by carefully observing differences from one's own culture, which retains a normative relationship to the other. As the writer (like the anthropologist) struggles to understand the peoples he writes about he "is still governed by the attitudes he carried with him."[3] We cannot help being the children of our own culture, Levi-Strauss adds, but by struggling to cast off our culture and know another, we finally come to see ourselves and our culture through the "other" as a mirror.

In this context, the beliefs and attitudes Faulkner inherited from his own, rigidly self-defined and defensive white culture and larger Euro-American cultural tradition inevitably shaped and tinted his attitudes toward and portrayals of African American life. Even if he had abandoned his own society to live for a time among black Mississippians, it is inevitable he would still have viewed African Americans across a racial divide. Although a few white writers have "passed" as African American in order to achieve greater verisimilitude, this is not to argue Faulkner should have taken on the work of the field anthropologist or under-cover agent. Rather, let me suggest that Faulkner's writing about

race reveals more about the racial perceptions of his own white society, as seen through the lenses of the "enlightened" artist, than it does about African American society.

Faulkner's black characters were not written purely from personal contact and observation of life in the environs of Jefferson, Mississippi. His intertextuality alludes to and perpetuates well-established myths and stereotypes pertaining to the nature of black identity and culture. As Bernard Bell points out, most of Faulkner's African American characters represent stereotypic categories: the tragic mulatto, the Mammie, the faithful retainer, the rebellious marginal man.[4] Bell and other African-American critics have also observed that Faulkner's blacks are defined in relationship to his whites, and that they frequently express white, rather than black, cultural values. White life and racial perspectives remain the primary orbit of action and thought for black characters, rather than attention to their own goals and strategies. Faulkner's blacks even live in a proxy relationship to some of his white characters, serving and protecting them, saving their lives if not their souls.

One particular strand in Euro-American thought, cultural primitivism, shaped Faulkner's conception of African Americans and partially accounts for several of his persistent stereotypes. There is a tendency in the white imagination and in white writing about race to thrust into black character aspects of the idea of the primitive, a characteristic Faulkner shares with many other white writers. Cultural primitivism exhibits a tendency to view modernity (whatever the period) as abnormally out of touch with nature, and the values and pace of life that are "natural" to humanity. From this point of view, as elaborately recorded by cultural historians such as Arthur Lovejoy and Lois Whitney, since the dominant (white) culture has corrupted nature and human nature, it will find the models for its salvation and restoration in the lives of the very people it has debased, marginalized, and thus unintentionally insulated from the excesses of its way of life.[5]

In the early decades of the twentieth century white Americans, in growing numbers, divorced themselves from the farms and small towns of their origins. As their new urban lives took on complexities previously unknown, large numbers of neo-urbanites longed for escapes (more

often through art than reality) to a simpler, more "natural" way of life. For a number of white American writers of the early decades of this century blacks and Native Americans served as exemplars of the natural or "primitive," and thus held the antidote for the malaise of civilization. (Cultural primitivism should not be confused with "the savage," a projection of an entirely different complexion, which finds the "other" as the source of one's fears, and thus a justifiable scapegoat for one's fear-driven anger.) Whether their settings were urban "jungles" or the rural South, white writers in the nineteen twenties, at a time when Faulkner was searching for his own viewpoint, tended to portray blacks as cultural primitives. Notable in this vein is the writing of Carl Van Vechten (*Nigger Heaven*), Waldo Frank (*Holiday*), Eugene O'Neill (*The Emperor Jones* and other plays), and Sherwood Anderson (*Dark Laughter*). These texts portray blacks as still close to their African background or the river wetlands of the deep South: a people at home in nature and natural at music and hard labor—as well as by "nature" physically and sexually superior to whites. As complimentary as some of these portraits may appear, the continuous simplification and typing of African American literary subjects severely affects the ability of a dominant society to see "others" with something approaching representational wholeness.

Faulkner expresses his attraction to cultural primitivism this way: "I think that man progresses mechanically and technically much faster than he does spiritually, that there may be something he could substitute for the ruined wilderness, but he hasn't found that."[6] The tensions between technology and nature, between cultural corruption and spiritual values can be seen as the conflicts that wrack a number of Faulkner's white characters, including Bayard Sartoris, Ike McCaslin, and Horace Benbow. Although Faulkner portrays some whites and Native Americans as primitives, Edmund Volpe believes that for Faulkner the African American "is close to his sources in the natural world. Only a few generations removed from the jungle, his accumulated social heritage has not yet conditioned his responses, choked off his feelings."[7] The multi-racial character Sam Fathers, in *Go Down, Moses*, who was the grand nephew of an Indian chief but born and bred in slavery, epitomizes these qualities. In "The Bear" Cass Edmonds tells his younger

cousin, Ike McCaslin, that the blood of Sam "knew things that had been tamed out of our blood so long ago that we have not only forgotten them, we have to live together in herds to protect ourselves from our own sources."[8] As the discourse in the "Bear" saga develops between the old and an emerging order, between the natural and the industrial, Sam Fathers, who is of black, Indian and white parentage, anchors the argument for the natural, for the possibility of life outside society where harmony between races and with nature is achievable.

Although Faulkner's earlier black portraits are most stridently stereotyped and shaped by the racism of his culture, as Irving Howe observes, ". . . his sympathies visibly enlarge [as his writing progresses]; but always there is a return to one central image, the image of memory and longing."[9] The search for a lost fraternity of black and white is at the center of Faulkner's racial vision. Thus, as I turn to specific texts and characters, I am mindful of the continuous struggle with racism that Kinney speaks of, but also of Levi-Strauss's view that it is impossible to "know" the "other"—only possible to more clearly see one's self and, I would add, to create sympathetic, even if incomplete, perhaps distorted, images of the "other." I will suggest some of the ways in which Faulkner's black characters fill some of the absences and gaps he finds in his own cultural memory.

In Faulkner's early novels, notably *Soldier's Pay*, *The Unvanquished*, and *Sartoris*, one finds many thin, facile stereotypes of blacks, as Arthur Kinney also observed. Racial slurs and derisively comic figures are numerous, but notable also is an implied discourse between southern white hegemony and marginalized black "primitivism." *Sartoris* (1929), (*Flags in the Dust*, 1974) is a threshold novel that develops this and other themes appearing in Faulkner's later fiction: the disintegration of white aristocracy, the clash of traditional and post-war values, and alienation of culture from nature. The novel tells of the return of young Bayard Sartoris from the First World War, and his unsuccessful attempts to become a Sartoris and a civilian again. Racked by combat nightmares, and grieving for his brother who died in combat, Bayard tests his own mortality again and again through alcohol, wild horses, and fast cars. His presence in an otherwise placid landscape is cyclonic—upsetting wagons, shattering the heavy silence, finally overturning his roadster

in a creek bottom. Bayard is rescued by John Henry, a young black man, who carries him up the bank to his wagon. The trip back into town on the mule wagon is torturous to Bayard's broken ribs. John Henry holds his hat in front of Bayard's face to shield him from the sun, a scene with echoes of Blake's "The Little Black Boy" in *Songs of Innocence*. Bayard's head rests on Henry's knees, as the black man holds him, trying to make the trip bearable. Scenes like this one prompted Irving Howe's observation about "memory and longing." Whenever the white man stumbles, the myth of the cultural primitive suggests, a faithful black servant, strong and capable, stands ready to intervene.

It is a reasonable conjecture that Faulkner chose the name "John Henry" to evoke association with the black folk hero. The legendary John Henry was a "natural man," according to various ballads, who battled and defeated a steam drill that threatened his job and those of other black workers on the "C & O Line."

It is an interesting parallel, since Faulkner frequently juxtaposes black men and machines as if they were naturally opposed forces. Like John Henry, Faulkner's blacks are frequently presented as "natural men," but there are some important differences. The John Henry of ballad and song is acutely aware of the threat of industrialization to his job and livelihood. Not only is he cognizant of the forces at work about him, he attempts to alter them by competing with the steam drill—a context that takes his life, even though he beats the machine.

The contrasting function of Faulkner's John Henry is also discernible: he stands as antithesis to the effects of war, the military and domestic machinery of violence, the disintegration of traditional Southern values: he saves the white boy from the wrecked technology of his society, and shields him from the harsh patriarchal sun.

Although *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) was published the same year as *Sartoris*, it shines light-years beyond *Sartoris* in every respect, including its handling of black portraits. Faulkner's principal black character here is Dilsey Gibson, mother of three children, who has been a faithful domestic servant and "Mammie" to the white Compson family for thirty years. Like John Henry in *Sartoris*, she serves and assists white people, but there is a depth and individuality to her character far beyond her counterparts in the earlier novels. Faulkner shows here, and as a

recurring theme in most of his writing that follows, an interest in black life as a counterforce to the decadence of his white plantation families.

Dilsey is, as Irving Howe politely expresses it, an example of "how a gifted artist can salvage significant images of life from the most familiar notions" (123). In her study of *Faulkner and Southern Womanhood,* Diane Roberts discusses the social politics of the Aunt Jemima figure. (The reference is to the famous portrait of a black Mammie in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind.*) Roberts observes that traditional southern writing depicts the white plantation mistress as a figure on a pedestal, but also as a figure without a body, thus incapable of either giving birth to or raising children. Against this "absence under the hoopskirt" Roberts reminds us that the Mammy's body is loudly immediate. "The exaggerated breasts of the Mammy provide milk; she prepares food, bathes, comforts, and instructs the white children . . . ."[10]

Although Dilsey performs all the tasks expected of the stereotypic Mammy, Faulkner reconstructs the conventional image of the ample female frame and protruding breasts. In his own words, "she had been a big woman once . . . ," but with years of hard work she was so diminished that only "the indomitable skeleton was left rising like a ruin. . . . " Yet as Faulkner adorns Dilsey's bag of bones for Easter service, in a purple silk dress and "maroon velvet cape" her spare frame gains a regal dignity. With these variations on the conventional image Dilsey is neither a jelly-quivering and chuckling caricature nor is she laughable.

Dilsey's character grows in wisdom and stature as the day progresses. She oversees the dressing and departure for church of her own two children and Benjamin Compson, age thirty-three, who suffers from Downs Syndrome. Her daughter, Frony, objects to bringing Benjy to their church, because there are "folks talkin." The opinion has been expressed among certain of Jefferson's whites that even a "white idiot" is too good for a black church. Dilsey replies, "Den you send um [presumably whites] to me. Tell em the good Lord don't keer whether he smart or not. Don't nobody but white trash keer dat."[11] Naturally, this is said in confidence to Frony, but it does display the strength of Dilsey's love, her fidelity, and the sharp independence of her tongue,

as it reveals Faulkner's experiment at projecting discourse within a black family.

The Easter service in the black community church provides a rare occasion for Faulkner to demonstrate his recognition of a separate African American speech and culture. Most readers and critics have praised Faulkner's rendition of Reverend Shegog's Easter Sunday sermon. By the end of the service Dilsey is deeply moved, rigidly and quietly crying. The sermon has relieved some of her burden and given her renewed cause for hope. As she leaves church, tears streaming down her face, Dilsey says to her daughter, "I've seed the first en de last," and a moment later repeats the trope that shapes her day, "I seed the beginnin, and now I sees de ending" (316). Dilsey's alpha and omega vision, repeated later in the day, has been widely interpreted: the life, death and resurrection of Christ, the life and death of the Compson family, the struggle from slavery, through oppression, to a hoped-for freedom. Dilsey has been freed from the derisive Mammy stereotype; her dress, her words and Easter deeds elevate her, but having had her vision, she must also resume her work in the kitchen trenches at the Compson household. As Diane Roberts comments, "Dilsey endures, but she does not triumph" (64). She cannot change her circumstances, yet she is not trivialized: she has a life in the black community independent of the Compsons, whom she is incapable of salvaging. Despite Faulkner's hints of an independent life, Dilsey retains her fidelity to the Compson family. Thus, despite her independence from key elements of the Mammy stereotype, Faulkner situates Dilsey, and most of his black characters, within a white tradition which assumes that African American life is defined by willing service and fidelity to white society.

As Dilsey organizes and serves the disintegrating Compson family, Sam Fathers (in *Go Down, Moses*) presides faithfully over the white-owned and equally threatened wilderness lands of Yoknapatawapha. Throughout his fiction Faulkner shows a tenderness for the dream of nurturing relationships between African American adults and white children. In the relationship between the aged Sam Fathers (who is of mixed parentage) and young Ike McCaslin, heir of the McCaslin plantation, Faulkner combines two powerful themes: the brotherhood of white and non-white, and the equally-longed-for reunion of the white

man with the primordial wilderness. Faulkner explores here the possibilities for a parental relationship between the parentless white boy and a black man old enough to be his grandfather, who teaches Ike skills and values that come as much from Ike's own race, gender and class as from Sam's Indian and black experience.

Sam is waiting at the threshold of the wilderness on the day of Ike's first trip to the Big Bottom. Faulkner captures that unforgettable sense of the big woods—"great, brooding, seemingly limitless"—as Ike approaches it for the first time. Soon he is sitting in the wagon with Sam, "the two of them wrapped in the damp, warm, Negro-rank quilt while the wilderness closed behind his entrance at it had opened momentarily to accept him."[12] From this November hunt until Sam's last, nine years later, he initiates the white boy in the ways and rituals of hunting and woodsmanship.

The most memorable moment in the relationship of Sam and Ike occurs when Sam, serving as Faulkner's wilderness priest, baptizes Ike with the blood of the boy's first-killed buck, dipping "his hands in the hot smoking blood" and then wiping them "back and forth across the boy's face" (164). The ceremony is that of Ike's confirmation into the wilderness.

Despite his "presence" in "The Bear" Sam remains a private, elusive character; we know even less about his private life and thoughts than we do about Dilsey's. Ike McCaslin searches desperately for meaning in Sam's stoic face and laconic instructions. By the conclusion of Part III Sam Fathers and his fierce hunting dog, Lion, are dead, as is old Ben, the great bear that has been the iconic centerpiece of the ritualized hunt for as long as Sam or any of the patrician hunters can remember. With these three deaths Faulkner's romance of the wilderness comes to an abrupt and shocking conclusion. Born in slavery and retained as a faithful servant of the McCaslin family, Sam served family needs and the noble plantation values of the Old South beyond call or expectation: inculcating those virtues that "touch the heart—honor and pride and pity and justice and courage and love" (119). Faulkner invests in this former slave and wilderness hunter—a sacred trust to instruct the next generation of white males, not in his values, but in the plantation values of the Old South which he knows perhaps better than any other, unless

it is that enigmatic black member of the McCaslin family, Lucas Beauchamp. Ironically, Faulkner insulates Sam Fathers from reality and change, and Ike is left to discover on his own the "stain" of miscegenation on his own family, and the impending death of the great woods of Yoknapatawpha to commercial lumbering and development. Because of Sam's identity and complex roles in "The Bear" and in Faulkner's ideology (as father, teacher, and wilderness priest), he remains ignorant of the historical forces at work about him.

Lucas Beauchamp, who appears in both *Go Down, Moses* and *Intruder in the Dust* is generally considered Faulkner's most complete and most successful black character. Unlike Dilsey and Sam, Lucas expresses a full range of emotional responses from bitterness to humor, from self-satisfaction to arrogance and hubris. He refuses to humble himself and submit to white customs and expectations. His pride, it could be argued, comes primarily from patrimony, since his white grandfather was L. Q. C. McCaslin, one of the patriarchs of Jefferson. A comprehensive study of Lucas would have to look at several stories from *Go Down, Moses* as well as his prominent role in *Intruder*. In "The Fire and the Hearth" we see Lucas as a young man who refuses to be appropriately submissive. He fights as an equal with his white cousin Zack Edmonds, whom he suspects of adultery with his wife. Lucas fights for his pride and marital rights, knowing full well that he will be lynched if he kills his cousin. In one of Faulkner's most poignant scenes depicting black life, Lucas confronts Zack and demands the return of his wife, Mollie. "'I'm a nigger,'" Lucas tells his cousin, "'but I'm a man too. . . . I'm going to take her back'" (47). He adds, tellingly, "'You thought that because I am a nigger I wouldn't even mind.'" (53). By risking his life Lucas achieves a fair degree of autonomy and becomes, as much as his circumstances will allow, to use Frederick Douglass's term, his "own master." The significance of this scene should not be overshadowed; rarely does Faulkner authorize a black character to act in his own interest, rather than as a faithful servant to white values and wishes.

In *Intruder in the Dust* (1959) Lucas has become an island unto himself, identifying with neither the black nor the white community of Yoknapatawpha. Nonetheless, he is unalterably connected to both: he has inherited land and three thousand dollars from the McCaslin estate,

yet he is considered a black by white society and the law. Quite willing to ignore this racial reality, he reinvents himself: independent, prideful, contemptuous of all others. Part of the process of rejecting his racial background and patrimony required that he rename himself, which he did in a way that echoes Faulkner's own change of name for independence from his family. Faulkner changed the spelling of his name from Falkner; Lucas Beauchamp was born Lucius Quentus Carothers McCaslin Beauchamp. By establishing Lucas's independence from both races Faulkner avoids the perhaps impossible task of depicting the complexities of black society. Nonetheless, as Richard King puts it, "Faulkner's creation of Lucas was artistically and morally daring for a white writer, Southerner or not."[13]

As Richard King also observes, the basic relationship between Lucas and the white community "falls on a dialectic between gifts and exchanges for services among equals" (241). The dialectic is initiated when Lucas pulls a young white boy, Chick Mallison, from the icy waters of a winter creek, gives him a change of clothes and a meal, and an intimate view of a black household. The opening scene suggests the beginning of another black pastoral, in which a "Sam Fathers" will guide and instruct his young charge. But Faulkner slips out of this convention almost immediately by having Chick offer to pay seventy cents for the service Lucas rendered. When Lucas brusquely rejects the money Chick departs in humiliation. What follows is a series of gifts and exchanges between the two, as each tries to assert his superiority. Later, when Lucas is wrongly accused of murdering a white man, he calls on Chick, commissions him to form a digging party and exhume a grave to prove his innocence. Chick has no choice but accept an opportunity to save the black man who saved his life, and in so doing an opportunity to close out his awkward indebtedness. The relationship between Lucas and Chick Mallison and the detection scenes are adroitly handled, but regrettably they are diminished by lawyer Gavin Stevens's paternalistic pronouncements on the future of race relations in the South.

Chick Mallison and his Uncle Gavin are eventually successful in their collaborative efforts to free Lucas. In a brilliant coda, Lucas refuses to accept as a gift the lawyer's legal services. After several offers and refusals, Gavin charges a penny, which Lucas pays. Still discontent with

an even exchange, Lucas gives one final demand and the novel's last words: "my receipt." Thus Lucas gets virtually the first words ("Come on to my house") and the last, both declarative demands on whites. Yet, the world Lucas defends is a narrow and self-centered superiority dependent upon his white inheritance rather than his African American identity. He may have assisted in the racial education of a white boy, but, like Sam Fathers before him, he is not an agent for change nor does he anticipate the civil rights revolution that would erupt less than a decade later, even in Mississippi.

Arthur Kinney observes that Faulkner's racism is ". . . profoundly subtle and profoundly deep, and wholly unintended." Although Kinney is speaking specifically about Faulkner's portrait of Dilsey ("her glory is to serve"), his comment equally applies to Sam Fathers, and Nancy Mannigoe (in *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun*). They find purpose and fulfillment in relation to the fading aristocracy they have so faithfully served. The racism inherent in these portraits is subtle yet runs deeply, for it betrays a creative consciousness that labors to imagine interior dialogue, or discourse outside white society.

Superior writers succeed at rising above propaganda and stereotype; their portraits, even of minor figures, stretch toward the revelation of character uniqueness. Successful characters are fictional human beings who emerge from their pages to exist with independence from their creators. Upon rare occasion (Dilsey's Easter Sunday morning, Lucas in "The Fire and the Hearth," and occasionally in *Intruder*) Faulkner succeeds at breathing such independent life into his African American characters. Claude Levi-Strauss's observation bears repeating here: no matter how hard even the trained anthropologist struggles to become a neutral observer of another society, his ethnography is "still governed by the attitudes he carried with him." The stylistic merits of Faulkner's cross-racial portraits notwithstanding, his considerable achievement as a writer about race comes instead from his representation of Southern white perceptions of African American life.

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo

NOTES

[1]As quoted in Eugenio Donato, *"Triste Tropiques*: The Endless Journey," *MLN* 81 (1966) 174.

[2]See also Thadious M. Davis, *Faulkner's "Negro": Art and The Southern Context* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1983); Doreen Fowler and Ann Abadie, eds., *Faulkner and Race: Faulkner and Yoknapatawapha, 1986* (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1986); Seymour Gross and John Hardy, eds., *Images of the Negro in American Literature* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1972); John Cooley, *Savages and Naturals: Black Portraits by White Writers in Modern American Literature* (Newark: The U of Delaware P, 1982).

[3]Donato 172.

[4]"William Faulkner's Shining Star: Lucas Beauchamp as a Marginal Man," *Critical Essays on William Faulkner: The McCaslin Family*, ed. Arthur Kinney (Boston: Hall, 1990).

[5]See Arthur Lovejoy's foreword to Lois Whitney's *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1935).

[6]Frederick L. Gwyn and Joseph L. Blotner, eds., *Faulkner in the University* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1959) 68.

[7]*A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner* (New York: Farrar, 1964) 27.

[8](New York: Random, 1947) 167.

[9]*William Faulkner: A Critical Study* (New York; Random, 1954) 134.

[10](Athens: The U of Georgia P, 1994) 42.

[11](New York: Random, 1929) 307.

[12](New York: Random, 1942) 195.

[13]"Lucas Beauchamp and William Faulkner: Blood Brothers," *Critical Essays on William Faulkner*, ed. Kinney 234.

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

Is it a Boy or a Girl? Gender as the Ever-Present Authority and Anxiety in Bishop Studies*

KATHRINE VARNES

In the last issue of *Connotations*, an article by Jonathan Ausubel entitled "Subjected People: Towards a Grammar for the Underclass in Elizabeth Bishop's Poetry" appeared with a response written by Jacqueline Vaught Brogan. Ausubel's close grammatical analysis substantiates the claims of the more content-driven observances of Bishop criticism by convincingly pinpointing for readers more evidence of her increasingly famous ear and intellect. Although little in the essay's central argument seems disputable, Brogan's response takes issue with Ausubel's, albeit loose, formulation of an underclass in Bishop's work. For, as Brogan sees it, Bishop's poetry suggests that "we are *all* equally subjected by the language constructing and conscripting our world" (176). While Ausubel takes a critical stance outside of a feminism which he finds too narrow, Brogan reads Bishop's poetry as leveling difference under the subjection of language. Thus, both arguments trigger the question: Where exactly can we place Bishop in relation to feminist criticism? Given the recent proliferation of feminist work on Bishop, gender seems a topic with which no criticism on Bishop can wholly dispense.[1] Yet, when we contextualize these two articles within the past few decades that have produced Bishop criticism, we discover that the emphasis on authenticity in poetry—especially when confronted with Bishop's indeterminate relationship to feminism—created a peculiar critical anxiety about gender that still continues in Bishop studies.

---

*Reference: Jonathan Ausubel, "Subjected People: Towards a Grammar for the Underclass in Elizabeth Bishop's Poetry," *Connotations* 4.1-2 (1994/95): 83-97, and Jacqueline Vaught Brogan, "Elizabeth Bishop and a Grammar for the Underclass? Response to Jonathan Ausubel's 'Subjected People' in the Poetry of Elizabeth Bishop," *Connotations* 4.1-2 (1994/95): 172-80.

Brogan's earlier feminist essay on Bishop, "Perversity as Voice," praised and critiqued by Ausubel, begins by defining authenticity as a patriarchal coin in the exchange of the lyric voice.[2] Arguing convincingly that "we have largely retained some notion of authenticity in the lyric voice as an unchallenged assumption that has continued to be disseminated until the most recent of critical discussions," Brogan draws primarily on Wordsworth and Northrop Frye in order to establish "an authentic voice" as a patriarchal concern, and on Jonathan Culler and Paul de Man to question it (178-79). Brogan does not explore, however, how this interest in authenticity continues to develop during the decades between Frye and Culler, a period during which feminism concurrently negotiated for a critical foothold. I believe that this historical relationship, primarily evolving in the 1960s and 1970s, is vital to understanding critical developments and how they affect our critical placements of Bishop.

In an essay that provides a general historical survey of American poetry in the 1960s, Leslie Ullman describes the publication of two major anthologies, first, *New Poets of England and America* containing the "formal, detached and ironic poetry favored by New Criticism," and, second, *The New American Poetry 1945-1960* that rejects "the aesthetic associated with academic poetry in favor of freer interaction between the poet's sensibilities and the content of the poem, allowing that content to create itself in adherence to its own laws" (190-91).[3] Constructing her written history, Ullman narrates a poetic liberation from formalism that leads to a more authentic, less mediated product that ultimately reflects the "self." This interpretation of poetic form as a social form in the sense that both keep readers and writers from an authentic content does not originate with Ullman; in fact, her history reiterates what has become a critical paradigm for literary histories, especially of the last several decades.[4] In a general critical climate that favored representations of an authentic self, then, feminist critics also claimed this rejection of formalism in favor of a more personal verse-style.

In feminism, as Betsy Erkkila notes, ". . . the critical emphasis on woman's literature as a record of women's personal experience tended to privilege certain kinds of women writers" (7).[5] This increasing interest in literature that reflected "real" or "authentic" women came not just from a critical but also a political climate in which the validating feminist

slogan, "The personal is political," circulated. Part of a larger argument about women's lives, this privileging of women writers whose poetry could bé read as personal experience still works to combat negative stereotypes in a sexist canon. For many critics, however, the issue is no longer that they choose to write on autobiographical poetry, but that women's poetry is already inherently personal.[6] This focus on "the self," particularly the authentic self, as a rule of definition, also set a precedent of linking "authentic" poetry to women in a way that excluded several women poets, including Bishop, from the feminist canon.[7] Thus, what Brogan sees as perversion in Bishop's voice because it challenges patriarchal assumptions about the "authenticity, originality, and authority" of the lyric voice, also challenges previous feminist assumptions about aesthetic and political authenticity in poetry (176).

The most striking example of Bishop's exclusion occurs in a very strategic place: Maxine Kumin's widely available foreword to Anne Sexton's *The Complete Poems* in 1981.[8] After a largely biographical essay, Kumin places Sexton in her sense of literary history:

> Freed . . . from their clichéd roles as goddesses of hearth and bedroom, women began to write openly out of their own experiences. Before there was a Women's Movement, the underground river was already flowing, carrying such diverse cargoes as the poems of Bogan, Levertov, Rukeyser, Swenson, Plath, Rich, Sexton. (xxxiii)

After these two sentences, an asterisk leads readers to a footnote: "I have omitted from this list Elizabeth Bishop, who chose not to have her work included in anthologies of women poets." Historically placed by Kumin "before the women's movement," the poems of Bishop are excluded because the poet chose not to participate in the movement of a metaphorical underground river. Kumin makes it clear that this exclusion has little to do with the poetry, but only where the poet published. In these last words of Kumin's introduction to Sexton, then, many readers of poetry see a condemnation of Bishop, but unless already familiar with her work, they would not necessarily know of Bishop's rationale for her decision and might dismiss her as traitorous, even irrelevant.

Nearly all Bishop critics, however, are aware of her rationale as expressed in her interview with George Starbuck, published in 1977,

four years before Kumin's foreword: "I didn't think about it very seriously, but I felt it was a lot of nonsense, separating the sexes. I suppose this feeling came from feminist principles stronger than I was aware of" (56).[9] In fact, citing this very passage in reference to Bishop's feminism has become a rite of passage used to clarify critical stances on Bishop's resistance to marginalization. Why must we repeatedly rehearse this scene? We must, at least partially, because the scandal is not so much Bishop's decision, but the critical treatment of Bishop that followed.[10]

In many ways, her decision proves a convenient diversion from the poetry, which as Brogan aptly points out, refuses to supply a stable, authentic lyric voice. While this element can create anxiety for any reader, a political movement looking for political truths to sustain a position would be sorely disappointed in Bishop, even in poems that tempt with a lure of authenticity as does "In the Waiting Room." As many critics including Ausubel and Brogan have shown, the indeterminacies in this poem provide its most compelling center. What has changed in criticism, however, is that indeterminacy is now understood as a political stance.[11] And this acceptance of indeterminacy needs to inform, also, what we expect to ascertain about a poet's political position and how that might influence our readings of the poems.

One of Ausubel's points is that gender provides too narrow a perspective to account for the intricacies of Bishop's work. Instead of eliminating gender as a viable inquiry, I propose expanding our notions of what that inquiry entails. Bishop's poems may not always specify the narrator's gender, but the question of gender is still at play. In fact, its very indeterminacy would have many readers searching for tell-tale clues. This unavoidable cultural obsession that has us immediately ask new parents, "Is it a boy or a girl?" does not drop out merely because Bishop sidesteps the question. On the contrary, the fact that Bishop deliberately creates non-gendered narrators makes an issue of gender: gender may not be everything, but it is worth leaving out.

While, like Ausubel, I also find a narrowness in some feminist criticism, I link it to a more mainstream way of thinking about authenticity in poetry. Although it is reductive to look for evidence from the poet's life to support a critical reading, a cultural context cannot be ignored. At

a time when career poets were nearly always men, and when feminism operated primarily on a heterosexual model—or the occasional "radical" lesbian stereotype—Bishop's public persona didn't exactly fit. In fact, "fitting in" might have been the more dangerous possibility.

Perhaps a perfect fit, though it makes a fine essay, is not what critics should want. We need to keep gender in play without falling into mere biography or essentialism, without falling into an expectation of authenticity in the lyric voice, without subsuming the difference of gender under a universal subjection of language. As Ausubel's article investigates class, not gender, with an eye to how that plays out in grammar, we see by his own definition of the underclass that class and gender are not discreet categories. Indeed, like Bishop's refusal to publish in women's only publications, Ausubel's suggestion of a grammar for the underclass is useful for feminist considerations of Bishop, despite his preclusion of gender as a prevailing issue in Bishop's work.

University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware

NOTES

[1]Just a few recently published book-length studies on Bishop include Victoria Harrison's *Poetics of Intimacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993); Susan McCabe's *Elizabeth Bishop: Her Poetics of Loss* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1994); Marilyn May Lombardi's *The Body and the Song: Elizabeth Bishop's Poetics* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1995) and a collection of essays also edited by Lombardi, *Elizabeth Bishop: The Geography of Gender* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1993).

[2]This essay first appeared in *Poetry* (see Ausubel) and was later collected in *The Geography of Gender* (see n1 above). My page numbers refer to the reprinted version.

[3]*A Profile of Twentieth-Century American Poetry*, edited by Jack Myers and David Wojahn (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1991).

[4]For a thorough discussion of how critical history is already structured by our senses of narrative as a liberation through an encounter with truth as well as a resolution through pairing and reproduction, see Judith Roof's "How to Satisfy a Woman *Every Time*" in *Feminism Beside Itself*, ed. Diane Elam and Robyn Wiegman (New York: Routledge, 1995). The conventional critical history of the confessional movement identified with the work of poets such as Berryman, Lowell, Sexton, and Snodgrass, for instance, follows the critical paradigm that Ullman presents.

[5]Erkkila also notes, not surprisingly, that Bishop was not one of those writers. See her astute *The Wicked Sisters: Women Poets, Literary History and Discord* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992).

[6]See groundbreaking feminist critics in women's poetry, Suzanne Juhasz, *Naked and Fiery Forms* (New York: Octagon, 1976) and Alicia Ostriker, *Stealing the Language* (Boston: Beacon P, 1986). Juhasz writes "There is no rule for feminine form, precisely because it needs to be an articulation of the person, an extension of the person" (178). Although there is no rule, a "need" for form "to be an articulation of the person" translates practically into a rule of the person. A decade later, Ostriker argues, "When a woman poet today says 'I,' she is likely to mean herself, as intensely as her imagination and her verbal skills permit . . ." (12). What if a "woman poet today" doesn't mean herself when she says "I"?

[7]In Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's pioneering *Shakespeare's Sisters* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1979) for example, the introductory notes list modern and contemporary women poets left out of the canon. This list includes Marianne Moore, Bishop's friend and mentor as well as Maxine Kumin but not Bishop (xxiv). Juhasz does not mention Bishop in her 1976 study. Ostriker briefly mentions or discusses Bishop several times in her 1986 survey of women's poetry but finds her "apolitical" and suggests that Bishop, darling of the poetry world's male establishment, was insultingly held up for other women, especially in the 40s and 50s, to emulate (7, 56).

[8](Boston: Houghton Mifflin).

[9]See reprint in *American Poetry Observed: Poets on Their Work*, ed. Joe David Bellamy (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1984).

[10]Consider, for instance, Kate Daniels' analysis: "Given the abhorrence with which Bishop viewed the description . . . so often bestowed upon her by reverential male critics, 'the best woman poet of her generation,' her assessment of her own feminism seems somewhat unexamined at best, and disingenuous at worst"(242). Actually, in Bishop's logic, it makes sense because it rejects the label "woman poet." Daniels does not discuss Bishop's "assessment of her own feminism" as much as she compares Bishop's feminism unfavorably with Adrienne Rich's and suggests that the range between the two poets makes her unsure of whether there is a 'movement' per se in women's poetry (242). Although Daniels won't confirm a woman's movement in poetry, like Kumin, she does imply a political movement to which Bishop does not belong. See *A Profile*, n3 above.

[11]See Barbara Johnson, "Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion," in *Diacritics*, spring 1986.

Connotations
Vol. 4.3 (1994/95)

More Metadrama than Antidrama: Thoughts and Counter Thoughts on Bernd Engler's "Arthur Kopit's *The Hero* in Context"*

THOMAS P. ADLER

Although Bernd Engler's claim that Arthur Kopit has been subjected to "unanimous critical neglect" is something of an overstatement (admittedly, articles by Gautam Dasgupta, Steven Gale, Don Shewey, and myself may have been unavailable to him at the time),[1] assuredly it remains true, as Engler says, that this playwright's substantial contribution to contemporary American theatre "has not gained the critical attention it deserves" (279). So Engler is to be thanked for adding to the discourse in a thought-provoking manner.

As Engler hints in sketching out the historical context for Kopit's appearance as a kind of *enfant terrible*, the year 1959—with first plays by Jack Gelber and Jack Richardson and Lorraine Hansberry and, of course, Edward Albee—was almost as much an *annus mirabilis* for a rebirth of a liberated—and liberating—American drama (indeed, there had been an earlier rebirth a half-century before with the Provincetown group) as it was for cinema in France with the New Wave directors Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, and François Truffaut. Two of the points in Engler's rapid overview need qualification, however. First, his generalization that "an aesthetics of escapism . . . had been propagated by the Broadway system" (288) is certainly, as he must recognize, overly broad when one remembers such classic American dramas as those he cites in note 2 (289) of his article. Second, Tennessee Williams had hardly "retreat[ed] from the literary arena . . . in the late 1950s" (280); he actually kept writing and saw into production new work, often

*Reference: Bernd Engler, "Antidrama—Metadrama—Artistic Program? Arthur Kopit's The Hero in Context," *Connotations* 3.3 (1993/94): 279-90.

experimental in nature though, granted, frequently rejected by popular audiences and critics, almost right up to his death in 1983, including *Outcry* (1973), *The Red Devil Battery Sign* (1975), and *Clothes for a Summer Hotel* (1980). But 1959 itself did witness a significant work in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, one of Williams's two or three most metatheatrical plays; and in 1961 came a truly major work, *The Night of the Iguana*, a beautifully written summation of much that had come before.

That being said, Engler presents a refreshingly provocative reading of Kopit's *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mama's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad* (1960), by proposing that it comments on the predicament of the emerging dramatist who suffers an anxiety of influence in the face of "pre-existing texts" or "pre-texts," "try[ing] to overcome the stifling heritage of his predecessors and . . . still in search of his own voice. . . . condemned to endlessly 're-present' the tradition, either by slavishly imitating it or by rebellion against it" (283). According to that interpretation, Albee himself might, in fact, be seen to have written a parallel text to *Oh Dad* in his "Fam and Yam: An Imaginary Interview" (1960).[2] During this slight little sketch, the Famous American Playwright of the post-World War II generation—probably William Inge, one of the "over-psychologizing" dramatists of the 1950s that Engler sees Kopit reacting against—comes face to face with the Young American Playwright of the nascent avant-garde off-Broadway movement, almost certainly a stand-in for Albee himself. The playlet stood as his clarion call for a new American theatre as opposed to the ailing and sickly old one that Albee would take to task in his now-famous essay, "Which Theatre is the Absurd One?" (1962).

Indeed, the stated artistic agendas of Kopit and Albee are quite similar. In "The Vital Matter of Environment" (1961), which addresses the interplay between tradition and innovation in drama, Kopit sees as endemic to American theatre both "its inability to assimilate traditions" and "its persistent efforts not to invent." Bearing "little more than superficial resemblance to the society and culture surrounding it" has meant that the commercial theatre here, unlike that of most European countries, "lacked *necessity*" and did not matter.[3] Albee's own stylistically innovative works such as *Counting the Ways and Listening* (1977) and, most recently, *Three Tall Women* (1991) with its postmodernist

second act help belie Engler's assertion that "In the course of the 1970s all the major experimental attempts to create an utterly new theatre had exhausted their creative potential and ended in a return to realistic conventions" (280). Albee states his aesthetic objectives most fully in the introduction to his most daringly anarchic play, *Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse Tung* (1968), where he speaks about the dual obligation facing the serious dramatist: "first, to make some statement about the condition of 'man' . . . and, second, to make some statement about the nature of the art form with which he is working. In both instances, he must attempt change."[4]

It is precisely on this question of form, specifically on the nature of "antidrama" and Engler's too-easy conflation of it with "metadrama," that I wish to offer some counter notes to Engler and, finally, a counter reading of Kopit's *The Hero*. Drawing upon the definition of "anti-theatre" from Eugene Ionesco's 1958 essay "The Tragedy of Language," Engler considers as "antidrama" any play that parodies or subverts a particular theatrical tradition, in the case of *Oh Dad*, "the entire repertoire of the American drama in the 1940s and 50s" (282). On the other hand, I would consider "antidrama" *not* a parody of any special genre or subgenre of dramatic texts, but rather a subversion of the nature of drama itself as it has been traditionally understood. And in this, I, too, would turn to Ionesco for support, understanding his "anti-play, that is to say a real parody of a play"[5] to mean not a parody of a specific play or type of play but of *any* play generically speaking, or of the elements of drama itself. Then Ionesco's later description of *The Bald Soprano* as an anti-play makes better sense: "the play had movement; actions, although without action; rhythm and development, though plotless; and progression of an abstract kind" (183-84). According to those terms, however, Kopit's *The Hero* would not seem to be antidrama. I would, nevertheless, agree that it is an example of metadrama, although, once again, I find Engler's specific definition of that concept too narrow when he applies it to Kopit's work in terms of "a subversive attack on the preconceptions and ideologies on which most plays written in the vein of the Theatre of the Absurd are based" (285).[6]

Instead, I would consider Kopit's 1964 mime as metadrama because it celebrates the notion of theatre itself as well as the act of going to the

theatre. Engler's observations about the character of The Man, the artist who "creat[es] the illusion of an alternative world . . . . [that] is not at all a representation of a pre-existing reality" (286); about The Woman, "the spectator [who] . . . accept[s] the mere 'As-If' as the real reality . . . . acknowledg[ing] the illusion as the illusion it actually is" (287); and about the nature of "The illusion art can offer . . . as a means of compensation for what cannot be obtained in real life" (287) prove insightful and on-target. Engler's analysis, however, somewhat "silences" The Woman spectator—if I can use that word about a play already, like several of Beckett's, a pantomime. Yet a fuller reading of the play, this time not as about the limitations of art's "illusions [as] counterproductive" to "tak[ing] adequate action . . . in . . . an allegedly hopeless situation" (288) but as about a temporary retreat into art as restorative *before* taking action, largely depends upon her actions.

Kopit's non-representational play begins and ends with a sunrise and sunset that deliberately announce themselves as artificial because the audience witnesses the stage machinery involved: *"The sun is a bright, orange disk which is hoisted by a wire, up the cyclorama"* / *"The orange disk of the sun sets slowly against the cyclorama."*[7] When The Woman enters, she is at first startled by the illusion of reality (the palm tree, the water, the mountain, the lunch spread out on a blanket) created by the hero/artist out of *"nothing"* (82-83). But soon she willingly enters into the play, becoming a full participant in the creative process. Her act of *"smiling"* and offering him half the sandwich, which he stares at *"amazed,"* proves the decisive moment, for afterwards she *"touches . . . and sighs, with pleasure . . .* [and] *laughs warmly . . .* [and then] *They snuggle up to each other"* (84). It is an image of mutuality, of communion, in the face of the void or nothingness beyond the illusion on the painted backdrop. And in that sense, perhaps it is not unlike what Vladimir and Estragon in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953) are proffered. In fact, their very nicknames, Didi and Gogo—containing as they do nearly all the letters needed to spell "Godot"—could be interpreted as suggesting that Godot will not come, need not come, because he is already here, and he is The Other.

Unlike what Engler claims, the smiles on the Man's and Woman's faces do not become "vaguer and vaguer" (288) as the sun sets. True, *"The*

vague smiles on their faces never leave. Indeed, they almost seem frozen there" as *"Darkness"* descends (84). But isn't that because they now exist in the world of art, which is eternally fixed? Whereas the audience knows, if they are not to atrophy in disuse, that they themselves must leave the theatre, the house of illusions, and go back out into the fluid world of reality and responsibility, rested and illuminated by their temporary sojourn in the restorative realm of art. The great analogue in dramatic literature for our experience of going to the theatre in order to find renewal for more of daily life—which to me signifies and encapsulates what Kopit's *The Hero* is all about—will always be the journey that the characters in Shakespeare's romantic comedies take into "the green world," which, too, afforded a space for renewal in the midst of a strife-torn world.

Purdue University
West Lafayette, Indiana

NOTES

[1]Gautam Dasgupta, "Arthur Kopit," *American Playwrights: A Critical Survey*, vol. 1, eds. Bonnie Marranca and Gautam Dasgupta (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1981); Steven H. Gale, "Arthur Kopit," *Critical Survey of Drama* (English Language Series), vol. 3, ed. Frank N. Magill (Englewood Cliffs: Salem Press, 1985); Don Shewey, "Arthur Kopit: A Life on Broadway," *The New York Times Magazine* (29 April 1984); and Thomas P. Adler, "Public Faces, Private Graces: Apocalypse Postponed in Arthur Kopit's *End of World*," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 21.2 (1988): 107-18.

[2]Edward Albee, "Fam and Yam: An Imaginary Interview," *The Sandbox* and *The Death of Bessie Smith* (New York: Signet, 1960) 81-96.

[3]Arthur Kopit, "The Vital Matter of Environment," *Theatre Arts* 45.4 (1961): 13.

[4]Edward Albee, "Introduction," *Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse Tung* (New York: Pocket Books, 1970) 9.

[5]Eugene Ionesco, *Notes and Counter Notes: Writings on the Theatre*, trans. Donald Watson (New York: Grove Press, 1964) 179. Interestingly enough, in his 1961 essay, "Have I Written Anti-Theatre?" Ionesco echoes both Kopit and Albee: "Every movement, every fresh generation introduces a new style or tries to do so, because the artists are clearly or dimly aware that a particular way of saying things is worn out and that a new way must be sought; or that the old exhausted idiom, the old forms must be exploded, because they have grown incapable of containing the new things that have to be said" (247).

[6]Lorraine Hansberry, in fact, penned a short parodic send-up of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* entitled "The Arrival of a Mr. Todog." For a discussion of that unpublished text, cf. Steven R. Carter, *Hansberry's Drama: Commitment and Complexity* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1991) 155-58.

[7]Arthur Kopit, *The Hero: A Pantomime*, in *The Day the Whores Came Out to Play Tennis and Other Plays* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1965) 88, 84. Further references to this edition appear in the text.

British Society for 18th Century Studies

Membership is open to anyone interested in any aspect of the eighteenth century

The Society is affilliated to the International Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and promotes the study of all aspects of eighteenth-century cultural history. From January 1995, the cost of membership will be £25, or £12 for students and retired members. At these prices, this is one of the most moderately priced societies of its kind. Benefits of membership include two issues per year of the *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, an interdisciplinary journal that is essential reading for all scholars in the field, running one of the most comprehensive book review sections available anywhere as well as articles of the highest distinction. There is also a regular *Bulletin* designed to keep members abreast of all conferences, domestic and international, arranged by the Society and by our sister societies throughout ISECS.

Membership forms are available from the Secretary, Dr. John Dunkley, Dept. of French, University of Aberdeen, AB9 2UB. Tel: (0224) 272163; Fax: (0224) 276730.

Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate

Contents of Volume 4 (1994/95)