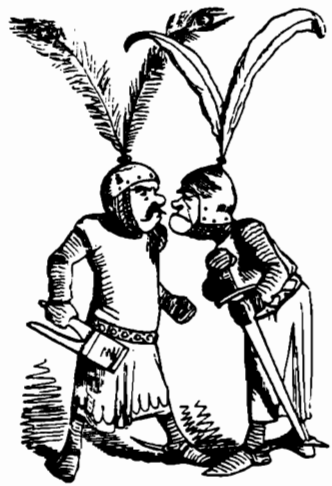
Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate



Volume 6 (1996/97) Number 2
Waxmann Münster/New York

Editors' Note

To our regret, Professor Brownell Salomon has decided to tender his resignation from the editorial board of *Connotations* since he has officially retired from the Bowling Green State University. We cannot thank him enough for having given us his support even when we were only just planning the journal.

Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate

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Connotations wants to encourage scholarly communication in the field of English Literature (from the Middle English period to the present), as well as American and other Literatures in English. 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 to recent books.

Contributions will be published within five months after submission so that discussion can begin without delay.

Articles and responses should be forwarded to the editors. As a rule, articles should not exceed 12,000 words and follow the MLA Handbook. Responses should be limited to 4,000 words. If possible, all contributions should be submitted on diskette (preferably in WordPerfect), accompanied by a hard copy; they 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 a member of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals.
Contributions are indexed in the *MLA Bibliography* and the *IBZ/IBR*.

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ARTICLES

DISCUSSION

Connotations
Vol. 6.2 (1996/97)

"*Shakespeare's Wordplay*—Some Reappraisals": A Reply*

Connotations' re-reviews, forty years on, of *Shakespeare's Wordplay* gave me great pleasure—the more so in that they all focus on my favourite play—but their kindness also leaves me feeling a bit of a fraud. I have never thought of myself as a *real* Shakespearean of the kind who could never rest with an unresolved crux under all those mattresses. From time to time I have been struck, even a bit hypnotised, by one or other aspect of Shakespeare's art and have tried to share that fascination with other playgoers and readers. Virtually the only "research" I did for the book in question consisted in heaving onto a desk and consulting the massive volumes of what my mentor, C. L. Wrenn, ironically called the little dictionary and which to me, as a loyal Londoner, will always be the New, and not the Oxford, English Dictionary.

Still, Oxford was where I wrote *Shakespeare's Wordplay* while I had a post there from 1947 to 1954. This means that it not only bears the signs of a particular epoch, the emancipatory Attlee years so well conjured up by David Laird, but it was the product of a particular place. (In fact my *Winter's Tale* chapter originated in a term's lectures of which I vividly recall the first, which was largely on "Go play, boy, play . . . ." A lifelong victim of spoonerism, I ended by reassuring the audience I did not intend to go through the line play by play.)

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*Reference: David Laird, "The Magic of M. M. Mahood's *Shakespeare's Wordplay*," *Connotations* 6.1 (1996/97): 3-7; Maurice Hunt, "Poetry vs. Plot in *The Winter's Tale*: Modernity and Morality in M. M. Mahood's *Shakespeare's Wordplay*," *Connotations* 6.1 (1996/97): 8-18; Brian Gibbons, "Doubles and Likenesses-with-difference: *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Winter's Tale*," *Connotations* 6.1 (1996/97): 19-40; Kenneth Muir, "Remembrance of Things Past," *Connotations* 6.1 (1996/97): 41-45.

Surprisingly, in view of the elitism then prevalent at Oxford, the structure of the university and of the English School reinforced the general "emancipatory" trend of literary criticism at the time by encouraging the tyro critic to write for the general, though informed, reader. Specialisation was frowned upon; according to one's way of thinking, this reflected a genteel amateurism or (as I prefer to think) preserved the Johnsonian notion of humane learning. But simple fact was that, in teaching across the whole spectrum of English literature before 1832, there was no time to specialise. The texts were virtually all one read; and these texts—and this is a second point to be made about Oxford—were, because of the centuries covered, first and foremost poetry. I think the fine tuning required in the study of the Metaphysical poets in particular (on whom I had written my first book) came in useful when I approached Shakespeare's language, and as Maurice Hunt shows I was steeped in the Romantics as well.

A third Oxford influence needs to be noticed. As far as there was an acquiescence in any literary-critical trend of the time, it tended towards the theologisation of literature by such figures as C. S. Lewis and Charles Williams—and behind them, the later Eliot. I did not much like the Inkling's ethos or methods, but I did not escape their influence, and in the case of *The Winter's Tale* it certainly caused me, to superimpose on the play, as Kenneth Muir suggests and as Maurice Hunt skilfully demonstrates, a mythological pattern which did not satisfactorily match my response to its language. In point of fact, I found Bethell's reading too heavily theological, and hoped to counteract it by stressing the importance of the Sicilian scenes, but here I was up against another limitation of time and place: young women tutors, around 1950, did not explicate Shakespeare's bawdy, which could be left to Eric Partridge. This accounts for my choice of plays in which the puns were mostly uncomic, causing M. C. Bradbrook to complain of the "claustrophobic feeling of being shut in with Shakespeare, the *Oxford* (sic) *English Dictionary*, and a very good but incurably earnest preceptress."

Another review of the time, by R. A. Foakes, drew attention to another shortcoming of which I am now sharply aware: the book's lack of theatrical awareness and its overemphasis on complexities of language which can at best only be subliminally registered during a performance.

This was brought home to me at Stratford in 1981. I opened my *Winter's Tale* programme to find a long quotation from *Shakespeare's Wordplay* about Leontes' jealousy being a sudden libidinous invasion. Of course I smirked like anything—until Leontes' jealousy erupted; then I realised that, if such a gifted actor as Patrick Stewart could not play the role convincingly according to my idea, the idea was almost certainly wrong. Because of my awareness of this deficiency in my discussion of *The Winter's Tale*, I particularly enjoyed Brian Gibbons's exploration of the play's non-verbal double meanings. Here, I felt, was an essay that directors should read for all its positive insights as well as its warnings against heavy-handed stage symbolism and—the blight of recent productions—the doubling of the roles of Hermione and Perdita.

So thank you, Inge Leimberg, for initiating these re-reviews as well as for your own testimony to the profit the book gave one very responsive reader. I am only sorry that Kenneth Muir is no longer here to receive my thanks.

Molly M. Mahood

Connotations
Vol. 6.2 (1996/97)

Lucius, The Severely Flawed Redeemer of *Titus Andronicus*

ANTHONY BRIAN TAYLOR

Acceptance of Lucius, who restores order at the end of *Titus Andronicus*, has sometimes been qualified, on one or two rare occasions, his role has even been questioned,[1] but for the most part, the man who emerges as the redeemer of Rome has had the approval of the critics. Nothing has contributed more to ensuring his favourable reception than the work of Frances Yates. It was Yates who first drew attention to the fact that *The Book of Martyrs* begins with King Lucius, the legendary figure who introduced Christianity into Britain, and ends with Elizabeth, and concluded that the play's Lucius is the namesake of the first of a line of Christian rulers that leads to the Queen.[2] She also noted the reference in the play to the departure of Astraea, the goddess of Justice, from the earth (IV.iii.4); Elizabeth was often identified with Astraea, and as Lucius brings justice back to Rome, in his person, as in the Queen's, it can be said the goddess has returned. Consequently, his role of redeemer is spoken of in the most glowing terms:

> The apotheosis of Lucius at the end of the play thus perhaps represents the Return of the Virgin—the return of the just empire and the golden age.[3]

As time has gone by, Yates' views have become so ensconced that they are now accepted as part of critical lore about the play, subscribed to by both editors and critics: in the seventies, for example, they were firmly endorsed by Reuben Brower:

> Many less learned auditors would have seen the point in the restoration of peace and order under Lucius, the "first Christian king of England," as he was presented in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, one of the more widely read works of Elizabeth's reign.[4]

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debtaylor00602.htm>.

In the eighties, Maurice Hunt ended an article by pointing out that "Lucius predicts his Christian namesake, who began a dynasty that would eventually bring Astraea back to earth in the form of Queen Elizabeth";[5] and in the nineties, the New Arden editor, Jonathan Bate, remarking that "the Christian faith" was received into Britain "in the time of King Lucius," speaks of Lucius "bringing back the light" of Astraea to the earth in the play.[6]

Yet if one actually examines Yates' case, there is reason for considerable misgiving. Close examination of the beginning of the *Book of Martyrs*, for instance, makes it extremely doubtful that Shakespeare would have wished an audience to identify his character with the legendary King Lucius and then, by implication, with Elizabeth. In the small space devoted to King Lucius, there are two salient facts: the first is that he introduced Christianity into Britain; the second is that he died childless with disastrous consequences for his country. *Titus Andronicus* was written when the Queen was well past child-bearing age; as a young playwright at the beginning of his career, Shakespeare would have had to have displayed a good deal less sense than we normally credit him with, to have invited his audience to link Elizabeth, even by remote implication, with a ruler who was the epitome of the Elizabethan nightmare, a childless monarch whose death led to a "commonwealth miserably rent and divided." Foxe is quite explicit about the events that followed the king's death:

> Lucius the Christian king died without issue. For thereby such trouble and variance occurred among the Britons that they not only brought upon them the idolatrous Romans, and at length the Saxons, but also entangled themselves in much misery and desolation. For sometimes the idolatrous Romans, sometimes the Britons reigned and ruled as violence and victory would serve; one king murdering another . . . .[7]

There is also the nature of the textual evidence Yates finds for the association of Lucius with Astraea (and, by implication, with Elizabeth). This occurs in the arrow-shooting scene (IV.iii), which is the focus of her brief treatment of the play:

> Titus, the good, the noble Roman, maddened by his wrongs, rushes on to the stage, accompanied by his friends . . . they hit some of the signs of the Zodiac

> which begin to fall out of their places. One of the arrows, that shot by Lucius, hits Virgo. There must be a connection between the search for Astraea on earth and the hitting of Virgo in heaven, for Virgo, as we know well, was Astraea after she had fled to heaven from the wicked world. . . . the good Empire returns with Lucius. He is the just man who in the end assumes the purple, and his reign will "heal Rome's harms, and wipe away her woe." It is therefore perhaps a very significant detail that it was Lucius who hit Virgo in the shooting scene, and, therefore, presumably, brought her down to earth.[8]

In the light of these observations it is astonishing to find that Lucius, in fact, never appears in this scene. It occurs in Act IV; he leaves Rome for exile among the Goths at the end of the first scene in Act III, and does not reappear until the beginning of Act V. Yates has confused him with his young son who bears the same name: it is the boy who participates in the arrow shooting, and far from hitting her, as is claimed, his arrow lands harmlessly "in Virgo's lap" (IV.iii.64),[9] there being nothing that even remotely suggests that she consequently fell down from the sky. The only textual evidence produced to link Lucius with Astraea, the Goddess of Justice, therefore, rests on an elementary misreading.

Yates' thesis has also been afforded a dubious postscript in the most recent edition of the play where Jonathan Bate has produced a further historical namesake in Lucius Junius Brutus, the founder of the Roman Republic.[10] Unfortunately, however, Shakespeare shows no sign of ever having known the forename of Junius Brutus. His expulsion of the Tarquins from Rome is told briefly at the end of the Lucretia story; in *Lucrece*, however, he is referred to only as "Junius Brutus" and "Brutus" (See "The Argument" and 1801, 1844) which is consistent with what is found in Shakespeare's sources in Ovid, Livy, Chaucer, and Painter.[11] He is referred to in "The Life of Marcus Brutus" in North's Plutarch but again there is no mention of his forename, and in *Julius Caesar*, his descendant speaks of him only as "Brutus" (I.ii.159).[12] And finally and most tellingly, as the revenger of Lucrece's rape, he is invoked as "Lord Junius Brutus" in *Titus Andronicus* by Marcus, as he, Titus, and Young Lucius kneel and swear to avenge Lavinia (IV.i.90). Had the dramatist been aware of the man's full name, surely he would have had Marcus, who takes every opportunity to compare members of his family with

heroic figures of the past, link his nephew and the founder of the Roman Republic through the name of "Lucius" on this occasion.

In view of the confusion bred by Yates' hugely influential but decidedly shaky "apotheosis," therefore, it seems timely to return to the play and, setting aside possible associations with his name, revalue Lucius in terms of what he actually does and says.[13]

I

As the man who emerges after the bloodletting and chaos "To heal Rome's harms and wipe away her woe" (V.i.147), Lucius invites comparison with other saviour-figures in Shakespeare like Richmond and Malcolm. In stark contrast to such figures, however, from the very beginning of the play, he has blood on his hands; if his country like Scotland under Macbeth is a "slaughterhouse," or England under Richard III is awash with "warm blood," he has unthinkingly but viciously played his part in making it so. Indeed, it is Lucius who brings bloodshed and death into the play; his first words spoken at the tomb where his dead brothers lie, are:

> Give us the proudest prisoner of the Goths,
> That we may hew his limbs, and on a pile
> *Ad manes fratrum* sacrifice his flesh . . . (I.i.95-97)

And although this is referred to as a "Roman rite," there is something disturbing about the detailed way in which he talks of cutting up his victim, Alarbus:

> Away with him, and make a fire straight,
> *And with our swords upon a pile of wood*
> *Let's hew his limbs till they be clean consumed.*
> (127-29, italics mine)

Moreover, when the sacrifice is over, his report of the event is even more disturbing:

> See, lord and father, how we have performed
> Our Roman rites, Alarbus' limbs are lopped,

> And entrails feed the sacrificing fire,
> Whose smoke like incense doth *perfume* the sky.
> (142-45, italics mine)

What kind of brutal and coarse mentality is it, one wonders, that allows a man to compare the smell of burning human entrails with "incense." Moreover, the butchery Lucius is so savouring also sets a cycle of savagery in motion. Alarbus' "lopped" and "hewed" limbs signal the entry into a dramatic world where hands are chopped-off, a tongue torn from a girl's mouth, heads severed, throats slit, and events rise to a macabre crescendo when, in a bloody banquet, a mother unwittingly devours her murdered sons. It is one of many ironies afforded by *Titus Andronicus* that it is the saviour figure who introduces the savage theme of dismemberment into the play.

The play gives the impression that Shakespeare, the new man among Elizabethan playwrights, is out to flaunt his feathers, borrowed and otherwise.[14] For example, he obtrusively displays his mastery of dramatic techniques with clever repetition of action. The play opens, for instance, with the quarrel of two brothers over who should rule Rome, which is being violated and torn apart. And when the scene shifts from the city to the forest, the second, darker movement also gets underway with a quarrel between two brothers. This time the issue is who should possess Lavinia who is consequently violated and literally dismembered; and as "Rome's rich ornament" (I.i.52), the girl, as has often been noted, symbolizes the city.[15] Dramatic parallels are characteristic of this self-consciously clever play; and, as in this example, repetition of action is often supplemented by repetition of word. In the opening quarrel between Saturninus and Bassianus, Rome is described as the "imperial seat to virtue *consecrate*, / To justice, continence, and nobility" (I.i.14-15); in the later quarrel between Chiron and Demetrius, Rome's new empress is described as "To villainy and vengeance *consecrate*" (II.i.122, italics mine).

In its witty, rather ostentatious way, the play underscores the fact that Lucius is the initiator of the cycle of savagery. There is the correspondence between the sacrifice of Alarbus and the rape of Lavinia: in the one, Lucius, with the approval of his father, gives vent to his bloodthirsty nature by butchering the brother of Chiron and Demetrius

in the city; in the other, the two Goths, with the approval of their mother, express their "barbarous" nature by their ferocious treatment of his sister in the forest. The link between the events is emphasized by Tamora in her response to Lavinia's plea for pity:

> Remember, boys, I poured forth tears in vain
> To save your brother from the sacrifice,
> But fierce Andronicus would not relent.
> Therefore away with her, and use her as you will
> (II.iii.163-66)

And "away with her," the phrase she keeps repeating in this confrontation (cf. 137, 157), is a bitter echo of Lucius, immediate response to her own plea for "Sweet Mercy" for her son—"*Away with him*, and make a fire straight" (I.i.127, italics mine). Moreover, when Marcus later discovers the mutilated and raped Lavinia wandering in the forest, his describing her as "*lopped and hewed*" (II.iv.17) directly echoes Lucius' earlier "*lopping*" and "*hewing*" of Alarbus (italics mine). Such verbal patterning makes the point that the violence Lucius has unleashed, is rebounding savagely on all he holds most dear, his family and Rome.[16]

Lucius is habitually brutal; in the family quarrel in Act One, for example, when his father requests that he return Lavinia, his curt reply is "*Dead* if you will" (I.i.196, italics mine). Of course, Rome's history provides other examples of cruel and austere Romans; it is no accident, for instance, that Junius Brutus is invoked in the play, a man "of a sower stearne natur, not softened by reason. . . . so subject to his choller and malice he bare unto the tyrannes, that for their sakes he caused his own sonnes to be executed."[17] But Lucius is not just one more iron Roman; an incident when he returns from exile at the head of an army of Goths is a reminder of the deeply unpleasant nuances of his report of the sacrifice of Alarbus. His exile is seen by some critics as a turning point; for Robert Miola, for example, the young man who had been "a bloodthirsty youth" is transformed by this experience into "a man capable of wise leadership."[18] Leaving aside for the moment his capabilities as a leader, when he returns victorious and Aaron and his baby son are brought to him, learning that the Moor dotes upon his son, he orders:

> First hang the child that he may see it *sprawl*—
> A sight to vex a father's sight withal.
> Get me a ladder. (V.i.51-53, italics mine)

There is no more horrible image in a play full of horrendous images than that evoked by Lucius' words; and "Get me a ladder" makes evident Lucius' personal eagerness to witness this ghoulish spectacle.[19] It is avoided only when he is duped by Aaron into swearing an oath that he will spare the child.[20]

After the bloodletting of Act V, when Lucius emerges as the man to restore order, when he comes to administer justice, his words may have a lofty, magisterial accent but his cruelty is once again appalling. This is the punishment he devises for Aaron:

> Set him breast-deep in earth and famish him;
> There let him stand and rave and cry for food
> If anyone relieves or pities him,
> For the offence he dies; this is my doom. (V.iii.178-81)

As Rome's new emperor, Lucius is not merely dispensing justice: he is once again inflicting pain and agony with calculated relish. And the same chilling note is struck in the treatment of the dead Tamora:

> As for that ravenous tiger, Tamora,
> No funeral rite, nor man in mourning weed,
> No mournful bell shall ring her burial;
> But throw her forth to beasts and birds of prey;
> Her life was beastly and devoid of pity . . . (194-98)[21]

The last time Lucius referred to observing rites in the play, it was in the course of meting out brutal treatment to the living; and here, as he deals in like manner with the dead, he is ordering, albeit in characteristically pious, weighty, and solemn tones, the body of a queen and empress, hateful though her life has been, to be cast out into the fields like so much offal. And as he dispenses his own sadistic brand of justice, it is ironic to note, given the "apotheosis" of Lucius, that the only other character the play contains, who desecrates the dead and applies comparable ingenuity to inflicting anguish and suffering on the living, is Aaron, the play's "black devil."[22]

The Andronici proudly equate being civilized with being Roman—"Thou art a Roman; be not barbarous" (I.i.378). And none of their number is more devoted to the civilized values enshrined in his family and in Rome than Lucius; his courage and soldiership in their cause are beyond question. Returning to the city in triumph, for example, he can indeed claim to be "the turned-forth," a Coriolanus-like figure, who has shed his blood in "Rome's quarrel" (V.iii.101), one who has,

> preserved her welfare in my blood,
> And from her bosom took the enemy's point,
> Sheathing the steel in my advent'rous body. (109-11)

And in the final scene, in his own grief and the commendation of his dead father to young Lucius, he eloquently and movingly pays the "last true duties" of a devoted son. Yet Lucius is a deeply flawed Roman. Stolid, unimaginative, and soldierly, it never dawns on him that his readiness to commit unspeakable atrocities on man, woman, and child, is utterly barbaric and totally irreconcilable with the civilized values on which his life is centred. Moreover, in being a deeply flawed Roman, Lucius is his father's son, and as such, a fascinating extension of the play's central theme.

II

The central statement Shakespeare makes about Rome, of course, is in the character of his eponymous hero. Initially Titus inspires admiration, a triumphant figure, his sons before him and his prisoners in chains behind his chariot. The victor in his country's "great quarrel" with barbarism, his opening speech over his dead sons has a deep Virgilian solemnity; threading its features, the epic simile, the comparison to Priam, and the reference to souls "hovering" "on the dreadful shore of Styx" (1.i.88), is a grave sense of *"lacrimae rerum,"* of life as an unending, painful battle to sustain civilization.[23] It is no surprise that such a man when honoured by his country, took the name of "Pius" (1.i.23), an epithet, which as Eugene Waith has pointed out, inevitably

invites comparison with "*pius Aeneas.*"[24] Yet, having made this moving opening Virgilian speech, Titus, "surnamed Pius," behaves as Aeneas never would; he unhesitatingly sanctions human sacrifice, quelling the anguished protest of the victim's mother in urbane accents that suggest what is about to happen should be accepted as natural and civilized:

> Patient yourself, madam, and pardon me.
> These are their brethren whom your Goths beheld
> Alive and dead, and for their brethren slain
> Religiously they ask a sacrifice.
> To this your son is marked, and die he must,
> T'appease their groaning shadows that are gone. (121-26)

And the considerable distance between the qualities and values of Titus and those of Virgil's epic hero is emphasized by Tamora's comment on the "slaughter" of her son "in the streets" (112)—"*O cruel, irreligious piety*" (130). And when in the family quarrel that follows, he kills Mutius, one of his four remaining sons,[25] it is again underscored when he is rebuked by his brother Marcus, "*My lord, this is impiety in you*" (355, italics mine).[26]

If his sanctioning the cruel treatment of Alarbus is to have dire consequences for Rome and the Andronici, however, the immediate cause of the rapid decline that follows his epic entry in Act One, is the total lack of political acumen that shows itself in his intervention in the succession question. Marcus is unavailing in his efforts to make Titus himself accept the imperial throne; on grounds of age and weariness, Titus refuses and the opportunity to take advantage of his current popularity is lost. There follows his choice of Saturninus for emperor. While Bassianus is virtuous, Saturninus lives up to his brother's description as the embodiment of "dishonour"; young, lascivious, and vicious, his unstable nature is illustrated by the suddenness with which he takes for a bride the queen of the Goths, a woman old enough, in her own words, to be "A loving nurse, a mother to his youth" (329). Titus must have had intimate knowledge of the brothers for his daughter is betrothed to one of them. And his decision is not taken on the spur of the moment; it has been discussed with Lucius as the latter shows when Saturninus erupts before Titus announces his precise intentions:

> Proud Saturnine, interrupter of the good
> That noble-minded Titus means to thee. (208-9)

Moreover, Titus' total lack of political judgement is shown by the way in which he ends Act I: he deludes himself that Tamora, whose son he has had killed in the streets only hours before, is now his friend and political ally, and plays the fawning courtier by organising a "love-day" for the woman who is his mortal enemy.

But if the development of Titus as a tragic figure is one of the major weaknesses in the play,[27] his character nonetheless has quite remarkable dimensions. As various commentators have pointed out, the play is set at a time when Rome was "at the end of its civilized greatness, ready to sink into barbarism."[28] And Titus, noble, patriotic, but flawed by cruelty and an abysmal lack of political judgement, is a mirror of Rome in decline. He, too, has spent his life in repelling barbarism, but now his weariness, old age, and lack of mental agility in coming to terms with new problems, reflect the lack of real energy and capacity of Rome in dealing with the various crises that beset it in its declining years. His subscription to the unhistorical cruelty of making sacrifice of prisoners in the city streets is a symptom of the coarsening of Roman life and values.[29]

In the figure of Rome's "best champion," therefore, we see Shakespeare's initial exploration in microcosmic form of the painful and tragic collapse of a great civilization. In the middle of the play, this is translated with only partial success into a struggle for a language that will convey the enormity of what is happening, a frustrated quest for justice in a broken world, and eventually into madness. In the depiction of Titus' sufferings, the play also undergoes a curious change of pace; from being fast moving, the middle scenes involving the Andronici become slow with very little actually happening. What these scenes do reveal, however, in contrast to the prospect revealed by the earlier acts of a young dramatist imitating Marlovian *coups de théâtre* or trying to rival Ovid for cleverness, wit, and ingenuity, is sporadic glimpses of what Shakespeare himself will have to offer as a great tragic dramatist. A case in point is:

> For now I stand as one upon a rock,
> Environed with a wilderness of sea (III.i.93-4)
>
> When will this fearful slumber have an end? (251)

and the scattering of other pre-echoes of *King Lear*.

When the play resumes its former pace in Act Five, one is once more reminded of Eugene Waith's observation that in this early play Shakespeare often seems to be ambitiously trying to "stage" Ovid's poetry.[30] In the play's major Ovidian source, the story of Tereus, Procne and Philomela, for example, part of the horror is seeing civilized life degenerating into a savage hunt with men and women preying on each other mercilessly like animals. Ovid merely implies what is happening with a series of chilling similies,[31] but the eristic young dramatist, having previously "staged" the savage hunt in Act Two in the forest with Tamora as the tiger and Chiron and Demetrius as her young and Lavinia as the prey, returns to it to provide his play with a shocking climax. Maddened by his sufferings, Titus casts aside all civilized pretensions; like the Athenian princesses in Ovid's story, he becomes as vicious an animal as his enemies and joins in the savage hunt. And beginning in the primaeval depths of the forest before emerging into the city, this is to end, as in Ovid, with the human beast trapping and devouring its own kind.

III

A degree of scepticism is induced by the tendency in modern productions to depict Lavinia's plight on a non-realistic level in the scene in which Marcus discovers her raped and mutilated in the forest.[32] The Elizabethan playhouse was adept at catering for the taste of an age in which savage public punishments such as the cutting off of hands or disembowelling drew large crowds; and bloodstained animal flesh and bladders of pigs, blood concealed about the boy actor's person on this occasion, would have doubtless given the Ovidian image of the girl's blood spurting from her wounds "As from a conduit with three issuing spouts" (II.iv.30), full and graphic value.[33] And yet in the face of what he himself describes as "all this loss of blood" (29), Marcus affords the

girl no practical relief but lapses instead into a long speech in which care is taken to refine every detail: if her arms were branches, "kings have sought to sleep" in their "circling shadows"; if her blood flows from her mouth like water, it is both a "crimson river" and "a bubbling fountain stirred with wind"; and if he had heard the girl play "upon a lute", her assailant would have

> dropped the knife and fell asleep,
> As Cerberus at the Thracian poet's feet.
> (II.iv.49-50)

There is no doubting the sincerity of the widely respected "reverend man of Rome" but the "frosty signs and chaps of age" are upon "*olde Marcus*"[34] and like other old men, he tends to be "wordy." Indeed, beginning with references to "dream" and "slumber" and ending with one to sleep, the speech is an old man's reverie; shaken by the horrible and totally unexpected spectacle before him, he has succumbed to the senile tendency to drift away and become absorbed in his own thoughts rather than confront the harshness of reality.

Marcus' speech has been much debated: its Ovidian style, its "unactability," its affording the audience vicarious relief, and, latterly, its giving voice to human suffering.[35] But the main point *within the immediate dramatic context* of a witty, consciously repetitive play, has not been grasped. As he confronts the symbolic figure of Lavinia, her Virgilian name recalling the city's rise, her plight, raped and devastated by "barbarous Goths," foretelling its fall, it is Rome itself that stands bleeding before Marcus. And the situation therefore parallels the opening of the play when another aged figure had been confronted by the prospect of Rome in distress. On that occasion, the response of Titus, Marcus' brother, as the city faced ruin and dismemberment, had been equally inept. His endorsement of Saturninus as the new emperor had ensured that Rome would continue to suffer and bleed. It was a political act of folly which is paralleled by the ineptitude of Marcus' response to Lavinia. The Andronici epitomize *Romanitas* in the play but the members of the older generation of the family, both shaken with "age and feebleness" (I.i.188), for all their sincere patriotism, fail spectacularly, first literally and then symbolically, to come to their country's assistance.

In the play's own terminology, one aged brother, given a golden opportunity, was unable "To heal Rome's harms," while the other, in this symbolic encounter, has not the presence of mind to "wipe away her woes."

The question posed by the finale is whether the new generation of the Andronici can do better. It is posed in characteristically witty terms with the play's ending echoing its beginning. It had begun with Titus being chosen emperor by the people of Rome "by common voice" (I.i.21); the successful general who had won the hearts of the people with his patriotism and courage, momentarily has Rome's future in his hands. It ends with his son similarly placed and applauded; Lucius, too, has won the hearts of the people with his courage—"'Tis he the common people love so much" (IV.iv.72)—and he is similarly elected: "The common voice do cry it shall be so" (V.iii.139). Titus had exercised the supreme power vested in him disastrously and unwittingly ensured the continuation of Rome's misery. Can Lucius succeed where his father failed? There is no doubting his courage or his sincere wish to do so. But the same qualities he brings to the task and even the sentiments in which he pledges himself to undertake it, all echo those of Titus as the play opened; and soldierly virtues and patriotic sentiments were of no avail in the crucial moment of political crisis. Moreover, where Titus was flawed by cruelty, Lucius is considerably and chillingly coarser in that respect. Nevertheless, as Macduff tells Malcolm, vices in a ruler, although severe, are "portable," and the crucial issue is whether Lucius can now exercise the political wisdom and the statecraft his father so crucially lacked.[36]

From the first, however, the signs are ominous. Among much else that he says, for instance, Marcus strikes a disturbing note by reviving the Aeneas analogue when addressing Lucius:

> Speak Rome's dear friend, as erst our ancestor,
> When with his solemn tongue he did discourse
> To lovesick Dido's sad attending ear
> The story of that baleful burning night
> When subtle Greeks surprised King Priam's Troy.
> Tell us what Sinon hath bewitched our ears,
> Or who hath brought the fatal engine in
> That gives our Troy, our Rome, the civil wound. (V.iii.79-86)

Again shaken by violent events and now increasingly conscious of his age, as he resumes his role of political sage and manager of the Andronici's affairs in Rome, Marcus means well but once again displays an old man's vice of being too wordy.[37] And here, as he extends the comparison to the Troy story in the attempt to glorify his family, his final question is "who hath brought the fatal engine in / That gives our Troy, our Rome, the civil wound." In fact, if any of the "gracious auditory" cared to reflect, they would see that it was his own brother who brought into Rome the small party of Goths, Tamora, Aaron, Chiron, and Demetrius, which wreaked havoc, and "the fatal engine" which actually afforded them entry into the city was Titus' triumphant chariot. At the time, Titus believed his country's "ten years" of war (I.i.31) had been brought to a successful conclusion, just as the Trojans believing the same, unwittingly brought a small party of Greeks into Troy. And where Titus had unintentionally introduced the "barbarous Goths" into Rome in small number as prisoners, his son, "Rome's dear friend," the new "Aeneas," has now led a whole army of the Goths to the gates of the city as victors.

But are these the same "barbarous" Goths who appeared earlier in the play? One of the most ingenious and challenging features of Jonathan Bate's stimulating recent edition of the play, is the argument that they are not. Bate believes the play "begins with a Roman stigmatization of the Goths as barbarians, but modulates towards a very different view."[38] Citing grounds for the Elizabethans regarding the Goths as their ancestors, and arguing that the Goths were like the German leaders of the Reformation in opposing Rome, he devises a thesis for regarding the Goths who appear earlier in the play as "evil" and those who follow Lucius as "good." Unfortunately, however, as I have shown elsewhere, there is no evidence for thinking that the Goths have undergone any miraculous conversion on the road to Rome.[39] Those who follow Lucius remain a "warlike" people (V.iii.27) whose savage nature is demonstrated in the willingness with which they are prepared to participate in the most atrocious and cruel acts; when Lucius orders them to hang the baby, for example, they make preparations without demur. In fact, early and late, the Goths in the play conform to the stock Elizabethan image which can be found in writers like Ascham and Cooper and which was

known to every Elizabethan schoolboy from his study of Ovid's *Tristia* where they are described as warlike, lawless, brutal barbarians.[40] And what motivates the Goths who have allied themselves to Lucius, is no sudden burst of uncharacteristic altruism but the prospect of revenge on Rome; this is made clear when he addresses them as the play's final act opens:

> Therefore, great lords, be as your title witness,
> Imperious and impatient of your wrongs;
> And wherein Rome hath done you any scath,
> Let him make treble satisfaction. (V.i.5-8)

How, one wonders, does letting the "barbarous" Goths exact "treble satisfaction" on Rome, sit with the dawn of the new Roman golden age Lucius is ostensibly ushering in. Clarity of thought in ticklish and potentially dangerous political situations is clearly no more Lucius' forte than it was his father's.[41] The services of the Goths, it appears, have been hired at a price, and that price is shortly to be paid.[42]

Besides the numerous, menacing Goths, there is also one sinister individual presence in the finale, Aaron's child. There is no evidence that he is present as a manifestation of any new found clemency on Lucius' part: the only reason given is so that he can be produced as proof of the empress' adultery with the "irreligious Moor" and thus convince the Romans of the justice of Andronici's actions. But there is also a less obvious, more ominous reason. The play, as D. J. Palmer has shown, presents an ironic anti-world,[43] and among its more daring features, is the comparison of three murderers, two of them rapists, to the Magi moments before a birth is announced (IV.ii.32-3); and the son that is born into this fallen world is "no redeemer"[44] but the "coal black" child of the "devil and his dam" whose birth is celebrated by murder. So, as the cheers ring out for the politically naive and brutal new young emperor, the presence among the hybrid assembly of the "growing image" of a "fiend-like face" (V.i.45) is one more indication of what the future has in store.

But the final comment on what lies ahead for Rome is in the repetitive structure of this witty and ironic play. Proceedings had begun in Act One with a display of Lucius' sadistic cruelty which had set in motion

a train of events that had brought Rome to its knees; they end in Act Five with a similar display. This time, however, as Lucius once again indulges himself before uneasy Romans surrounded by vengeful and triumphant Goths in a situation that can only be described as high octane, what is to follow is left to the audience's imagination.

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NOTES

[1]A. C. Hamilton, for instance, while accepting him, also notes that "Lucius, who succeeds as Emperor, first occasions the cycle of revenge by demanding the sacrifice of Tamora's son, and at the end he plans further revenge against her" ("*Titus Andronicus*: The Form of Shakespearian Tragedy," *ShQ* 14 [1963]: 202); Gail Kern Paster, while recognising his emergence as "... another Aeneas," also draws attention to his "merciless disposition" ("To Starve with Feeding: Shakespeare's Idea of Rome," *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays*, ed. P. C. Kolin [New York: Garland, 1995] 230; originally published *in The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare* [Athens: U of Georgia P, 1986]).

Among the very small minority of critics who have questioned Lucius as redeemer are R. F. Hill, who finds it strange in view of his "fearful brutality" that "we are expected to applaud" Lucius in his "role as saviour of Rome ("The Composition of *Titus Andronicus*," *ShS* 10 [1957]: 62); and more recently, Emily C. Bartels, who feels that "the stability of Lucius' reign is uncertain" because of his insistence on human sacrifice in Act One and because "the reliability of his new allies" is "questionable" ("Making More of the Moor: Aaron, Othello, and Renaissance Refashionings of Race," *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays* 272; originally published in *ShQ* 41 [1990]: 433-54).

[2]Yates' views first appeared in "Queen Elizabeth as Astraea," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 10 (1947): 27-82; and were reproduced in her book, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).

[3]*Astraea* 75.

[4]*Hero and Saint: Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Heroic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971) 194.

[5]"Compelling Art in *Titus Andronicus*," *SEL* 28 (1988) 214.

[6]Jonathan Bate (ed.), *Titus Andronicus* (London: Routledge, 1995) 21.

[7]*The Acts and Monuments of the Church; Containing the History and Suffering of the Martyrs*, ed. M. H. Seymour (London: Scott, Webster & Geary, 1838) 76. (For King Lucius, see 75-76.)

[8]Yates 75.

[9]Quotation is from *Titus Andronicus*, ed. E. Waith (Oxford: OUP, 1984).

[10]"As we have seen, the man who led the people in their uprising was Lucius Junius Brutus. This is the role that Lucius fulfils in the play" (92).

[11]Ovid refers to him in the *Fasti* as "Brutus" (II.849); Livy in the *Historia Romanorum* as "Junius Brutus" and, with his idiosyncratic fondness for initials, as "L. Junius Brutus" (I.lviii.6-7, lix.1, lx.3); Chaucer as "Brutus" in The *Legende of Good Women* ("Legenda Lucrecie," 1862); and Painter, Livy's English translator, follows his source precisely (see "The Second Novell"). (For Livy, see *Historiarium Romanarum* [Haunia, 1873]; the other sources used by Shakespeare are conveniently gathered by F. T. Prince in the Arden edition of *The Poems* [London: Routledge, 1964; rpt. 1994] 189-201.)

[12]See *The Lives of the Noble Grecians & Romanes Compared together by that Grave and Learned Philosopher and Historiographer Plutarke of Chaeronea, Translated out of Greek into French by James Amyot: and out of French into English by Thomas North* (Printed from the 1579 edition with the addition of 15 lives from the third edition [1603]), vol. 2 (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1930) 436-37.

[13]Modern productions have occasionally reminded us that there is room for a very different assessment of Lucius' role; in Jane Howell's recent BBC-TV production (1985), for example, "The new emperor emerges as a hypocritical opportunist" and a fascist (*Titus Andronicus*, ed. Alan Hughes [Cambridge: CUP, 1994] 45); see also P. C. Kolin, "*Titus Andronicus* and the Critical Legacy," *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays* 37.

[14]Cf. the quotations from Seneca (II.i.136 and IV.i.80-81), Horace (IV.ii.20-21), and Ovid (IV.iii.4).

[15]In the view of A. H. Tricomi, for example, "Shakespeare chooses to identify Lavinia's violation with the violation of Rome" ("The Aesthetics of Mutilation in *Titus Andronicus*," *ShS* 27 [1974] 17).

[16]Verbal patterning is a feature of the play influenced by Ovid. This particular instance, for example, is paralleled in the play's major Ovidian source, the story of Procne, Philomela, and Tereus (*Metamorphoses* VI.424-674). Sent to Athens by his wife, Procne, to secure her father's permission for a visit by her sister, Philomela, to Thrace, Tereus is consumed with lust for the girl. When at last he has her in his power on board his ship, he is described as a predatory animal closing in on its helpless prey. And as soon as the ship arrives in Thrace, he drags the girl, calling on her father in her panic, to a hut in the darkness of the forest to rape and mutilate her—"In stabula alta trahit silvis obscura vetustis / . . . frustra clamato saepe parente" (VI.521-25). Later when Procne revenges herself on him by murdering his only son, their small child Itys, the abduction of Philomela is deliberately echoed. Like the girl, the boy calling on his mother ("mater mater clamantem" 640) is dragged ("Nec mora traxit Itym" 636) like a small, helpless animal ("cervae / lactentem foetum" 636-37) in the grip of a predator ("Gangetica . . . tigris" 637) into the darkness of a forest ("per sylvas . . . opacas"). As in the play, ingenious verbal repetition emphasizes that the violence unleashed by the initial perpetrator has rebounded on what is most precious to him. (Reference to Ovid's poem is to a standard sixteenth-century edition containing the notes of Regius and Micyllus, *Metamorphoseon Pub, Ovidii Nasonis* [Venice, 1545].)

[17]*The Lives of the Noble Grecians & Romanes* 2: 436.

[18]*Shakespeare's Rome* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983) 69.

[19]At such a moment, it is considerably easier to credit the depiction of Lucius as fascist and "maniacal" in Howell's production (see *"Titus Andronicus* and the Critical Legacy" 37), than Ruth Nevo's description of him as "noble, honourable, and *gentle*" (italics mine; "Tragic Form in *Titus Andronicus*," *Further Studies in English Language and Literature*, ed. A. A. Mendilow [Jerusalem: U of Jerusalem P, 1975] 18).

[20]Lucius' "clemency" here and the presence of the babe at the finale have been taken as proof of his changed nature, but he has very pragmatic reasons, remarked below, for producing the child as the play ends. Moreover, Lucius' "careful" observance of "popish tricks and ceremonies" (V.i.74-77) would be anathema to an Elizabethan playhouse audience. Yet modern editors have brushed aside this reference to Lucius' religion as a meaningless anachronism, Jonathan Bate even arguing for shades of a "protestant succession" in his later election as Rome's new emperor. (See Waith [ed.] 172, and Hughes 126; for Bate, see 21).

[21]Having characteristically prohibited "pity" in the onlookers' response to Aaron's cries as he starves to death, Lucius in almost the next breath damns Tamora for being "devoid of pity." (The lack of clarity in his thinking is discussed in the final section of this article.)

[22]For Aaron's desecration of the dead and ingenious torment of the living, see, for example, V.i.135-40 and III.i.150 ff. For Lucius (in spite of his indignation) equalling Aaron in cruelty see V.i.93-94 and I.i.143. R. T. Brucher, one of the few modern critics to actually remark Lucius' *"fondness* for violence" (italics mine), also perceives that "It is not love of violence that distinguished Aaron from the Romans, but the witty conception of it" ("'Tragedy Laugh On': Comic Violence in *Titus Andronicus*," *Renaissance Drama* 10 [1979] 82).

[23]Other instances with a Virgilian ring are I.i.71-74 and "Why suffer'st thou thy sons, unburied yet, / To hover on the dreadful shore of Styx?" (87-88), echoing Phaer's translation "round about these shores they hove" (VI.355). (For "hove" as an alternative form of *hover* in the sixteenth century, see *OED*; for another echo of Phaer in the scene, see Waith [ed.] 98 [note to line 316]: reference is *to The Aeneid of Thomas Phaer and Thomas Twyne: A Critical Edition*, ed. S. Lally [New York: Garland, 1987].)

[24]Waith (ed.) 84.

[25]The influence of *The Jew of Malta* upon Aaron's characterization has been widely recognized; here, like Tamburlaine, Titus makes a magnificent charioted entrance, commits atrocities and kills a son who opposed him.

[26]Romans and Goths invoke the Troy story in the course of the play, but there will be no more specific comparisons to Aeneas by the Andronici until Marcus' ominous and rather inept public proclamation of Lucius as the "new Aeneas" following Titus' death (see below).

[27]The assumption by Titus of the role of grieving, tragic father also strains credibility. He unhesitatingly kills Mutius, the son who was his "joy," for acting against the interests of Rome, but when the evidence suggests that two more of his sons, Quintus and Martius, have even more gravely and viciously acted against the interests of Rome, Titus collapses before the prospect of their imminent death.

[28]G. S. West, "Going By The Book: Classical Allusions in *Titus Andronicus*," *SP* 79 (1982): 77; P. C. Kolin, "'Come Down and Welcome me to This World's Light': *Titus Andronicus* and the Canons of Contemporary Violence" 310, Michael Billington,

"Shaping a Gory Classic for TV (1985)" 436, and Joel Fink, "The Conceptualization and Realisation of Violence in *Titus Andronicus* (1988)" (a review of the production of Colorado Shax Festival) 459 (all in *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays*, ed. Kolin).

[29]There were human sacrifices made in Rome in the city's early history (see for example, Livy, *Historia Romanorum*, XXII.57.2), but these were a thing of the long distant past at the time the play is set.

[30]See "The Metamorphosis of Violence in *Titus Andronicus*," *ShS* 10 (1957): 39-49.

[31]The similes are of the eagle about to tear its helpless prey apart (VI.514-18), the bloodstained lamb momentarily cast aside by a wolf, and the terrified dove, its wings covered with blood (527-30), and the tigress bearing the helpless fawn away into the dark forest (636-37).

[32]In Peter Brook's celebrated production at Stratford in 1955 with Olivier in the lead, for example, as the raped and mutilated Lavinia, Vivien Leigh had "her arms swathed in gauze, with scarlet streamers attached to her mouth and wrists" (Waith 55).

[33]The image is derived from Ovid's description of Pyramus' blood spurting out when he stabs himself, *via* Arthur Golding's translation: "The bloud did spin on hie / As when a Conduite pipe la crackt" (IV.147-48). (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].)

[34]This description of Marcus is taken from Q1 which, as Jonathan Bate points out was printed from the "foul papers" or "Shakespeare's working manuscript" (see 98-99). (It is puzzling that, having established Marcus' advanced years, Bate then transfers the lines in the final scene referring to "my frosty signs and chaps of age" [V.iii.72-86], which are traditionally assigned to Marcus, to "A Roman Lord.")

[35]For a useful resume of various interpretations, see Hughes 36-38. For the recent, brilliant explication of the speech as giving voice to human suffering, see Jonathan Bate. Noting Shakespeare's longstanding obsession with Orpheus, the archetypal figure of the poet, he sees it as an illustration of poetry's ability to "bring back that which has been lost" (111); he also suggests it is an epitome of fictive tragedy—when Marcus asks the mute victim, "Shall I speak for thee?" (II.iv.32), "it is the question, always present but rarely voiced, that every tragedy asks" (117).

[36]Earlier in the play the signs were not promising. When the storm broke over his family in Rome, Lucius' response was courageous but simplistic: he looked to his sword. And even after he has failed to rescue his brothers and been punished for his pains by banishment, he is still to be found wandering in the streets of Rome "with his weapon drawn" (III.i.48). It takes his half-crazed father to point out to "foolish Lucius" that the city is now "a wilderness of tigers" for the Andronici (54), and to do his thinking for him and send him to the Goths to raise an army. But it is possible that, although he is no less cruel, his period of exile has been a *political* watershed for him.

[37]In the Yale production of 1924, Marcus was played as a "superannuated Polonius" (A. M. Witherspoon, "Staging of *Titus Andronicus* gives Alpha Delta place in Shakespearean History" [Yale University, 1924], *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays* 386.)

[38]See Bate 19 ff. For similar views, see Ronald Broude, "Romans and Goths in *Titus*

Andronicus," *ShSt* 6 (1970): 27-34, and C. C. Huffman, "*Titus Andronicus*: Metamorphosis and Renewal," *MLR* 67 (1972): 730-41.

[39]That the Goths who support Lucius, are different from and changed in nature to the "barbarous" Goths who appear earlier in the play, is crucial for critics taking a favourable view of Lucius. See, for instance, Bates 19. For further details of the argument presented here, see my "'The Goths protect the Andronici, who go aloft': The Implications of A Stage Direction," *NQ* 241 (1996): 152-55.

[40]Among Ovid's references to the Goths, one finds "belligeris . . . gentibus" (III.ix.13), "gente fera" (9), "rudis . . . Getis" (V.iii.8), "non metuunt leges" (V.vii.47), "inhumanae barbariae" (III.ix.2), "quamque lupi, saevae plus feritatis habent" (V.vii.46). (Reference is to *Tristia: Ex Ponto*, ed. A. L. Wheeler [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1924; rpt. 1965].)

[41]In German productions of the play, Lucius has been depicted not only as a fascist, but also as "a political bungler" ("*Titus Andronicus* and the Critical Legacy," *Titus Andronicus: Critical Essays* 37).

[42]Any literate member of an Elizabethan audience familiar with Renaissance lore would also know that the employment of the Goths militarily signalled the beginning of the end for the Romans. See, for instance, Niccolo Macchiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. and ed. R. M. Adams (New York: Norton, 1977) 41: "If you try to seek the basic reason for the fall of the Roman Empire, you will find it began with the hiring of Goths as soldiers; from that moment, the force of the Roman Empire began to grow slack, and all the energy taken from it accrued to them."

[43]See "The Unspeakable in Pursuit of the Uneatable: Language and Action in *Titus Andronicus*," *Critical Quarterly* 14 (1972): 320-39.

[44]The phrase is Palmer's; see 324.

Connotations
Vol. 6.2 (1996/97)

Hamlet as Fable: Reconstructing a Lost Code of Meaning

ANTHONY DiMATTEO

> What's Hecuba to him, or he to her,
> That he should weep for her? What would he do
> Had he the motive and the cue for passion
> That I have?
>
> (*Hamlet* 2.2.553-56)[1]

I. Introduction

One reply to Hamlet's self-questionings in the passage I use as an epigraph is that the actor would do exactly what Hamlet is doing. The degree to which the play engages classical figures and the significance of why it would in the first place continue to reward analysis. As the many notes of Anthony Brian Taylor demonstrate, there remain unexplored mythographic patterns within the language and structure of Shakespeare's plays.[2] Classical subtexts arguably comprise an intentional pattern of allusions functioning to advise a contemporary humanist audience through a symbolic code drawn chiefly from Ovidian myth.

Shakespeare, in other words, is not innocent of "undermeanings," to use D. C. Allen's term for how Aristotelian "dianoia" functions in the creation of plot and narrative in Renaissance poetry through a kind of undersong signalled by myth allusion. As Jean Starobinski has described the use of classical fable as it develops in the late Renaissance and after, "we are dealing with a semiological code for expressing 'intention' in a consecrated language" (171). So too Leonard Barkan speaking of how the remains of antiquity in the Renaissance often crystallize into a coded "visual" language deployed as part of a work's inventive processes: "Images of transformation in the sixteenth century often stand as

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debdimatteo00602.htm>.

concentrated miniatures speaking their own language and epitomizing whole metamorphic stories" (189). In *Hamlet*, scattered references to antique story through vivid images or analogies (King Hamlet as Hyperion, Claudius as satyr, 1.2.140; Gertrude "like Niobe, all tears," 1.2.149; "Pyrrhus' bleeding sword," 2.2.487) must be considered as ornament as well as iconic sign of a fabled history or experience from time immemorial that influences perception of present deeds.

As Jonathan Bate shows, a "key" to Shakespeare's use of myth is how the dramatist deploys Ovid's ancient tales of change as conceptual metaphors with complex "psychological" meanings as well as literal and physical ones (28). These myths as metaphors have dramatic and cognitive power, forwarding plot and also meditating upon it, revealing perception and feeling as murkily transformative in their relations to the world beyond and within individual characters. Hence, myth allusion often says more than the characters may mean by it, introducing a semantic burden in excess of what the immediate dialogue requires and thereby suggesting the dramatist's "secret" comment.

Hamlet, as I hope to show, through "terms, images, incidents" richly makes use of the Venus and Adonis myth as told by Orpheus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[3] What Orpheus sings of the gods' mortal lovers and how their elegiac fables shed light on Orpheus' own story connect with the dramatic rendering of Hamlet's experiences and self-perceptions. The nexus of Hamlet, Adonis, and Orpheus links with another analogy between fable and history that involves an unsettling convergence of spirits. Aeneas' encountering the ghosts of Anchises and Dido in Hades provides a lively background by way of comparison to Hamlet's "greeting" his father's ghost and the dead Ophelia at her burial site. The critical task is not a mere matter of "translating" the influence of these myths upon the writing of *Hamlet* into symbolic expressions of personal sentiment that Hamlet and Ophelia "feel." Nor does it concern only identifying the juxtapositions of different mythological figures as various foils against which the play's characters are seen. Such networks of analogies pit different treatments of myths, Virgil's versus Ovid's for example, against each other, as I will later argue.

Now I want to stress the myths' cognitive potential, understood as they were in the Renaissance, to have great speculative power, the reason

why, for example, Boccaccio advises orators and poets to "mix fable with discourse": "Quid enim pulchrius in colluctionibus hominum quam nonnunque imiscuisse fabellas sententiis?" (111ᵛ). This referential power of myths gravid with meaning is enlisted but also deeply called into question by *Hamlet*. Allusion to myth serves to comment upon the action of the play, as Boccaccio and Natale Conti understood the function of such technique, acting as a kind of internalized *hyponoia*, and yet it is also, like the nobility of Denmark, made subject to a tragic and final silencing or scrambling. Myth speaks in the drama only to grow mute. It forms a pattern no sooner articulated than skewed or anamorphosed. Not coincidentally, lines of allegorical reading and genealogical lines of nobility are both cancelled out in the tragic course of action.

II. "Antiqui dicunt": Three Ghosts of Hamlet

In Renaissance mythography, Hamlet's forerunners or classical models, Orpheus, Adonis, Aeneas, are figures of ancient heroes understood to have transcended nature's mortal coil. Adonis attains a kind of vegetative perpetuity, Aeneas everlasting fame, and Orpheus spiritual or vatic immortality. Aeneas and Orpheus conspicuously are exceptions to Hamlet's sense of death as an absolute limit, "The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn / No traveller returns" (3.1.79-80). Hamlet, paragon of man, soldier, and scholar, the model of princes, in the course of the play is compared to and disengaged from these classical models of human transcendence over utter decay and change. The stench of rot and incest, troubling encounters with his dead but not dead father, a walker of the night not clearly of any world, and Hamlet's riddling "vatic" witticisms all express the doomed condition of his fate. The course of the play invokes and subverts legends of man's triumph over mutability, like so much statuary crumbled into dust before our eyes.

First, as for terms, Ophelia's elegiac praise of Hamlet as "the glass of fashion and the mould of form" (3.1.155-56), "that unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth / Blasted with ecstasy," are nearly quotations of the traditional mythographic reading of the Ovidian Adonis as the paragon of man too soon destroyed by nature. As Abraham Fraunce

elaborates the Ovidian tale, Adonis is "Dame Natur's dearling, hev'ns joy, worlds woonder" (43^{v}), his blasted life changed into an anemone symbolic of how "flowre fades, eye dazeleth, face wrinkleth, bewty decayeth" (45^{r}). Georgius Sabinus comments that Adonis' tragic death "warns us that nothing is less lasting than beauty and form" ("admoneamur nihil esse minus diuturnum pulchritudine et forma," 364). "Frailty, thy name is man," Ophelia implies. We need to hear these mythological undertones, the meanings if not the names, of Ophelia's mournful encomium. They suggest how Hamlet and Ophelia's broken identities and frustrated love manifest inescapable universal patterns of the natural and human world. In the play, Venus' curse of love prompted by Adonis' death proves only too true:

> Sith in his prime, Death doth my love destroy,
> They that love best, their loves shall not enjoy.[4]

Hamlet and Ophelia act out this doom, both participating in the cosmic pattern established out of grief and revenge by Venus over her dead Adonis.

Recognizing Ophelia in this double way, as an obvious Venus-figure mourning her ruined Adonis and also as one like Adonis and Hamlet doomed to early death, reveals her "perfecting" role in the drama. In her double plight to lament and die, she brings to completion a central patterning of the play's mythological allusions, making it identifiable. The more we unravel this complex mythological analogy, so generative of the play's multiple meanings, the more we begin to understand what Harold Jenkins calls one of the play's "perennial questions. . . . Why is Hamlet so cruel to Ophelia?" (125). Briefly, my response here would be hunting the boar (associated with Diana) or loving Venus (the soft hunt) are mutually exclusive pathways. When Hamlet repeatedly tells Ophelia, "Get thee to a nunnery" (3.1.121), prompting her lament regarding "the mould of form" (155), the play reveals an unbridgeable divide between a range of conflicting values, between *amor* and *majestas*, to use Ovidian terms, or, to use philosophical and religious, between the domains of matter and spirit. As Hamlet says, "virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it," (3.1.117), that is,

pleasure will not reconcile with virtue, thereby overturning a favorite neo-Platonic ideality of the Renaissance, as in Achille Bocchi's emblem "Cum virtute alma consentit vera voluptas" (25).

These moral and cosmic conflicts occur not just between Ophelia and Hamlet but within both characters as the course of the play unfolds. Their fate spells out human limitations writ large in the cosmos. In the Renaissance, Adonis was the epitome of life-giving form, indeed "the Father of all formes they call" in Spenser's famous "Gardin of Adonis" description in *The Faerie Queene* (3.6.47). However, even in his magical *locus amoenus*, Adonis must be hidden away by Venus "from the world, and from the skill / Of Stygian Gods, which doe her love envy" (3.6.46). Likewise, he is a touchstone of physiognomic proportion in George Sandys' commentary on Ovid (366), and yet this perfect man is also doomed to tragic death like the sun by the "boar of winter" and mourned by that paradigm of all lovers Venus, in short an emblem of the frailty and vulnerability of even ideal human form and beauty.[5] This commonplace reading of the Adonis figure makes obvious connections with Shakespeare's "Renaissance Hamlet," another mirror of princely perfection doomed to short life and frustrated love.

In this line of mythographic reading that I am attempting to open, we also need to acknowledge for its bearing on *Hamlet* the narrative context of the Adonis myth in Ovid, of how the fate of Orpheus who speaks the tale proves like that of Adonis, the poet's tragic death followed by his becoming a mortal-made-immortal by the intervention of the gods. Ovid's implication is that change is a process that all times and realms, human and divine, undergo, as Orpheus who sings of metamorphosis also becomes the object of it. An all-embracing metamorphic dynamic is also let loose in the multiple worlds of *Hamlet* where suffering, death and transformation are so greedily at work in the three worlds that the action of the play scans: the world beyond with its ghost "doom'd for a certain time to walk the night," the present human world of "unweeded gardens," and the world of the past (the jawbone of Cain).

Besides the terminology that couples ideal form and mutability, there are numerous plot similarities between the Ovidian myth of Adonis and the play that give rise to thought in puzzling ways: the incestuous

relations of father and daughter in the myth and uncle and mother in the play (the latter relations considered incest at least in the Tudor canon law of prohibited degrees); love frustrated by martial demands made upon the male (the harsh treatment of Venus by Adonis set on hunting the boar, that of Ophelia by Hamlet intent on killing the "adulterate beast" Claudius); death of prince Adonis by the boar's goring and subsequent "eternalization" as a flower, that of prince Hamlet by an envenomed sword and the implied creation of at least a humanist legend as the scholar Horatio vows to tell his lay of woe "to th'yet unknowing world" (5.2.384). Also, the fact that Orpheus, the singer of Adonis as well as of other youths beloved of the gods ("dilectos superis") in Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses*, undergoes tragic death and immortal translation has a further, more specific analogical relevance to Hamlet than the one stated above regarding both the narrator and the tale undergoing metamorphosis: like Hamlet's story, that of Orpheus shows how the civilizing figure, the righter of wrongs or tamer of the barbarous, finally succumbs to the very forces he had attempted to overcome. Orpheus is destroyed by an excess of the very Dionysiac rituals he had taught or refined; Hamlet is murdered in the course of the same fencing competition through which he obtains his triumph of "revenge," a twisted plot that Horatio describes as "fall'n on th' inventors' heads" (5.2.390).

This last mythographic parallel would have proved especially disturbing to the play's humanist audience. Orpheus in the Renaissance was, in Thomas Cain's findings (11-4), the very paradigm of eloquence for the humanists, the primordial Word-bearer of civilization, finally overcome in the end by his own desire for perfection (the double loss of Eurydice understood as the loss of a once achieved "good harmony" or proper mode of speaking or music ironically brought about by Orpheus' excessive love of the harmonious or just). Like that of Orpheus, Hamlet's story turns civilization's gaze upon itself, revealing a fearful underside, the brutal, wild, mutable "Hobbesian" world of the natural and the barbarous where strife finally overwhelms the lover of justice who would change things for the better. Uncannily, in myth and play, love itself has deeply ambiguous motivations and results.

III. Reading the Code Historically

We must not, however, read an Adonis or Orpheus subtext in isolation from other classical points of contact. A symbolic coding and an implied range of meanings are at stake, not one to one identifications. These node-like signs drawn from myth and the polysemous meaning attributed them date Shakespeare's work, that is, place it in a relationship to a specific audience or readership trained in academic recital and exegesis of Ovid and Virgil, as T. W. Baldwin describes the typical Elizabethan Latin curriculum. The interplay of drama and myth evolves out of the learning practices and belief-structures of the late Renaissance, not because of archetypes that eternally recur, but because of acquired ways of understanding how things mean.

As noted above, chief among these heavily valued "antique" signs and acquired meanings were stories of classical heroes who had journeyed to and returned from the world beyond, transcending the limits of the known world by coming into contact with "the dead, ancestors, divinities," in Carlo Ginzburg's anthropological sense of what such a mythological voyage would have meant in terms of archaic European belief-structures that demonstrably persisted into early modern society (Ginzburg 262).[6] Despite spectacular attempts to persecute or edify their would-be believers, the gods and classical heroes obtained a well-documented afterlife in the literature and art of the Renaissance, as thoroughly explored, for instance, by Erwin Panofsky, Jean Seznec, Ernst Gombrich, and D. C. Allen. The high Medieval tradition of reading *sub integumento*, the way Bernard Silvestris read Virgil, and the associated flexibility of reading rhetorically *in bono et malo* that develops along with it, as in Petrarch's friend Pierre Bersuire's reading of Ovid, had allowed Orpheus and Adonis to be praised as Christ-like figures or vilified as corrupt *daimones* who could seduce the Christian soul.[7] The fable of Orpheus, for example, could be read *in bono* as a shadowy, ultimately inadequate figure for Christ who suffers embodiment and death (journeys to Hades) in order to rescue the soul (Eurydice) from damnation, or *in malo*, as Boethius does in his *Consolation of Philosophy* (Metrum 12), as a figure for the sinner overcome on the brink of salvation by the unruly law of love.[8] Augustine, as Sir John Harington knew in his search for

the stamp of Christian orthodoxy upon his Virgilian commentary, had acknowledged the heuristic double potential of pagan gods in his reading of Adam's idolatry in the garden: "Created gods are gods not in their own true nature but by their participation in the true God" (573). It is through this participation that "the devil hath power / T'assume a pleasing shape" (2.2.595), to give the orthodox theological reading of Hamlet's analysis of what the ghost might be.

These hermeneutical traditions as they had come to evolve in the late Renaissance require us to read myth allusions in *Hamlet* not archetypically but stenographically, following Sir Thomas Browne's advice for the symbolic reading of myth that, admittedly in a baroque way, expands upon Augustine's transformative reading of pagan myth as a covering over of the oblique traces of the true light revealed only when myth is construed from the perspective of Sacred Writ. These footsteps or marks of Providence Augustine describes as "vestigia Trinitatis."[9] We have already identified some "shorthanded" and ambiguous figures in *Hamlet* drawn from myth that mark the unfolding of the drama as a dubiously spiritual voyage beyond the world known to reason. The question that the play repeatedly raises is, toward what place or dimension of the sacred is Hamlet journeying? Taking Hamlet as a Renaissance archetype of the civilizer, this query translates into grave doubts about "civilization," to use anachronistically an eighteenth-century concept (Starobinski 7-8). Is it foul revenge or redemption that ultimately characterizes Hamlet's story?

The acquired double potential of myth allowing it to serve simultaneously as examples of human virtue and vice complexly connects in the play with Hamlet's anxiety not only about his father's apparition but also his own thoughts. The antique past and the present day of Denmark are fitfully linked. Just prior to the play within the play wherein he hopes to "catch the conscience of the King" (2.2.601), Hamlet reveals to Horatio black thoughts:

> If his [the King's] occulted guilt
> Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
> It is a damned ghost we have seen,
> And my imaginations are as foul
> As Vulcan's stithy. (3.2.80-84)

Again it is precisely this shimmering surface of allusions to myth that indicates deep cultural resonance within the late Renaissance. If he has conjured everything up, then Hamlet's experiences are similar to those of Spenser's Scudamour when he "visits" a not wholly imaginary House of Care, "bent to revenge on blameless Britomart" (4.5.31). A Spenserian excursus is warranted here. Scudamour meets Care, "a blacksmith by trade," a Vulcanic figure alluding to the proverbial jealousy that Vulcan feels for his wanton wife. "Those be unquiet thoughts, that carefull minds invade," Spenser's narrator describes the psychological complex that leads to such imaginings (stanza 35), thus indicating that the journey to Care's House is an allegorical phantom expressive of Scudamour's "overheated" mind. However, as with Hamlet's allusion to the "damned ghost" being the possible cause of his imaginings, the House of Care episode is not only a representation of pure delusion stemming from misguided jealousy and revenge. The antique lineage of Care is a trace, mark or visible manifestation of unhealthy spirits dragging the jealous soul down towards matter. As a daimon, Vulcan was understood as representing a process within the cosmos. He is that "turbulent fire mixed within all things making them prime for generation," that is, to use the spiritual translation of this commonplace of natural philosophy, the darkening of the spirit or "fire" with matter (Natale Conti's reading in DiMatteo 87). This is why Hamlet fears his "imaginings" are not only misperceptions but the results of a moral contamination affecting all things of the created world, including his mind. His quest for justice might be a journey into damnation, towards dead matter, as if the weapons being forged by "Vulcan," including Hamlet's play within the play soon to follow and all his "antic" witticisms, were serving a black purpose, *typhos* and not *logos*. By promoting *typhos*, in ancient Cynicism a kind of miasmic soot of the mind, Hamlet would morally reverse the labors of Hercules.[10]

With the Vulcan myth activated in small letters, different and disturbing analogies with long-lived interpretive histories flare into awareness. Whereas Ophelia, as argued, appears a grieving Venus, now Gertrude emerges through the Vulcan allusion also like a Venus figure. The goddess' legendary doubleness as heavenly or wanton love perfectly expresses Hamlet's doubts about his mother's identity and his own moral

situation. Furthermore, the dead King Hamlet can be analogized as Vulcan (a daimon) forging his son (or a soul) into an agent of evil. Perhaps most to the point, Hamlet himself is like Vulcan forging a "net," as in Homer's fable in the *Iliad*, when the "Sun" spies the cheating gods and informs Vulcan. On this last fable, Arthur Golding observes, "The snares of Mars and Venus shew that tyme will bring too lyght / The secret sinnes that folk commit in corners or by nyght" (3). Or does Hamlet fear that his own "imaginations" (and the word as used in the passage exactly parallels the status of Spenserian allegorical events, half-real, half-imaginary, with clear boundaries nowhere) have taken on a life of their own and enthralled him? The excessively "generative" impulse that he had earlier accused his mother of ("As if increase of appetite had grown / By what it fed on," 1.2.144-45), even before his knowledge of the ghost, here for a moment appears as a disturbing potential of his own mind, the fire of the spirit itself breeding things of darkness. Furthermore, in Fulgentius' commentary upon the fable of Homer, in which the adulterous and incestuous siblings Venus and Mars are brought to the light of judgment, Mars is understood as corrupting the virtue of the marriage bed, "virtus corrupta libidine" (Whitbread 72), obviously, in Hamlet's world, applicable to Claudius but, if the ghost be a devil, to Hamlet himself whose private imaginings have sullied Gertrude. From this vantage point of a Venus and Mars analogy with Gertrude and Claudius, the ghost's words to Hamlet flare with unexpected iconography:

> Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
> A couch for luxury and damned incest. (1.5.82-83)

Venus as *Luxuria* on her couch is too familiar an icon for the goddess not to flash to mind here. Of course, the ghost tells Hamlet to "leave her to heaven" (1.5.86), but the image of his mother as an adulterate *Vanitas* has been indelibly etched. A vivid image, as the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* maintains, that involves a similitude of words and things, has staying power in the tablets of one's memory.

Such analogies breeding quick among themselves indicate how *Hamlet* in plot, terms and phrases lingers over a whole range of ancient concerns

through which late Renaissance culture both couched and covered over its own ambition and fears.

Let us return to another of Venus' lovers, the "suppressed" or unstated side of the Vulcan analogy. Comparing Hamlet to Adonis, on the basis of the similarities and connections already noted, we can see how the conflict between love and strife or war (figured by the "hard" or fatal hunt in both play and myth) appears to define the universal or natural or even vegetative conditions of being embodied as a human, male and female. Hamlet and Ophelia seem to act out what Shakespeare had represented in *Venus and Adonis* as the curse of Venus, a sacred or eternal dimension of the human condition. Yet becoming an Adonis or Venus for Hamlet and Ophelia is a journey towards a deadly fate, becoming transformed into the more or other than human, their personal identity eradicated by the "destined" role they come to play that leads directly to their death. In this sense, Hamlet as Adonis shows how a soul can journey towards blackest hell, towards *hyle* or the unweeded garden of the material world and away from *nous* or from spirit and the longed-for release from nature's endless cycle of corruption and generation. Hamlet is obsessed with the possibilities of pagan antecedents or feelings for their potential and ambiguous relationship to his own plight.

We can also see Hamlet's strong mental participation in ancient things most clearly in the play when from memory he speaks as Aeneas for fourteen lines in the players scene (2.2.446-57). "Aeneas' tale to Dido" requested of the actors by Hamlet out of his love for it directs attention to the whole matter of Troy. His recall doubtless is prodded by his own peculiar dilemma that has for one of its classical antecedents Aeneas' meeting his father's *umbra* or *manes* in Elysium in *Aeneid* 6, a divinely sanctioned encounter that legitimizes the subsequent bloodshed and war upon the Lavinian shores and redeems the loss of Troy. This providential pattern is not under the sway of what the first player in Hamlet terms "strumpet Fortune" (2.2.489). Hamlet, however, agonizes over the legitimacy of the ghost, as scenes 1.4 and 3.2 reveal, and in another stark contrast to Aeneas' destiny, killing Claudius will involve his own death and prove the end of his own patriarchal line. "The hellish Pyrrhus / Old grandsire Priam seeks" (2.2.459-60) is an image of Claudius murdering King Hamlet and of Hamlet's black conceits about

his uncle Claudius. "Pyrrhus' bleeding sword" (487) that falls on the king in Aeneas' speech will eerily appear to levitate in Hamlet's hand in the prayer scene when he stands over the kneeling Claudius, commanding, "Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent" (3.3.88).[11] As we ponder the analogical options, Gertrude ambivalently seems both Hecuba and Dame Fortune, Ophelia both Creusa and Dido. By activating Aeneas' tale in the context of a speech "doubly performed" (the actor playing Hamlet plays Aeneas), we are alerted to the possibility of Hamlet's story being as much possessed by as reminiscent of ancient deeds, shadowy presences that haunt the present as well as *res gestae* whose prudent recollection can inform right action. From this strange perspective of the felt animation of the immemorial past, the resources of historical memory seem to endanger "the pales and forts of reason" (1.4.28) rather than support them.

If Venus-Adonis and Aeneas-Dido (Ophelia's "accidental" suicide makes the latter classical subtext partially apparent) provide fearsome analogies for Hamlet and Ophelia, Orpheus and Eurydice offer an even more telling if more muted parallel, again with a prime qualifying factor for inclusion within this network the fact that Orpheus is a journeyer back from the beyond, a legendary traveller who did return from what Hamlet calls "the undiscover'd country" (3.1.79). In Ophelia's description of Hamlet to her father, Hamlet looks like such a voyager, understandably so given what has just transpired, his encounter with the "perturbed spirit":

> And with a look so piteous in purport
> As if he had been loosed out of hell
> To speak of horrors, he comes before me. (2.1.82-84)

After the silent "perusal" of her face and a series of strange gesticulations and a sigh, Ophelia continues,

> He seem'd to find his way without his eyes,
> For out o' doors he went without their helps,
> And to the last bended their light on me. (2.1.98-100)

While the detail of Orpheus' gazing back is too famous to indicate any one source, the *locus classicus* that seems most to echo in this scene told

by Ophelia from memory is that of Virgil's *Georgics* 4, where Proteus recollects the fate of Orpheus to Aristaeus.[12] The legendary poet, who has just encountered the shades of Dis that his song has startled and that are now following after him, is suddenly struck by madness, "subita dementia," Virgil calls it (4.498), when he violates the law of Proserpina, looking back upon Eurydice, now lost twice and forever. Like Hamlet before Ophelia, Orpheus is rendered speechless (4.505): "What tears move the dead, what voice the gods?" Tightening the analogical knot is the fact that Orpheus enters *The Georgics* as an avenging spirit that must be propitiated by Aristaeus, the would-be rapist of Eurydice. Proteus reveals to Aristaeus,

> No other than an angry god pursues thee,
> Great the offence to appease. (4.454-55)

Thus, Hamlet's sudden "antic" behavior towards Ophelia, prompted by his transformation into an avenger heeding the call to remember the avenging spirit of his father, together with the backward glance toward his lost beloved, make the closet scene resonate with mythical associations. In case these are missed here, the next time Hamlet invades a private, secretive, solitary space that belongs properly to Ophelia, "Orphic" undertones are more directly spelled out.[13] In the graveyard scene, Laertes and Hamlet struggle over the dead Ophelia, with at least Laertes actually standing in the space of her grave. They exchange "classical" insults, Laertes' "old Pelion" (5.1.246) rebuffed by Hamlet's "Ossa like a wart" (278). Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1.155) provides appropriate gloss on how Jove, defeating the Giants, "hurled Pelion down from underlying Ossa," yet we should also recall that Orpheus, as Georgius Sabinus tells us on the first page of his commentary on Ovid, sang of the "beginnings and creation of the world" ("initia et fabricationem mundi"), of which the Gigantomachia is so important a part.

Hamlet's "dram of evil" speech to Horatio (1.4.13-38), just prior to Hamlet's lonely entrance into the eerie world of the ghost, also has oblique "Orphic" connections. The idea of "some vicious mole of nature" (1.4.24) perhaps ultimately connects with Aristotle's discussion in the *Poetics* of *hubris* as the flaw (*hamartia*) of Oedipus, but the myth of

Orpheus was also heavily glossed as a mighty instance of a great man, "His virtues else, be they as pure as grace" (1.4.33), suffering a lapse into "general censure" or at least the semblance of vice. Here is Badius Ascensius' standard allegorical account of the vicious mote symbolized by the wayward gaze of Orpheus: For if we would have understood Eurydice as the rational soul, then it follows that she be married to Orpheus, that is, to the flesh, and pursued by Aristaeus, that is, by reason, into the grass, that is, into delights, where she is slain by a serpent or slain by sins, whereupon by the songs and tears of her contrite spouse, Eurydice or the soul is returned to the upper world, that is, a state of grace, upon the law that Orpheus not look back, that is, the flesh not fall back into sin because then would the new sins be worse than the original. These affairs especially pertain to us Christians who still refuse the moral life, fully knowing that when our soul is married to the flesh, it is allured by it into vice and withdrawn from reason's sway (*Opera Virgilii*, fol.140^{v}). Hamlet's "vicious mole of nature" or "dram of evil" is like the sting of the serpent or the enticements of the flesh that in Badius' allegory of the Orpheus-Eurydice fable destroys the "noble substance" of the soul, indeed a "scandal" especially among Christians. I am arguing for a latent influence of the exegesis of the myth upon the way that Hamlet interprets the corruption of virtue, even great virtue, by a modicum of sin. Extending and more forcefully exhibiting the Orphic undertones of the "dram of evil" speech is the sequence of represented events following it. When the ghost appears directly after Hamlet's meditation and beckons him to follow, Hamlet like a modern Orpheus has discourse with a shade and then, like Orpheus too, will go on to vow vengeance upon a man whose criminal actions have brought about the death of a loved one by poison (both Eurydice and King Hamlet are killed through venom and then appear as ghosts to their avengers). In the scene following Hamlet's ghostly encounter, Hamlet will indeed look like an Orpheus to Ophelia, describing Hamlet, "As if he had been loosed out of hell / To speak of horrors" (2.1.83-84). Then, in the next scene, Hamlet's poem to Ophelia recited by Polonius resonates with the "soul-married-to-the-flesh" allegory spelled out by the humanists Christophoro Landino and Ascensius, Eurydice as "humana anima" or "anima rationalis" and Orpheus as "caro" or

"corpus" (*Opera* fol.140[r]). The poem addresses itself "To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia" (2.2.109), and closes, "Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him" (122), a conceit that specifies Ophelia as the animating being of his life. Also, Ophelia's death like Eurydice's appears accidental and takes place within a water-meadow (*Georgics* 4.459), where perhaps the "long purples" or "dead men's fingers" (4.7.170) that Ophelia includes in her garland are a transmogrification of the "monstrous serpent" destroying Eurydice.

So many "random" points of contact warrant full consideration for the antique perspective they bring to Hamlet and Ophelia's thoughts and deeds, as if these were a variation upon a legend from time immemorial erasing or at least fearfully shaping what we would call the individual agencies and personal fates of Ophelia and Hamlet.

IV. *Hamlet* as Staging a Cultural Crisis

As argued above, there is contemporary motive for the play's echoing or subsuming old tales. The parallel of Hamlet's and Orpheus' stories would have seriously engaged a humanist audience given its belief in the civilizing power of eloquence so powerfully symbolized by Orpheus' taming of wild humanity and his revelation of the natural and civil laws that apply to mankind. Hamlet enacts an Orphic fate when he tragically dies, the fencing match, like the Bacchic rites that Orpheus institutes or refines, the instrument both of his bringing things to justice and of his own death. As for the way in which both heroes die, the cure seems the disease. Arguably then, Shakespeare's play stages the death not only of Hamlet but of the typically Renaissance belief in eloquence as some ultimate civilizing or enlightenment process, a powerful reason why Hamlet is linked to the trio of classical heroes explored above. To these we also add Hercules, thrice alluded to in the play (1.4.83; 2.2.358; 5.1.286) and a standard figure in the Renaissance, notably in Coluccio Salutati's *De Laboribus Herculis*, for virtue's victory over barbarism and vice. Given all the play's shadowy uses of ancient story, the heroes seem the ghosts of Hamlet who are silenced with his death. Unlike the walkers from the beyond, Aeneas and Orpheus who return to the upper air, there

appears no return from the beyond in the play, "the dread of something after death," a phantasmal projection of human thought that muddies the blackness of the grave. And yet, of course, a puzzling and disturbing exception, "the rub," is the ghost that, as in the ancient legends, returns as more than a psychic projection caused by the pain of conscience or the hope of redemption from death. The ghost exists in a between-world as its three appearances in the play indicate, two seen by characters other than Hamlet (1.1 and 1.4), the third and final time notoriously only by Hamlet (3.4). The ghost exists as a strangely palpable, animated, abysmal call by memory to memory, Hamlet to Hamlet, sometimes observable by others and yet answering only to Hamlet. In this divided representation of the ghost, half-seen, half-projected, the play perhaps suggests that the world of the spirit and the possibility of the soul's voyage to it are in the process of becoming only so many remembered words and beliefs with no life beyond their being nominally warehoused in memory, the scattered remains or markers of realities perchance once lived but now visibly fading out, becoming only fable. The decreasing visibility of the ghost and the increasing fear that it may be a projection parallels what happens through allusion to the legends of heroes in the play, the ancient walkers of other worlds whose stories are invoked but in the reduced form of a symbolic code mechanically or compulsorily enlisted as "decorative" background. Any final decipherment of the code is placed under erasure in the play. What, in the end, is Hamlet to Orpheus, Hercules or Hecuba? What Ophelia to Venus and Dido?

The implied cleft between the miraculous possibilities posited in fable and the brute mortality of historical events in Denmark can also be sensed in the play if we consider the contrary influences of Ovid and Virgil upon the myths that the play takes up. Hamlet in fact experiences the Virgilian *raptus* or elevation of the poet as he attempts to heed a voice beyond. The great scene where Hamlet encounters the ghost echoes Aeneas and Anchises' infernal meeting, and Hamlet will go on to recite Aeneas' lines. At the same time, like Orpheus the doomed singer of Adonis in Ovid, heeding a voice from a world beyond makes the hero a mere conduit or instrument of fate. Contact with the netherworld sets in motion a course of events that involve the frustration of erotic love and the hero's destruction. Hamlet appears caught between the Virgilian

sublime and Ovidian mutability, a heroic recipient of an imperial message from the beyond and an utterly mortal figure seen in the fragmenting process of metamorphosis.

The dilemma of Hamlet, seen in the light of the myths, is describable as a conflict between form and flow, that is, between the stereotype, controlling representations of myth and that of history and loss, turbulent dynamics that scramble codes and blur or cancel lines of allegiance. The Virgilian *telos* of governance and the transcendence over time that it demands subordinate individual expression, above all demanding obedience to the will of the *paterfamilias*, like the command "Remember me." Such imperial concern for order and lineage conflicts with the deviance and decay of the cosmos, the erotic thermodynamics of nature that Ovid time after time tells us affect even the gods and that so worry Hamlet with regard to his imaginings and remembrances of the ghost and his mother.[14] Indeed, even the "afterlife" forms of Caesar and Alexander suffer metamorphic insult, according to Hamlet. Even the father's voice from beyond speaks of loss and death: how unlike the shade of Anchises in Book 6 who speaks at length about his son's progeny!

I do not pretend that the play juxtaposes Virgilian and Ovidian elements or historical and mythological "themes"; rather, their influences comprise discernible strands or modes of representation at odds with one another. Historical events in Denmark seem to set myths into motion as well as clash with or disappear into the stories of the heroes represented in bits and pieces throughout the drama. This varied, tangled interrelation of history and myth gives *Hamlet* a profound sense of an "impartial interplay of opposites" described by W. R. Johnson as the central influence of the *Aeneid* upon subsequent and especially Elizabethan literature (47). This opposition sharpens when we consider the contrast between Virgil's and Ovid's *weltanschauungen*. Virgil's permanent order and Ovid's flux seem to vie for influence over the play. Life as prison-house of the soul or as the unweeded garden of the body strikes our attention with the force of incommensurate metaphors.

"Quisque suos patimur Manis," Anchises tells Aeneas in Elysium (6.743), "each soul suffers its own fate." And how entirely interconnected and mediated all things in Hamlet's world seem, as if it were the peculiar

or unrepeatable historical circumstances of things coming together that seal the identity and fate of each character forever. Hamlet is most himself when least. He reveals his destined fate only by denying his private or erotic life, his love for Ophelia, as Aeneas must do regarding Dido's love. Such Virgilian associations, however, do not express archetypal verities bridging the great distance between Roman epic and Elizabethan drama; rather, they are only literary shadows left behind in the play's inexorable movement toward death and silence. Hamlet's heroic furor at play's end does not lead like Aeneas' killing of Turnus towards the foundation of empire. It marks the end of a monarchical line as Norwegian Fortinbras comes to the throne, both Hamlets dead, no Ascanius remaining, despite the completion of the hero's "true" destiny sanctioned by an otherworld. Shakespeare also underscores this contrast with Aeneas by deleting the two wives that Hamlet had in the historical account of Belleforest, a main source of the play, thereby also heightening the analogy with Adonis and the role of Ophelia as a Venus figure.

By bringing these parallelisms with figures from epic and fable to bear upon the history of Hamlet, the play acts out the tragic *pathos* that results when history and myth are implicitly revealed to be irreconcilable. It intimates how the uncertainties of history (murderous, drunken Denmark) can motivate as well as conflict with a human longing to see them in the legitimating or naturalizing terms of myth. That Hamlet as an Adonis or even an Aeneas-figure grows cold or "dies" to love in order to fulfill a natural or imperial fate and thereby have his "memorial" story told for all time is a "mythical" description of the play that rings partly true but largely hollow. No one can escape the non-repeatable course of human events frozen in time forever despite the comforting ability of stories to be retold and plays to be reenacted. The conflict of myth and history and of art and life is densely articulated through symbolic shorthand in Hamlet. Recreating this code is one way for us to understand Shakespeare's resources as a poet in indicating the polarities and heavily mediated predicament of his own belated era and cultural legacies.[15]

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NOTES

[1]All references to *Hamlet* are to Harold Jenkins's edition.

[2]See Taylor in Works Cited as well as Jonathan Bate, who provides a convenient bibliography of Taylor's essays.

[3]I cite from Rosemond Tuve (283, note 27) where she speaks of the presence of a subject being there "in the original" as opposed to the isolated "enigmatic image."

[4]I quote Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, Riverside edition, 1718. While explicit language of form is absent from Venus' lament, the death of Adonis will give a blasted, ruined form to all future love:

> For he being dead, with him is beauty slain,
> And beauty dead, black chaos comes again.

This cosmic curse upon love transforms the "luctus monimenta" of Ovid's Venus (*Metamorphoses* 10.725) into a foundational reality of human society. Also, Shakespeare conflates Orpheus, the singer of the Ovidian tale, and Adonis, the subject of it, when he attributes to Adonis powers traditionally given Orpheus. Venus says of Adonis,

> To recreate himself when he hath song,
> The tiger would be tame, and gently hear him.

Surely Horace's description in *The Art of Poetry* of the fabled ability of Orpheus, "lenire tigris rabidosque leones," or Virgil's in *The Georgics* (4.510), "mulcentem tigris," had to have been echoing in Shakespeare's mind, indicating critical need to avoid reading figures of myth in isolation but rather in a symbolic economy of similarity and difference.

[5]For a sustained treatment of meanings of Adonis in the late Renaissance, see Hankins. George Sandys, as usual, eloquently summarizes the long-lived tradition of reading Adonis in terms of natural philosophy (366-67). His polysemous reading of Adonis in Ovid seems like a gloss on elements of plot and language in *Hamlet*. Consider Hamlet's "mad" exchange (2.2.181-85) with Polonius in light of Sandys' allegory of Adonis as the sun:

> *Ham.* For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion—Have you a daughter?
> *Pol.* I have, my lord.
> *Ham.* Let her not walk i'th'sun. Conception is a blessing, but as your daughter may conceive—friend, look to it.

The annual return of the sun (Adonis) of course signals the stirring of the corruptive and generative powers of the earth and its creatures. Jenkins rightly here identifies what I take as a mythological pattern, how this passage links Ophelia to carrion, "and the play will associate her finally with violets" (466). Such symbolic affiliation contrasts her with flowers as well as compares her to them. In Sandys' conventional reading, the "springs" of Venus' tears readorn "the earth with her flowery mantle," whereas in Ophelia's death by water, her garments are, as Gertrude says, "heavy with their drink" and prove the efficient cause of her "muddy death" (4.7.180-82). Natural cycles of annual return and human annihilation in death are mightily juxtaposed through such imagery, which underscores Hamlet's grave doubts about the ghost as either a true shadow of the soul or a damnable "pagan" *manes*, "simulachra corporum defunctorum," as Ascensius describes such beings heeding Orpheus' song in Hades (*Opera Virgilii* 140^{v}).

[6]One need only consider Sir John Harington's anxious commentary upon Book 6 of the *Aeneid* (1604), written for the edification of Prince Henry, to see how archaic structures of belief were thought to connect with current social problems regarding witchcraft. Harington repeatedly cites Augustine, especially when he discusses the Cumaean Sybil, assuring readers "no power of witches can hurt a trew Christian" (64).

[7]On the rich history of the concept of the integument in the Middle Ages, see Dronke. In his *Metamorphoseos Moralizatae*, Bersuire is bent on making Ovid "preachable," allowing the fable to serve as a free-floating moral signifier of good or evil pathways in life. In contrast, Golding's "Epistle" to his translation of the *Metamorphoses* dwells on the negative side of Ovid, avoiding the moral perils of double readings. Ovid's tenth book, for example, concerns itself primarily with "Reproving most prodigious lusts of such as have bene bent / Too incest most unnaturall." Even Orpheus' death shows God's revenge upon "incest," that is, upon his pederasty (5).

[8]For the wide influence of this passage in Boethius and numerous commentaries upon it, see Friedman 89-145.

[9]See Edgar Wind for how this Augustinian approach to pagan poetry develops in rather arcane ways in the sixteenth century in the works of Ficino, Pico, Giraldi and others (41-52; 241-55). Sir Thomas Browne in his *Religio Medici* elaborates upon the approach (17). For how stenographic representations function in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and elsewhere in Shakespeare, see my article and notes listed below.

[10]Cf. Luis Navia (139-40) who shows how the ancient Cynics in serving virtue had Hercules as their cult-hero, his first labor to conquer the Nemean lion, grisly offspring of "Typhon." Curiously, Hamlet identifies himself with this hellish victim of Hercules' first conquest just prior to the appearance of his father's ghost. He refers to "each petty artire in this body / As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve" (1.4.82-83).

[11]Perhaps hovering behind these sword allusions, as Inge Leimberg has suggested to me, is also the blade of Aegisthus who slew Agamemnon "as a man might fell an ox at its manger" (*Odyssey*, 4.536, trans. E. V. Rieu).

[12]Bate also finds Orphic parallels in this scene (201).

[13]My description of the intimate space of Ophelia's closet is indebted to Lisa Jardine, who cites Angel Day's identification of closets in general as "the most secret" chamber in the early modern gentrified household (150-51).

[14]For a similar list of conflicting binaries as these relate to the epic tradition, see Quint (25).

[15]Using a similar approach, Jane Tylus "charts the failure of the myth of invulnerable selfhood shared by Coriolanus, Macbeth and Seneca" (3). She argues that this failure resulted from the general European crisis lasting the hundred years 1550 to 1650 (211-12). Perhaps Shakespeare felt some of these tremors while writing of *Hamlet* partly because of the aging Queen and the fiasco of Essex's attempt at her overthrow. Jeffrey Knapp also has recently described Shakespearean drama as staging a general cultural crisis: *The Tempest* "seems to dramatize the otherworldly conjunction of England, America, and poetry as both a heresy and a failure, a substitution of devilish literary 'spirits' for religious ones . . . " (8).

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Connotations
Vol. 6.2 (1996/97)

Carnival Vindicated to Himself? Reappraising "Bakhtinized" Ben Jonson

ROCCO CORONATO

Ben Jonson would probably have chimed in with Molière's rejoinder at accusations of plagiarism: "Je prends mon bien où je le trouve." As a matter of fact, his literary fame has been usually impaired by the panoply of classical sources harnessing his works. Nor can it be denied that the Jonsonian invention often resembles more a translating adaptation of the classics than an autonomous elaboration of native motifs. An undesired result of this reliance on the learned tradition is a reference-spotting habit which prompted even his most benign readers to underline his literary merits, instead of his primary business as a man of theatre. After dubbing him the most learned poet of his age who commonly "borrows with the air of a conqueror," Peter Whalley unwillingly admitted that this display of erudition sometimes "may appear, where we could wish it might not be seen."[1] According to this view, Jonson was so gullible as to fancy that equal honours were due to the translator as to the classics themselves. Whalley's reluctant remark paved the way for more ruthless assessments such as T. S. Eliot's recognition of an ideal, though limited, audience of "historians and antiquaries."[2]

Another recurrent assumption is that Jonson's bookish sticking to the learned tradition smacked of his idiosyncratic distaste for the popular canon. In particular, Jonson would not duly take into consideration the carnivalesque fondness for the grotesque. Bristol claims, for instance, that "Carnival is less applicable to the works of Jonson" than Shakespeare's, arguing that Jonson suffered from the not so original sin of writing for the Court.[3] This alleged separation from the popular world readily entails Jonson's detachment from a long-lived inheritance where, in Bakhtin's words, carnival represents the "second life of the people,"

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debcoronato00602.htm>.

the true-to-life conveyance of a subterraneous, grotesque principle overturning the official views of life.[4] One problem with such assumptions is that from a post-Bakhtinian point of view all forms of popular culture seem reduced to intermingled filiations of the same carnivalesque principle. All that is popular is carnival, and *vice versa*. An author's rendition of carnival motifs, then, is gauged only in terms of the Bakhtinian carnival, more than often a mix of medieval sources transplanted into learned Renaissance adaptations such as Rabelais's. This enlarged conception of carnival ends up with confirming a sort of literary prejudice against writers like Jonson, abruptly identified as the spokesmen of power.[5]

Despite Bakhtin's, and especially the Bakhtinians' trivialising attidude of universalization, however, carnival can hardly be conceived as a never-changing conception throughout all the ages, as some scholars have pointed out.[6] In Jonson's age carnival is by no means the glorious celebration of grotesque motifs in an urbane setting attested by Medieval sources all over the continent. The most renowned carnivalesque customs such as the Boy Bishop or the Mock Mayor, allegedly depicting an overturning image of conventional power within church and society, had already disappeared during the sixteenth century. Also the suspension of authority personified by the Lord of Misrule was actually confined to private houses or university colleges, where obviously no popular elements were admitted.[7] As a matter of fact, the first half of the seventeenth century saw a widespread reform of popular culture in Europe—the "Triumph of Lent," as Burke quite simply termed it,[8] which weakened the popular corpus of carnival into educated versions for the Courts. This taming process was given a polemical turn by Protestant writers, who came to see continental carnivals as disturbing relics of heathenish—or, more aptly, Romish—customs. English writers did not show too much originality either, as to my knowledge their only extant description of continental carnival is a translation of a pamphlet by a disgusted Swiss Calvinist.[9] Ironically enough, they could not guess that what they regarded as sinful evidence of the inner corruption of the Catholic powers, was later to be interpreted as an undermining threat to the establishment promoting them. Thus, carnival in England was soon reduced to the conventional Shrove-tuesday riots acted by the

apprentices—again, some anti-Bakhtinian irony must be at work when we notice that the primary targets of these carnivalesque disorders were agents of disorder like brothels and theatres. Finally, when carnivalesque motifs are staged, they undergo a further reduction into stock characters. In contemporary works such as Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament* and Middleton's *Inner-Temple Masque*, carnival is metonymically demoted into slap-stick comedy, whose only aim is mastering the ritual Shrove-tuesday riots. One may perhaps begin to question the validity of the dogmatic interpretation of Jonson as a slavish adapter of tamed carnival situations. Instead of refining carnival motifs for the benefit of the Court, Jonson may well have been portraying the contemporary reform of carnival as a different version of the grotesque, by no means reducible to a conservative move away from popular shows.

This essay, urged by the absence of a more literal consideration of carnival, seeks to offer a reappraisal of Jonson's use of the learned and popular sources related to carnival. I will pick up three test cases belonging to the different genres in which Jonson tried his hand. In *Sejanus* the focus is on the textual devices used to bridge the gap between the text and its intended audience, whereas *Epicoene* stages the Renaissance theme of moral eccentricity in a carnivalized censure of carnival customs, and *Neptune's Triumph for the Return of Albion* flouts the conventional Court shows by resorting to carnival motifs. What I would like to suggest is that Jonson's use of intertextuality, resorting to the carnivalesque tradition through a selection and rearrangement of literary sources, ultimately draws upon the learned tradition in order to stage the popular element, aiming at depicting the grotesque, which is removed both from the tamed version of carnival and the past glories of carnival itself.

I. *Sejanus*'s Lost Carnival

Historical irony has it that this classical illustration of disillusionment about popular favour could not be conveyed to the people. Discarded by most critics and its first spectators as a byword for failure, *Sejanus* bears in its printed text the marks of Jonson's bitter riposte to the

indictment on stage. His ironic move was to equate the hero with the play, as the 1616 Folio dedication remarks: "the tragedy suffer'd no less violence from our people here, then the subject of it did from the rage of the people of Rome."[10] The two audiences merge into each other, and the play testifies to both of the failed encounters with Rome's populace and the Globe's audience. Such an ironic conflation of the play and its hero is reflected in the text format as well. The 1605 Quarto is exuberantly keyed into a typographical polyphony, where the display of marginal notes nearly blurs the conventional division of the stage text, iconographically hedging the lines by means of learned enclosures.[11] Similarly, thematic enclosures were effected through a shift of focus: the people of Rome do not appear on the stage, and their actions are merely reported by witnesses. Through these textual and thematic devices, the play, itself a result of popular disfavour, pretended to elide the people from its scenario.

The extraordinary richness of the commentary within the Quarto text has also prompted worried questions about the author's actual originality. Any consideration of the play, in fact, must come to grips with Jonson's claim that these entwined texts were designed "to show my integrity in the *Story*."[12] In this section I have chosen the passage of Sejanus's dismemberment as a topical example of the exploitation of the classics touching upon the carnivalesque tradition. My aim is to prove that, beside the ironic showing off by Jonson, the conflation of sources eventually posits a sort of second, hidden text where, at last, the people are described in action.

Jonson's rationale in selecting the sources of the Sejanus plot is enhancing the theme of social and moral hierarchies. Sejanus's rise and fall is accordingly presented as a continuous struggle between slaves and masters. The obvious social meaning of slavery in Rome is connoted by reciprocal accusations of moral slavery. Sabinus, a nobleman, scoffs at himself and his fellows, who have stooped to "that proud height, to which / We did by slavery, not by service, climbe" (*Sejanus* I.10-11). Silius, another nobleman, owns up to this change of roles:

> We, that . . . were borne
> Free, equall lords of the triumphed world,
> . . . .

> We since became the slaues to one mans lusts;
> And now to many: euery ministring spie
> That will accuse, and sweare, is lord of you,
> . . . . (I.59-65)

Tiberius himself mutters away his muffled contempt for such a "race of men / Prepar'd for seruitude" (I.52-53). In all these instances Jonson adapts his sources into an overall frame of servility and reversal of social roles,[13] poignantly portrayed by the acclamations bestowed on Sejanus, "the now court-god." The favourite is belittled as a "seruing boy" (I.212-15), though the sources attest his descendance from the gentry.[14]

The slave element helps forestage the characters, each striving to seize the centre of the popular scene. Only Tiberius dares remind Sejanus of his low birth, echoing the rumours which greet his rise:

> The state thou hold'st alreadie, is in talke;
> Men murmure at thy greatnesse; and the nobles
> Sticke not, in publike, to vpbraid thy climbing
> Aboue our fathers fauours, or thy scale:
> (III.560-63)

Though still quoting from Tacitus (IV.xl.4-5), Jonson is gradually displacing the focus of the people's fawning and gazing from the Emperor to his favourite. After successfully cajoling Tiberius into retiring to Capri, Sejanus rejoices at his full monopoly of the clients' attention: "these, that hate me now, wanting accesse / To him, will make their enuie none, or lesse" (III.619-20). Jonson is probably thinking of the Latin root of the word *invidia*, coming from *in-video*, thus underlining the primary visual significance. The sources, however, refer to the absence of Tiberius rather than to the overwhelming presence of Sejanus at the centre of the stage.[15] This exalted slave craves to be looked upon by the increasing multitude of actual and self-debased slaves, almost evoking a theatrical palimpsest within the text.

The metaphorical enhancement of slavery is enriched by a ritual connotation along the development of the plot. The tragic hero "still goes on, / And mounts" (IV.428-29), playing into the hands of Tiberius who plans to make him "odious / Vnto the staggering rout," all too ready to "ore-turne all obiects in their way" (IV.469-72). Sabinus is

offered him as a cannibalistic sacrifice in the conspicuous absence of any witnesses: "The yeere is well begun, and I fall fit, / To be an offring to SEIANVS . . ." (IV.228-29). The passing reference to the year's beginning, in fact, links up with the ominous prodigies that forebode Sejanus's metaphorical fall by more bathetic, physical collapses. Dio Cassius (LVIII.v.5-6), another source quoted by Jonson, reports the events acted by the followers of Sejanus, namely, "the falling of our bed . . . burd'ned with the populous weight" (V.52-53), and the fate of some servants who, "declining / Their way, not able, for the throng, to follow, / Slip't downe the *Gemonies*, and brake their necks!" (V.59-61). At this point the popular scene peeps out from Jonson's use of the classical tradition. Sabinus is dragged on the Gemonies too. In the Quarto Jonson appends this passage with a note referring to the *Lectiones Antiquarum* by Ludovicus Celius Rhodiginus, where the Gemonies are etymologically described as a "locus gemitus et calamitatum"—a place of wretched sighs, uttered by the prisoners left on the banks of the Tiber to be abused by the people's rage. Rhodiginus underlines the inner theatricality of this custom, quoting a similar passage from Cicero's *Pro Cluentio*:

> Gradus illi Aurelii tum novi, quasi pro theatro illi iudicio aedificati videbantur, quos ubi accusator concitatis hominibus complerat, non modo dicendi ab reo, sed ne surgendi quidem potestas erat. (*Lectiones Antiquarum* X.v, 439-40)

The Gemonies are accounted for as a substitute for the theatre—"pro theatro"—where the people gathering on the steps gaze upon the subject of their rage. But this conventional upheaval of the Roman populace is also tinged with another ritual term of comparison, coming from the gladiatorial games. Rhodiginus browses through a long list of the several kinds of torments inflicted on prisoners and Christian martyrs, emphasising the sacrificial aura of the popular rage. Jonson ultimately assumes a competent, studious reader of the Quarto who will eventually restore the hidden theatrical frame from the learned reference quoted in the margin, adding the missing popular scene by way of classical allusions.

A similar sort of learned retrieval of popular attendance can be detected in the time setting. Both Sabinus's sacrifice and the fall of Sejanus's

servants are located by Dio Cassius in the calends of January. Along with the Saturnals, these Roman feasts used to be reckoned by seventeenth-century writers as the forerunners of carnivalesque licence.[16] As Meslin notes, slaves were free from their usual bonds of obligation, were given a double share of wine, and allowed to make sacrifices like their masters.[17] During these three days masters and servants freely mixed and had meals together, and the whole city was caught in a mood of revelry and debauch.[18] The events featuring Sejanus's servants take place in a proto-carnivalesque setting, when people are free to envisage the next fall of the present lord of Rome. The slave imagery conveys a sacrificial meaning. Sejanus, after parading into the Senate as a god attended by "seruile huishers" (V.450), is ushered out as a slave subjected to a ritual dethronement:

> They, that before like gnats plaid in his beames,
> And throng'd to circumscribe him, now not seene!
> Nor deigne to hold a common seate with him!
> Others, that wayted him vnto the *Senate*,
> Now, inhumanely rauish him to prison,
> Whom (but this morne) they follow'd as their lord!
> Guard through the streets, bound like a fugitiue!
> In stead of wreaths, giue fetters; strokes, for stoops:
> Blind shame, for honours; and black taunts, for titles!
> (V.721-29)

A last piece of evidence confirms Jonson's skilful selection of the sources in order to suggest a popular audience on the printed page. Also the final description of Sejanus's dismemberment conceals a theatre within the text, linking up with the previous marginal notes. Its source, Claudian's *Against Rufinus*, looks somehow misplaced considering the Sejanus-related canon Jonson has been drawing upon so far.[19] This textual oddity is twofold, as Jonson does not quote the work in the Quarto marginal notes. But the jaundiced rendition of the dismemberment of this other favourite, whose macabre, relenting details are translated by Jonson *verbatim* (*Sejanus* V.811-32; *Against Rufinus* II.410-17, 427-32, 451-53), enhances the ritual occasion. Claudian compares the victim already rounded up by the soldiers to a beast moving in the arena: "illa pavet strepitus cuneosque erecta theatri / Respicit et tanti miratur

sibila vulgi" (II.398-99). The gladiatorial setting, already pointed at by Rhodiginus, comes newly to life when Jonson depicts the multitude flocking to the Gemonies "with that speed, and heate of appetite, / With which they greedily deuoure the way / To some great sports, or a new theatre" (*Sejanus* V.763-65). The apparently unrelated passage from Rhodiginus, thus, conjures up a ritual occasion for Sejanus's dismemberment, as the learned tradition finally evokes the people and its carnivalesque expectation of the favourite's fall.

The linking up of the sources stages a theatre of martyrdom, where real and metaphorical slaves attend the ludicrous spectacle of the fall of actual slaves and, eventually, of the exalted slave who aspired to power. The ritual savagery of the gladiatorial games, the *munera gladiatoria* taking place after the Saturnals as a sacrifice for the earth, suggests the description of the dismemberment and provides the missing audience by way of learned references. Uncannily keeping this surprise in store for the patient reader, Jonson resorts to the sources in order to stage a Roman carnival, where *Sejanus* is attended by an audience well-read in the classics, as if only such readers or spectators could master the fences of the notes.

II. *Epicoene* or the Silent Revels

Theatrical disguise is easily taken as a synonym for carnival at large. Evidence for that identification is offered by most carnival shows deploying reversals of gender to question the social allocation of authority. Ingram reports that in Medieval France the New Year's Day was greeted by men disguised as beasts or, alternatively, as women, whereas during the life of Henry VIII boys were ritually dressed up as female pages attending the Boy Bishop.[20] Actual upheavals might imitate this carnivalesque pretext as well. Fitz argues that when in 1531 some disguised men rounded up Anne Boleyne, a witness reported that the fact almost went unnoticed "because it was a thing done by women."[21] But the major weakness of a trivialised conception of carnival as sheer transvestism is that it can be easily made to include all references whatsoever to dramatic disguise devices, so that theatre

itself becomes a highbrow version of carnival. In this section I will reduce transvestism to its symbolic value of moral violation of the Elizabethan hierarchy of society and family, represented by the woman disguised as a man, thus assuming male authority. By Jonson's use of the sources in *Epicoene*, breaches of silence and of gender coalesce in a debate over the right place of woman in society, as well as the usefulness and performability of carnivalesque customs.

Jonson's *Epicoene* intermingles two separate traditions, the rhetorical value of silence and the boy disguised. The ideal wife is supposed to stay always silent, not the less so because even men must conform to the highest rule of elocution: sometimes silence *is* eloquence.[22] This tradition of silence was astringently summed up by Libanius in his Sixth Declamation, an overt source for the play's main story, featuring an old, misanthropic husband who realizes he has married a most talkative woman. The reversal of expectations is focussed on the hierarchical breach: a woman acting like "a conduit pipe, that will gush out with more force, when shee opens againe" (*Epicoene* IV.iv.78-9; cf. *Declamatio* 19) encroaches on the husband's alleged monopoly of speech, eventually forcing him into an abashed silence and unnatural desire of self-consumption.

The tradition of sex disguise, on the other hand, is a Jonsonian modification of the Libanius plot. The central scene of reversal is turned into a gender-related affair, where assuming the wrong sex conveys the sense of adopting wrong social roles.[23] Jonson's most characteristic move is sexually reifying the husband's disillusionment. Among the dispersed sources which may be cited for this tradition of the disguised boy, critics have taken into consideration Plautus's *Casina*, Machiavelli's *Clizia* and Aretino's *Marescalco*[24]. None of these plays, however, seems to offer any evidence of straightforward textual borrowings, except the wedding scene of the *Marescalco* with the husband claiming impotence and the final dénouement. *Clizia*, on the other hand, is in the first place a Renaissance adaptation of *Casina*, so that one feels at least perplexed at the critical underlining of its literary novelties and subsequent dismissal of Plautus's precedence.[25] My proposal is that instead of falling into reference-spotting, we consider these works as literary analogues staging the punishment of an eccentric. The stress ought to

be laid not on direct transmission of passages or stage tricks, but rather on the meaning of the festive occasion during which this punishment is carried out.

The three analogues are all staged in a general festive setting. The Prologue to *Casina* refers to some "ludi," though the comedy, later on, makes it quite clear that the real *ludi festivi* are being played at the expense of the dotard. *Clizia* takes place during carnival, whereas the *Marescalco* seems to belong to the Renaissance genre of carnivalesque jests.[26] Jonson's adaptation plays upon this latent carnivalesque context, as carnival becomes in *Epicoene* both a general term for festive misrule and an element of contradiction for its followers and detractors alike. The first instance of this Jonsonian translation of carnival occurs in the opening description of Morose. The old man cannot stand the stock characters of London life, such as a Costard-monger, a Smith, "Or any Hammer-man" (*Epicoene* I.i.154-56), and parades along the streets "with a huge turbant of night-caps on his head, buckled ouer his eares" (I.i.144-45). Adapting a passage from Libanius (*Declamatio* 4), Jonson temporally qualifies Morose's misanthropy:

> . . . He would haue hang'd a Pewterers' prentice once vpon a shroue-tuesdaies riot, for being o' that trade, when the rest were quit. (I.i.157-59)

His hate of carnivalesque shows as the utmost manifestations of popular noise and disorder is mirrored by his seclusion from the life of the community:

> . . . hee hath chosen a street to lie in, so narrow at both ends, that it will receiue no coaches, nor carts, nor any of these common noises: . . . (I.i.167-69)

The main fault of the eccentric, also topographically identified by his voluntary isolation, is a lack of social cohesion, as misanthropy is conveyed by cacophony. Morose's failure in complying with the social demands of London life brings him out of town "euery satterday at ten a clock, or on holy-day-eues" (181-82). The carnival-hater is "recompensed" by a carnivalesque setting comparable to Jonson's sources. But in *Epicoene*, taking place on a festive day (II.iv.110; III.ii.89-90), the eccentric is never reconciled with festive occasions of any kind.[27]

Carnival cannot affect society or mend the fissures within its fabric. The whole plot of *Epicoene* bears witness to a general censure of the possible versions of carnival. One of the characters is a true carnival performer, Mr Otter, once "a great man at the beare-garden in his time," but now only "his wifes Subiect" (II.vi.54-61).[28] Mrs Otter readily rebukes her husband for the late revival of his former occupation at Court:

> You were best baite me with your bull, beare, and horse? Neuer a time, that the courtiers, or collegiates come to the house, but you make it a *shrouetuesday!* (III.i.4-7)

Carnival, an old-fashioned taming of wild beasts for the Court, is now just a worn-out device for drunken revelry. It cannot help restore the conventional order within the family.

In *Epicoene* punishment is performed by a masterly albeit deliberately unconvincing quotation of carnivalesque customs. If Mr Otter is reviled as a vain drunkard, Morose the carnival-hater is punished by a charivari-like scene of misery, oddly blending the two possible infringements of marriage rules: a young woman married to an old man, and the woman being a scold.[29] But, just as Otter's old-days carnival, this is only a vestige of the past claims of redressing social wrongs. Morose's charivari is not a spontaneous, popular performance, but rather a play-within-the-play under the direction of Truewit and Clerimont: not a true-to-life Carnival, but a meta-theatrical display of stage-directing. The disillusionment about the healing powers of carnivalesque customs is endorsed by Jonson's staging of the Fourth Act, when Morose, who "lockd himselfe vp, i' the top o' the house" (IV.i.22), is presented with another sort of charivari being played now on the carnival performer. Prompted by the Wits, Otter rails at his wife, "an vnlucky thing, a very foresaid beare-whelpe" (IV.ii.74-75). The charivari stages its exception, as the scold is reinforced in her role, and Mrs Otter, secretly conveyed there by the Wits, again beats her husband.

The result of such a conflation of carnivalesque rituals is the exposure of their alleged power as popular tools of justice. Coupling the learned hint from Libanius with the sudden revival of popular customs, *Epicoene* has several onstage directors, where the Wits guide the actions of Morose, the Otters and the Collegiates, only to know, right at the end, that the

silent Dauphine has hidden the best part of the trick. In a sense, this is a confirmation of the old elocutionary rule: silence may eloquently redress the wrongs, especially if it is joined with theatrical disguises. If the literary analogues explicitly stage the disguise in order to underline the carnivalesque punishment of one eccentric, *Epicoene* reduces all the other characters to eccentrics that are kept off Dauphine's superior craft. Silence and cunning defeat the noisy tricks of popular tradition.

Jonson's comedy is, inevitably, a sort of *post-mortem* recognition of traditional carnival customs. The stress, however, is not on their reform, but on frank failure, as the day of festive mood ends with confirming the inverted order established between the Otters, as well as the "hermaphroditicall authoritie" detained by the Collegiates. Instead of merely paraphrasing the classical reversal of gender roles, Jonson adapts Libanius's disparagement into a definite temporal setting where carnival, though still performable, needs revising and eventually leads to a painful conclusion both for his detractors and his followers. The festive frame derived from the literary analogues ironically proves that the carnivalesque tradition is ebbing into a noisy, useless progression of stereotyped scenes. It is not the character who starts or performs the carnival but the spectator who silently attends it, that can bring home the most "wealthy dowrie" (II.v.91).

III. *Neptune's Triumph* for the Return of Carnival

Jonson's masques are usually considered the acme of his growing identification with the refined ideals of the Court.[30] A supporting argument is often found in their logical progression from the chaotic exposition of misrule to the orderly display of dances and songs. The comic contents of the inductions and the antimasques, thus, would make use of a more mundane tradition only to enhance the final sense of the King's order. More generally, the exploitation of classical sources is said to stand for the author's separation from the popular tradition, just as the people, by definition, cannot join the masques' audience. The failures of some masques, however, should already undermine any belief in such straightforward identification between the poet and his choosy audience,

and somehow destroy the popular icon of Jonson as the conventional Court playwright. *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1618), a shrewd attempt at blending Rabelais and mythological matters in an intriguing debate over the possible reconciliation between opposite drives, led one of his spectators to indite quite a famous bit of Jonson criticism: "Y^{e} poet is growen so dul y^{t} his devise is not worthy y^{e} relating, much lesse y^{e} copiing out. divers think he should retourne to his ould trade of bricke laying againe."[31] In this last section I will consider another masque where the learned tradition, so evidently displayed in the note-laden printed text, by overlapping with an educated version of carnivalesque motifs is transformed into a satire of Court shows.

Jonson's comic inductions show an exuberance of inspiration which cannot be reduced simply to the first element of a conventional progression from disorder to order. In particular, the antimasque of *Neptune's Triumph* stages a grotesque translation of poetry into cookery, casting a dubious light on the final triumph of the kingly rule. Written late in 1623 as a celebration of Prince Charles's homecoming from Spain, the masque was not staged because of "the competition of the French and Spanish ambassadors, which could not be accommodated in presence" (quoted in Ben Jonson, *Works* 9: 659). Also the masque evokes a similar sort of accommodation between the two characters of the first part. A tipsy Poet is assailed by a loquacious Cook, the self-appointed master of the revels in the banqueting-hall. Jonson describes the festive occasion as the only chance when the Poet can be employed as a "kind of *Christmas* Ingine; one, that is vsed, at least once a yeare, for a trifling instrument, of wit, or so" (35-36). Masque-writing acts like catering "for the palates of the ghestes" in the mock-heroic translation offered by the Cook:

> The Taste is taken with good relishes, the Sight with faire obiects, the Hearing with delicate sounds, the Smelling with pure sents, the Feeling with soft and plump bodies, but the Vnderstanding with all these: for all which you must begin at the Kitchin. There, the Art of Poetry was learnd, and found out, or no where: and the same day, with the Art of Cookery. (66-72)

This polemical conflation is actually not an autonomous invention, but rather an expansion of a few lines taken from a learned work and fitted

into low style. In this case Jonson is adapting a few passages from the *Deipnosophists* by Athenaeus, especially those dealing with a boisterous cook who, as Jonson explicitly translates, would claim that "a good *Poet* differs nothing at all from a *Master-Cooke*. Eithers Art is the wisedome of the Mind" (*Neptune's Triumph* 42-4; *Deipnosophists* I.7). Jonson stages grotesque motifs not from the popular tradition, but from other books.

The follow-up of this combination strikes a different note of mock-heroic confusion within the hierarchy of the Court revels. A further step down the grotesque tradition leads to the carnivalesque overturning of social roles. After having usurped the sacred realm of poetic invention, the Cook claims to be reverenced like a military chief, as his culinary art translates war machinery into food. The Poet-General

> Makes *Citadels* of curious foule, and fish,
> Some he dry-ditches, some motes round with broths;
> Mounts marrow-bones; cuts fifty-angled custards;
> Reares bulwarke pies; and, for his outer workes,
> He raiseth ramparts of immortall crust;
> And teacheth all the *tacticks* at one dinner:
> What rankes, what files, to put his dishes in;
> The whole Art *Militarie!* (91-98)

As Gordon argues, the Cook is an obvious foil for Inigo Jones's mania for fantastical scenery and pageantry.[32] Again, though himself pitted into a personal feud, Jonson chooses to rely on literary sources for this ironic degradation of the Court masque. The Cook's ideal of perfect man derives from a mixture of Vitruvius and Puttenham, portraying the architect and the poet respectively as the first civilizers and the highest incarnations of man.[33] Athenaeus provides a similar theme when a cook relates how Sycon, the founder of the culinary art, set up a complete curriculum for cooks covering all possible fields of human knowledge, from astrology to architecture, from natural science to strategy (IX.378). The Cook, thus, exposes the architect's fondness for stunning scenery. The return of Albion was to be performed through "a floting Ile," sent by Neptune-James I "to waft him thence" (*Neptune's Triumph* 142-43). The masque would have staged this mythological homecoming with an artistic deployment of the stage machinery designed by Inigo Jones.[34] But the Cook goes on disturbing the conventional frame of the Court

masque. If he had been free to provide the whole show, he would have had

> . . . your Ile brought floting in, now,
> In a braue broth, and of a sprightly greene,
> Iust to the colour of the Sea; and then,
> Some twentie *Syrens*, singing in the kettel,
> With an *Arion*, mounted on the backe
> Of a growne Conger, but in such a posture,
> As, all the world should take him for a Dolphin:
> O, 'twould ha' made such musick! Ha' you nothing,
> But a bare Island? (185-93)

Jonson's boisterous Cook obeys to a self-abusing irony, as Jones's islands were by no means likely to be "bare." His fictional island, however, also evokes the Italian scenery of carnival and wedding feasts, especially Neptune's chariot as described by Natale Conti[35] and Vincenzo Cartari,[36] all too present to Inigo Jones. Thus, although the Cook's alternative shows are sneered at by the Poet as mere "*Out-landish* nothings" (*Neptune's Triumph* 224), the actual show of the masque is closely related to this scenographic tradition. Apparently, the Poet is entrusted with the "serious part" (326), but his main task is composing the comic induction, whereas the second part, the masque proper, is just a didactic accompaniment to the prodigious stage machinery. Jonson's usage of the sources already censures the stylised, impressive scenery of court shows.

The comic induction, moreover, is indebted to a more popular, though strongly learned tradition of carnivalesque contrasts. Again, Jonson uses the sources to get back to the popular scene of the grotesque. The ironical conflation of *personas* in the Cook reverts the usual order of the masque. The cook-architect should be allowed only to furnish "a *metaphoricall* dish" (233), an ". . . *Olla Podrida*," but he has "persons to present the meats" (240-41):

> Graue Mr. *Ambler*, Newes-Master of *Poules*,
> Supplies your Capon; and growne Captaine *Buz*
> (His *Emissary*) vnderwrites for Turky,
> A Gentleman of the *Forrest* presents Phesant,
> And a plump Poultrers wife, in *Graces* street,
> Playes Hen with egges i'the belly, or a Coney,
> Choose which you will. (295-301)

During the masque the Cook will also serve "a dish of pickled Saylors, fine salt Sea-boyes, shall relish like *Anchoues*, or *Caueare*" (517-19), wittily conflating meat and fish. But the opening translation of military art into culinary was already redolent of a century-long tradition of mock contentions between the opposite armies of Carnival and Lent. The starting point was Lucian's description of culinary wars.[37] The Medieval and Renaissance carnivalesque tradition enlarged upon this culinary demotion of the chronological succession between the two related periods of the year. As Grinberg and Kinser argue, the contrast became a formal vessel for all the categories of human life, in a chiastic struggle which took on the grotesque features of food.[38] This tradition of opposite parties represented by meat and fish may be found at work in all European literature, from the early French Renaissance[39] to the Italian *Contrasto del Carnasciale colla Quaresima*.[40] Also John Taylor's *Iacke-a-Lent* stages such grotesque rendering of the time-bound struggle between a "fat grosse bursten-gutted groome, called *Shroue-Tuesday*" and the "numberless army" of Lent, heralded by "Sir *Lawrence Ling*" and "Colonell *Cod*":

> . . . it is a wonder to see what Munition and Artillery the Epicures, and Canibal Flesh-eaters doe prouide to oppose *Lent*, and keepe him out at the staffes end, as whole barrels of poudered beefe blow him vp, tubs of Porke to pistoll and shoote him through with his kindred hunger, famine, and desolation, Baricadoes of Bacon, as strong and impregnable Bulwarkes against inuasive battery. (*Iacke-a-Lent* 116; *Works* 1: 126)

The culinary battle was, moreover, staged in actual shows. In 1506 Giovanni Sabbadino saw a similar struggle in the Piazza Maggiore of Bologna between Shrove-tuesday, "un uomo grasso, tondo e colorito sopra cavallo grasso," and Lent, "a cavallo macro in forma de richissima vechia" (Grinberg and Kinser 65). Urban carnivals and literary texts thus resorted to the culinary theme as a synonym of temporal progression, and the question is open whether historical precedence must be given to the shows or to the texts. Despite this uncertainty, it is safe to assume that this web of references to the culinary battle are inevitably linked with the carnivalesque contrast.

The Cook's alternative show is thus a quotation of popular carnival. My suggestion is that Jonson was relying on the report of Pantagruel's

periplus in Rabelais's *Fourth Book*. In their voyage to the Oracle of the Bottle, actually quoted by Jonson (*Neptune's Triumph* 77-79), Pantagruel and his fellows set foot on the island inhabited by the oxymoronic Quaresmeprenant, a carnivalesque monster who "pleure les troys parts du jour," but "ses habillemens sont joyeulx" (*Pantagruel* XXIX). Quaresmeprenant is engaged in a war with his neighbouring "Andouilles farfeleus," a sort of Lenten sausages.[41] As Panurge argues, "c'est bataille culinaire, et voulez aux cuisiniers vous rallier" (XXXIX). An army of cooks is then enrolled by Pantagruel to bring about the defeat of the giant sausages. Apart from the common derivation from Lucian, some strong evidence for Jonson's thematic borrowing from this episode may be found in the revised sequel of the masque, *The Fortunate Isles* of 1625. The serious part has almost gone unchanged, whereas the comic induction sees a debate between Iohphiel the spirit and Mere-Foole, a "Melancholique Student" who begs to see the heroes of the past. Iohphiel retorts that they are now busy in menial chores. Pythagoras, for instance, "... has rashly run himselfe on an imployment, / Of keeping *Asses* from a feild of beanes; / And cannot be stau'd off" (*The Fortunate Isles* 256-58). Now, Pantagruel's earliest stop before the island of Quaresmeprenant was in the Island of the dead heroes, the "isle des Macraeons" (XXV) stemming from Lucian's Island of the Blessed (*True Story* II.17 ff.) which Jonson echoes in the Macaria of the second masque.[42] But, despite the conventional triumph of order in both masques, the conclusion of *The Fortunate Isles*, with its references to the very sea-deities forming Neptune's train (519-30), oddly twists this order. We are back to the characters envisaged by the Cook, thus testifying to a more widespread ambiguity within the Court masque. Although the scenery imagined by the Cook is ludicrous, it is still the Cook's job to provide the classical scenery the Court seems to relish.

Neptune's Triumph and its sequel, thus, do not offer the conventional reconciliation of the ending. The carnivalesque show of the Cook's antimasques is deprived of its learned origin and takes on a popular vein of grotesque display. Jonson draws on Rabelais's learned adaptation of carnival motifs, but apparently dismisses it as the Cook's "by-workes." At the same time he exposes the grotesque pendant of the architect,

whose Italianate alternative carnival has the last word. In conclusion, Jonson's dissatisfaction affects both popular and court carnivals which, like the islands of Quaresmeprenant and of the Macraeons, are just two stops along the voyage.

IV. Is King Carnival Dead?

The three points I have been considering are, of course, only the *début* of a longer periplus through the Jonsonian invention. If we stick to the texts, Jonson seems more generally to loathe the public, rather than the popular element. My impression is that Jonson, for one, resorts to the sources in order to create an alternative text-within-the-text, where the popular element is decoded as the latest occurrence of a moral theory set down by the classics. What I would like to suggest is that studies on Jonson—and on carnival as well—stand in need of a new reconciliation between the pleasure of popularesque, theoretical overturning and the virtue of a fresh-faced approach based on actual literary and historical contexts, somehow deposing the more revolutionary though question-begging assumptions of ferocious hyperbakhtinizing. A different working hypothesis could lie in dismissing simplified binary oppositions between the high and the low, the Court and the people, the learned and the popular, especially when there is some ground to believe that all classes could resort to the same layers of a shared civilization of the grotesque, partly codified into written sources and partly adapted or transplanted into social customs, where each could mutually foster the other. If this view could be granted some validity, we could also give a different interpretation of the sort of post-Rabelaisian carnival we find in these works, a specimen of revelry deprived of the Bakhtinian carnivalesque and its array of uncrowning and *sniženie*. Though not dismissing the popular element, Jonson actually seeks the grotesque, which can be made up by popular and learned elements. A direction which ought to be exploited could thus posit a cycle marked by the fall of King Carnival and the return of dethroned Grotesque as a more general principle including the carnivalesque. Within this more benign

framework, even Jonsonian carnival may stand, instead of a second life of the people, as a second theatre to be used as another source along the quest for the author's "bien."

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NOTES

[1]*The Works of Ben Jonson* ii-v. An opposite view is held by the anonymous author of the *Reflections on Originality in Authors*: Jonson, who is just a "pilferer from the Antients," could write only "one continued series of Imitation and allusion . . . . This surely is an odd species of improvement from reading, and savours very little of Invention or Genius: It borders nearly upon, if it is not really plagiarism" (63).

[2]"Ben Jonson" 14.

[3]"Carnival and the Institutions of the Theater" 640.

[4]*Rabelais and His Work* 5-6.

[5]Compare, for example, Womack's argument about Jonson, who is "objectively on the side of 'Lent'": ". . . the carnivalesque in Jonson becomes sly and tense, fraught with danger and perversity; its costumes falsehoods, its inversion crimes, and its promise of liberation anarchic" (*Ben Jonson* 135).

[6]As S. Greenblatt argues, Bakhtin's description of the carnivalesque, more than of carnival, is by and large a "*post festum* recollection," as "*Gargantua and Pantagruel* is not carnival, but the brilliant aesthetic representation of carnival motifs; not the communal laughter of a largely illiterate populace, but the highly crafted, classicizing comedy of a supremely literate individual; not festive mayhem in the streets, but words on a page" ("'Filthy Rites'" 7-8).

[7]See E. K. Chambers (*The Medieval Stage*) and especially Y.-M. Bercé (*Fête et révolte* 28 ff.) for the disappearance of these customs.

[8]See *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* 64, 207.

[9]This description of time-limited anarchy by T. Kirchmeyer is always bent to perform a devastating criticism of heathen Popism: "The tongue is set at libertie, and hath no kinde of stay, / All things are lawfull then and done, no pleasure passed by, / That in their mindes they can deuise, as if they then should die" (*The Popish Kingdome, or Reign of Antichrist* sig. 48r). A more detailed comparison between ancient Roman customs and continental carnival is made by T. Moresinus in his *Papatus*.

[10]Quoted in Ben Jonson, *Works* 4: 349.

[11]J. Jowett ("'Fall Before this Booke'" 279) notes thus an "insurmountable obstacle to the popularizing process."

[12]*Works* 4: 350. The tragedy does not include a single event or a character which may not be traced to some sources. Jonson, moreover, often resorts to several sources for the same passage. According to Dutton, the true sense of the "integrity in the story" would consist in the reader's chance to fulfil the historical parallelisms provided by the author ("The Sources, Text, and Readers of *Sejanus*" 181-83, 197-98).

[13]Respectively, Tacitus (*Annals* I.ii.1), Suetonius (*Life of Tiberius* LXI), and Tacitus (*Annals* III.lxv.3).

[14]Tacitus, *Annals* IV.i.2; Dio Cassius, *Roman History* LVII.xix.5.

[15]Tacitus remarks that Sejanus loathed "vulgi rumorem, ingruentem invidiam" (*Annals* IV.xli.1). Further on, he makes clear that the "salutantum turba" refers not to Tiberius, but to the numerous clients of Sejanus.

[16]See H. H. Scullard (*Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic* 207).

[17]*La fête des kalendes* 47.

[18]See J. Caro Baroja (*Le Carnaval* 163-72).

[19]Dio Cassius merely hints at the three-day long dismemberment of Sejanus (*Roman History* LVIII.xi.3, 5).

[20]*The Reform of Popular Culture* 163-65.

[21]"What Says the Married Woman" 3.

[22]For the rhetorical tradition on silence, see R. B. Waddington ("The Iconography of Silence" 248-61).

[23]Libanius only reports the dismal bed scene, when the newly-wed husband, craving for silence, is frightened by the thundering voice of his wife (*Declamatio* 6).

[24]According to Boughner, the disguise occupies a "pivotal place" only in *Clizia*, which also offers some "epicene elements," including the fake marriage ("*Clizia* and *Epicoene*" 89-91). But all these elements are actually derived from Plautus. Campbell, on the other hand, argues that Jonson borrowed from the *Marescalco* the "cruel and persistent ridicule of one eccentric." In both comedies, the page disguised leads the eccentric to the same "extremity of ridiculous abjection, before an equally large audience" ("The Relation of *Epicoene* to Aretino's *Il Marescalco*" 756-58).

[25]"*Clizia* and *Epicoene*" 89-91. All the three plays, moreover, openly stage the disguise trick for the benefit of the audience (*Casina* 769-72; *Clizia* IV.viii; *Marescalco* V.iv.1), whereas Jonson's *coup de théâtre* equates the audience's surprise with the characters' on stage. See P. Mirabelli ("Silence, Wit, and Wisdom" 312, 333).

[26]*Casina* 25-26; *Clizia* III.i; for the *Marescalco*, see M. D'Apollonio (*Storia del teatro italiano* II.84-85). For the carnivalesque setting of *Epicoene*, cf. L. G. Salingar ("Farce and Fashion in *The Silent Woman*" 30-34).

[27]I. Donaldson recognises in the plot of *Epicoene* "the punishment of misanthropy . . . through the means of a viciously high-spirited festive ceremony" ("A Martyr's Resolution" 6).

[28]P. Cunningham quotes a payment to Henslowe "by way of his Ma[ties] reward to him and his seruaunts in bringinge and presenting before his Ma[tie] at Whitehall the game of Bearebaytinge upon Shrovetuesday" (*Extracts from the Accounts* xxxvii).

[29]See *Le Charivari*, eds. J. Le Goff and J.-C. Smith.

[30]According to I. Ianicka, for instance, in his masques Jonson "raised his court-audience to an idealized reality of their own" ("The Popular Background of Ben Jonson's Masques" 187). See also E. W. Talbert ("The Interpretation of Jonson's Courtly Spectacles"), and W. T. Furniss ("Ben Jonson's Masques").

[31]Quoted in Ben Jonson, *Works* 11: 576.

[32]"Poet and Architect" 152n1.

[33]Vitruvius argues that the ideal architect "ingeniosum esse oportet, et ad disciplinam docilem . . . et ut literatus sit, peritus graphidos, eruditus Geometria, et optices non ignarus, responsa Iurisconsultorum noverit, Astrologiam coelique rationes cognitas habeat" (*De Architectura* I.i). A similar polymath is Puttenham's Homer who, though "a poor priuate man," was able to "so exactly set foorth and describe, as if he had bene a most excellent *Captaine* or *Generall*, the order and array of battels, the conduct of whole armies, the sieges and assaults of cities and townes," as well as "the sumptousnesse and magnificence of royal bankets, feasts, weddings, and enteruewes" (*The Art of English Poesie* 1-2).

[34]Inigo Jones prepared a preliminary sketch of "A Maritime Palace, the House of Oceanus," which was then adapted for *The Fortunate Isles* (*Designs by Inigo Jones* n65, 51-52). In the second masque the Cook obviously disappeared, though some of his lines were quoted in *The Staple of News* (IV.ii.1-41), written after Jonson and Jones had finally parted.

[35]*Mythologia* II.viii.164.

[36]*Imagini degli Dei* 223; 240.

[37]*True Story* I.13-17; 36-41.

[38]"Les combats de Carnaval" 73.

[39]*Deux Jeux de Carnaval* xi.

[40]*Libro di Carnevale* I.xx-II.lxiv, 12-46.

[41]See S. Kinser (*Rabelais's Carnival* 9-11, 50-1), and B. C. Bowen ("Lenten Eels").

[42]See J. Bennett Waters (*Britain Among the Fortunate Isles* 121).

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Vol. 6.2 (1996/97)

Edwin Muir's *Chorus of the Newly Dead* and its Analogues*

KENNETH MUIR

In 1926 the Hogarth Press published Edwin Muir's *Chorus of the Newly Dead*. This poem was never reprinted in his life-time, although he expressed his intentions of re-writing it with substantial revisions. This hope he never realised. In a letter to Schiff (11 July 1926), Muir declared that the poem was "the best thing I have ever written; there is most of myself in it"; and his Wife, Willa, said that "he was making his first poetic attempt to come to terms with Death by looking for a transcendental meaning in Life."[1] As Peter Butter records,[2] Muir made changes in the printed copy, trying to eliminate poetic clichés; but in the process he came to realise that the poem fell far short of his intentions.

Although Muir was right to say that there was more of himself in the poem than in any of his previous work, it had a literary source—Herbert Trench's "Requiem of Archangels for the World." The archangels announce that Earth's sleep has come, that trees are dying, streams are stricken dumb, and hearts beat no more. Great wars, just and unjust, sleep; high-shining Kings, simple men, heroes, Gods of men, all sleep. At the conclusion of the poem, it is said that their strivings enlarged the self-dominion of the Absolute:

> Absolute, let them be absolved!
> Fount of the time-embranching fire,
> O waneless One, that art the core
> Of every heart's unknown desire,
> Take back the hearts that beat nor more![3]

*This essay was submitted by the author to be published posthumously.

Trench was a dramatist as well as a poet. His *Napoleon* had been performed in 1919. He was naturally acquainted with *The Dynasts* and it may be suggested that his "Requiem" was influenced by the choruses in which Hardy comments on the action, in particular that of the Pities, which take a similar attitude to the aspirations and sufferings of humanity. Like Muir, Trench pities those who are rated as successful, as well as those who are apparently failures.

Most of Trench's poems suffer to-day from an unfashionably diction, but in his "Requiem" this matches the theme, and it remains an impressive poem. Muir was not the only poet to be influenced by it. A year after *Chorus of the Newly Dead*, Humbert Wolfe's *Requiem* appeared, and its title is a significant link with Trench's poem. Although Wolfe was a very prolific writer—he published tow volumes in 1926—and a regular reviewer of modern poetry, there is some evidence that he had begun *Requiem* before the publication of Muir's poem. In an epilogue to the satire, *News of the Devil*, he had indicated that he was going to write of "the quiet overseeing / of man by eternity," thus "revealing / the vision absolute."[4] This appears to be an allusion to the lines quoted above from Trench. The publication of *Requiem* seven months later was preceded by a remarkable advertising campaign. Wolfe had justly earned a reputation for wit and cleverness rather than for profundity; but now there were rumours that he had written a great poem. So effective they proved that Oxford bookshops on the day of publication were besieged by long queues of customers anxious to obtain a copy of the first edition. The book became a best-seller. One reviewer compared Wolfe to Keats, and others were full of praise. Purchasers were initially delighted, but their enthusiasm was eroded by later readings.[5]

Muir's poem and Wolfe's have a great deal in common. In both the speakers are divided into winners and losers, and some of them have the same names. Originally in 1923, Muir had four losers—Idiot, Beggar, Coward, Harlot—and Saint and Hero as winners. Two years later he added the Mystic and in the published version he substituted the Poet for the Saint. Wolfe has eight losers, including the Harlot, and eight

winners, including St. Francis and St. Joan. One of his Lovers, also belonging to the winners, is a poet.

In Muir's poem each soliloquy is followed by a chorus. Wolfe has no chorus, apart from the Coda. All his characters use the identical six-line stanza, with a short fifth line followed by an alexandrine. The speeches of the winners and losers are each followed by two or three more poems on related topics. The Huckster, for example, is followed by a poem on the Last Supper, and another in which Judas attempts to return the thirty pieces of silver to the High Priest. When Wolfe inserts a poem about the 1914-18 war, he ingeniously and appropriately employs Wilfred Owen's use of pararhyme (trenches/branches; clasping/lisping).

Muir and Wolfe were born within two years of each other, but in education and experience they differed in almost every way. Wolfe entered the civil service in 1908 after graduating at Oxford and he was brilliant at his job. Muir hated his work as a clerk in Greenock and Glasgow. By 1926 Wolfe had published seven volumes of verse and one of prose. Muir had repudiated his early verse and he regarded thirty-five as his real birth as a poet. Yet his *First Poems* (1925) contained fourteen he did not reprint in his *Collected Poems*; and when he published *Chorus of the Newly Dead* he was still unsure of himself. He was a late developer and excessively modest. Wolfe was over-confident and seems to have shared the belief of his admirers that he was a great poet.

It may be assumed that although both poets were mainly indebted to Trench's "Requiem," they had read each other's work. Muir's reaction to Wolfe's *Requiem* must have been mixed. On the one hand he would have realised that Wolfe's gallery of winners and losers had dwarfed his hesitant group of abstract figures. He would have realised, too, that Wolfe's verse was technically accomplished. On the other hand, the publication of *Requiem* must have come as a shock. Its large sales, though temporary, meant that his own *Chorus* was damaged by comparison. He may well have felt that Wolfe's claims of divine inspiration were invalid, that his characters were all stereotypes, and that he was too clever by half. The things that made him so popular proved that he was a brilliant writer of pastiche, rather than a great and original poet.

Muir himself did not emerge as one of the best poets of his time until a few years later. It may be that his failure to finish the new version of *Chorus of the Newly Dead* was caused by a half-acknowledged inhibition and a feeling that *Requiem* had vulgarised a theme that was dear to his heart.

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NOTES

[1]*The Complete Poems of Edwin Muir*, ed. Peter Butter (Aberdeen: The Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1991) 317.

[2]Peter Butter, *Edwin Muir: Man and Poet* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1966) 105.

[3]*The Collected Works of Herbert Trench*, 3 vols. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1924) 1: 130.

[4]Humbert Wolfe, *News of the Devil* (London: Ernest Benn, 1926) 38-39.

[5]It is notable that the 1927 collection of *Oxford Poetry*, edited by W. H. Auden and C. Day-Lewis, showed that the dominant influence on most of the contributors was T. S. Eliot. Not one of them seems to have fallen under the spell of Humbert Wolfe.

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Vol. 6.2 (1996/97)

T. H. White, Pacifism and Violence: The Once and Future Nation

ANDREW HADFIELD

> My intellectual friends of those days, between the wars used to say to me: 'Why on earth do you waste your talents feeding wild birds with dead rabbits?' Was this a man's work today? They urged that I was an intelligent fellow: I must be serious. 'To arms!' they cried. 'Down with the Fascists, and Long Live the People!' Thus, as we have seen, everybody was to fly to arms, and shoot the people.
>
> It was useless to tell them that I would rather shoot rabbits than people.
>
> T. H. White, *The Goshawk* (1951)

Terence Hanbury White (1906-64) had obsessive and equivocal feelings about violence throughout his life, both in his conception of himself as a private individual and as a political philosopher, which he confronted and explored throughout his fictional writings. In this essay I want to examine White's contradictory representations of violent action in his *magnum opus*, *The Once and Future King*, a tetralogy recasting Sir Thomas Malory's fifteenth-century prose epic of the matter of Britain, *Le Morte D'Arthur*. White frequently uses his fiction autobiographically, apparently trying to explain himself to himself and to anyone else who was prepared to read it. Numerous figures within his books appear to be representations of the author: in *The Once and Future King* alone, it is arguable that Arthur, Lancelot and Merlin are all versions of White at various points in the narrative. To give one example; White felt that his own upbringing had bred in him a perverse love of cruelty and a desire to inflict pain on others. This appears to have been referred to in the portrait of Lancelot who shares the same dark passion and is the horrible cause of his attraction to Guenever, traditionally represented as the cause for the destruction of the Round Table. White's narrator comments:

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debhadfield00602.htm>.

> It is the bad people who need to have principles to restrain them. For one thing, he [Lancelot] likes to hurt people. It was for the strange reason that he was cruel, that the poor fellow never killed a man who asked for mercy, or committed a cruel action which he could have prevented. One reason why he fell in love with Guenever was because the first thing he had done was to hurt her. He might never have noticed her as a person, if he had not seen the pain in her eyes.[1]

The situation is made more complex because Lancelot is also in love with Arthur, his boyhood hero, and so falls for Guenever too.[2] White himself suffered terrible guilt feelings concerning his own homosexuality which he felt had been caused by his relationship with his mother and had rendered him unfit for the company of "normal" people. As a result he spent much of his life as a semi-hermit and only allowed himself to love his dog, Brownie.[3]

However, the onset of the Second World War forced White to meditate further on the problem of violence on a much wider scale. White's Arthurian tetralogy demands to be read as an essay on the origins of war as much as an exercise in autobiographical fiction, a mixture and confusion of aims which accounts in part for the strange hybrid work which has survived. In this essay I want to show how the two interrelated aspects of White's tortured exploration of his own and mankind's aggressive nature founder on the problem of national identity, something which is simultaneously communal and individual. White ends his fiction caught between a desire for freedom from all constraints and the need for the establishment of a secure collective identity, a problem the story of Arthur serves to highlight rather than solve. In the course of the novels, Merlin emerges as the most important character. He can be seen as both the bringer of wisdom and a false prophet, a dichotomy mirrored in the two endings of the sequence.

The first part of the essay will outline the problems surrounding the text's composition; the second will examine the figure of Merlin and his involvement in the development of the plot; the third will do the same for Arthur; and the fourth will attempt to show that what links the strands of the story together is White's inability to deal with the problem of nationalism he has focussed upon.

I

White's conception of the purpose of his retelling of the Arthurian legends grew more grand and precise as the project continued into the years of the Second World War whilst he was domiciled in Ireland. Despite initial scepticism, White considered returning to fight as his friend David Garnett had done and did offer his services to the Ministry of Information, albeit rather half-heartedly.[4] But he came to see his sequence of novels as a more valuable war effort and a specific means of combating Hitler who was "the kind of chap one has to stop."[5] Put another way, the project became rather like that of *The Goshawk*, White's account of his retreat into the English woods to train a German goshawk in the 1930s, which develops into a meditation on the nature of fascist violence. White's final revised text of 1958, *The Once and Future King*, which collected together the three previously published novels, *The Sword in the Stone* (1938), *The Witch in the Wood* (1939)—now substantially rewritten as *The Queen of Air and Darkness*—and *The Ill-Made Knight* (1940), and the unpublished *The Candle in the Wind*, made the anti-Nazi message of the work a great deal more explicit, despite the omission of the most obviously polemical section of White's sequence, *The Book of Merlin*, eventually published posthumously with an introduction by Sylvia Townsend Warner, White's biographer, in 1977. Collins had objected to White's plan to include this in the completed sequence, ostensibly on the grounds of wartime economy. This had helped to lead to White's break with Collins and held up the publication of the other four revised volumes until 1958.[6]

Given the complicated state of the text, the long period of composition and the frequent changes in purpose, it is often difficult to attribute an overall design to the work. In other words, one can easily observe that White thought that the Second World War was a bad thing, but explaining why he thought it had come about or what could be done to prevent it happening again is far more problematic. His critics have all too often assumed that White uncritically valorized certain episodes and allowed individual characters to espouse his views rather than represent opinions he once held, possible arguments rather than final positions which the reader is obliged to endorse.

To take one example, at the end of the (published) version, Arthur reflects on the course of his life as he faces death at the hands of his illegitimate son, Mordred, and muses how he "had been taught by Merlin to believe that man was perfectible: that he was on the whole more decent than beastly: that good was worth trying: that there was no such thing as original sin," but that his efforts had ultimately led to "total warfare . . . the most modern of hostilities" (666-67). Taylor and Brewer comment: "Here, White's characteristic nineteen-thirtyish liberal pacifism is put into the mouth of Arthur, as he concludes that wars are fought about nothing, and that the sole hope for the future can only lie in culture, and the establishment of a new Round Table."[7] White had, indeed, espoused such ideals at that time and a friend who had known White when he was the head of English at Stowe remembered him as a potential conscientious objector. However, the same friend, who lost touch with the author until the war years, was disillusioned to hear that White had tried to join up,[8] which would seem to indicate that White's political ideas had changed somewhat from those he held at the start of his literary enterprise.

In a passage which survived the transformation from *The Witch in the Wood* to *The Queen of Air and Darkness*, a different perspective on the problem of war is provided. Kay asks Merlin how one can determine who is the guilty party in the event of war. Merlin answers:

> I'm not suggesting that all of them can be decided. I was saying, from the start of the argument, that there are many wars in which the aggression is as plain as a pike-staff, and that in those wars at any rate it might be the duty of a dozen men to fight the criminal. If you aren't sure that he is a criminal—and you must sum it up for yourself with every ounce of fairness you can muster—then go and be a pacifist by all means. I recollect that I was a pacifist *once*, in the Boer War, when my own country was the aggressor, and a young woman blew a squeaker at me on Mafeking Night. (239, my emphasis)

Kay asks Merlin—who is living his life backwards—to explain about Mafeking Night, but Arthur interrupts and the event is not mentioned again.

This makes a simple endorsement of Arthur's conclusions at the end of the tetralogy as White's own views less straightforward, and should

make one wary of accepting the ending of the novel sequence as White's final words on the problems encountered throughout the course of narrative. The passage also indicates that more than one character has a potentially valid point of view. Merlin insists that he was a pacifist and opposed war on a specific occasion when his country was morally wrong, but he does not endorse it as a desirable general rule (the detail about the young woman and the squeaker, which seems to be unnecessary, makes it clear that not everyone agreed with his judgement, i.e., the country was obviously not united in perceiving its errors). If anything is to be endorsed by the reader here, it is surely Merlin's assertion that "there are many wars in which aggression is as plain as a pikestaff," a reference to White's not uncontroversial diagnosis of the origins of the Second World War.

A more usual judgement of the work is that White eventually despaired of humanity and gives free rein to his misanthropy, particularly in his preferred conclusion to the sequence, *The Book of Merlin*. Stephen Knight comments, "White's urge to escape is in many ways simplistic, avoiding the historical and political reasons why cities and nations have become as they are .... The views put forward are narrow and extreme: White's hatred and contempt for politicians has become a general misanthropy."[9] The reason for this judgement is an equation of the views of Merlin and those of the author. Elisabeth Brewer, for example, assumes an equation of author and character takes place when she interchanges them in consecutive sentences: "we see White propounding the idea that it is 'communal property' rather than the ownership of private property that leads to war. Nationalism is the curse of man, and for this Merlyn has a simple, easy solution to propose. All you have to do is abolish nations, 'tariff barriers, passports and immigration laws, converting mankind into a federation of individuals.'"[10] But it is by no means clear that Merlin is White's mouthpiece throughout the book, though he undoubtedly is on occasions: it is one thing to use autobiographical material in fiction, whether that be direct experience, notebooks or held opinions—current or not—quite another to leave this as an unmediated repository of truthfulness imposed upon the reader. The fact that White portrays Merlin as changing his mind over his pacifism—just as White himself did—should alert us to a certain conscious structure of debate

and indeterminacy in the novel sequence, especially given its laborious creation.

II

It is certainly arguable that Merlin is always meant to be right, or always in control of what he teaches Arthur (the Wart). Arthur's first lesson in *The Sword in the Stone* is to be turned into a perch, which concludes with his meeting the king of the moat, Mr. P., "the old despot" who has a face "ravaged by all the passions of an absolute monarch—cruelty, sorrow, age, pride, selfishness, loneliness and thoughts too strong for individual brains. . . . He was remorseless, disillusioned, logical, predatory, fierce, pitiless—but his great jewel of an eye was that of a stricken deer, large, fearful, sensitive, and full of griefs." The Wart is too nervous to ask a question, so Merlin tells the pike that they have come to find out about the realities of power. Mr. P. replies:

> 'There is nothing . . . except the power which you pretend to seek: power to grind and to digest, power to seek and power to find, power to await and power to claim, all power and pitilessness springing from the nape of the neck.'
>
> 'Thank you'.
>
> 'Love is a trick played on us by the forces of evolution. Pleasure is the bait laid down by the same. There is only power. Power is of the individual mind, but the mind's power is not enough. Power of the body decides everything in the end, and only Might is Right" (47-48).

The interview ends with Mr. P. warning the rather dazed Wart that he ought to flee or else he is in grave danger of being eaten.

Mr. P.'s words mark him out as a simplistic thinker, something clearly borne out in the repetitive assertions of his syntax. He conjures up a desolate universe, empty of warmth, affection, or any other human bond and he prefigures the Wart's most disturbing sojourn with the explicitly Nazi ants later.[11] His long litany of negatives almost transforms his message directly into action as the Wart is left paralysed for a second and only escapes at the last minute. At this stage in his education, the Wart can only run from the likes of Mr. P.; later he must learn to deal with such figures or his regime will founder (as, in fact, happens).

Merlin's theories of education demand that the Wart learn to think for himself, so that he escapes the restrictions placed upon a child's development by the inadequacies of traditionalism as espoused by Sir Ector's benevolent but flawed regime (*Once and Future King* 3-5).[12] However, it is not entirely clear what this first lesson teaches the Wart, or exactly how he uses such learning when he ascends to the throne. Mr. P. serves as a warning to those who would be king of the terrible effect absolute power will have on the individual who holds it. Can the Wart escape this legacy? Or is he doomed to be tainted by the effects of power even if he strives to be a good ruler? Mr. P. is clearly an unattractive figure, but doesn't he actually speak the truth and expose the weaknesses inherent in others' arguments by getting to the heart of the matter?

The novel sequence gives equivocal answers to such questions, partly owing to an issue raised by Mr. P.'s second, unsought for reflection on the nature of power when he warns the Wart of the hopelessness of love, it being no more than "a trick played on us by the forces of evolution." Is this supposed to forewarn the child of the disastrous effects of his own future love for his unfaithful Queen Guenever, who, after all, has an affair with Arthur's closest friend, Lancelot, who, in turn, loves Arthur? (see above 208). If so, it would seem that in a certain sense Mr. P. is possibly right that love is something which serves as a destructive force and should be discounted by those who are born to rule.

Nevertheless, Arthur does marry Guenever and events unfold as they would have done anyway despite Merlin's interventions: there is a limit to how much a tutor—especially one who is living his life backwards—can change the future. Merlin is constrained by the inevitable, just as White the novelist is constrained by the material he is choosing to retell: both are free to intervene only in a circumscribed manner. To a large extent the lessons are not for the Wart/Arthur but the reader who is to make sense of the book—again, we are taken beyond the immediacy of the story and invited to make such readings in a wider context. It is indicative of this that the lesson takes place on two interrelated but separate levels: there is the answer of Mr. P. to the Wart/Merlin's question and the preceding commentary on the appearance of the pike, i.e., lessons that the characters in the narrative

can learn and those which are only available to the reader. Mr. P. is described as possessing "thoughts too strong for individual brains," which partly serves to explain why he has become the dangerous monster he now is. The implication is that this might be what the reader of the sequence will find happens to Arthur, despite his own qualities and noble sentiments. Secondly there is the visual image of Mr. P. whose "clean, shaven chops [gave] him an American expression, like that of Uncle Sam" (47). White is obviously referring to the American recruitment posters of First World War vintage, which might imply that Mr. P. does not stand simply for a Nazi war criminal, but that White saw no *absolute* and easy separation between the violence and corruption of power on the allied side and that of the Axis forces (see below).

Mr. P.'s facile conclusion that "only Might is Right" is questioned and debated throughout the sequence. At the start of *The Queen of Air and Darkness*, Arthur starts to realise this after enthusing about the first battle of the Gaelic wars described in the novel until Merlin forces him to consider the kerns and ordinary foot soldiers killed.[13] Merlin refuses to answer Arthur's blunt question—"Might isn't Right, is it, Merlin?" (229)—and makes Arthur to go off and think about the problem. Arthur presents the results of his cogitations in Chapter 6 which consists of the notion that "Might is only to be used for Right" and that a new order of chivalry will replace the violent one of his father, Uther Pendragon, so that knights will only use force to further civilised values: "It will be using the Might instead of fighting against it, and turning a bad thing into a good" (253-55). Arthur craves a response from his tutor, but instead Merlin turns to look at the ceiling and says "the first few words of the Nunc Dimittis" (255).

The "Nunc Dimittis" is the hymn based upon the "Song of Simeon" (*Luke* 2:29-32), where the holy man is promised that he shall not experience death until he has seen Christ, and records his praise upon meeting the Saviour. It begins:

> Lord let thy servant now depart
> Into Thy promised rest,
> Since my expecting eyes have been
> With thy salvation blest.[14]

The significance of Arthur's independent thought is also pointed out by the narrator: "You might say that this moment was the critical one in his career—the moment towards which he had been living backward for heaven knows how many centuries, and now he was to see for certain whether he had lived in vain" (252-53). Merlin's hymn singing—another detail present only in the 1958 version—illustrates the quasi-religious revelation he feels has taken place. Now he can disappear satisfied with his efforts, to be imprisoned by the witch, Nimue, an event foretold in chapter two (228).

The point is that we do not have to accept Merlin's reading of Arthur's coming of age as the only one possible. Subsequent incidents in *The Queen of Air and Darkness* can be read to undermine his position as omniscient sage (which would tend to cast his singing of the "Nunc Dimittis" in a somewhat ironic light). On the eve of the Battle of Beldegraine, Merlin starts to become concerned that he needs to tell Arthur something before he departs, but he cannot remember what it is. Arthur tries to help jog his memory, suggesting that it might be Nimue's impending betrayal; Merlin asks whether he has told Arthur about Lancelot and Guenever and Arthur replies that he has and that not only does he not believe it, but the warning "would be a base one anyway, whether it was true or false" (293). Eventually, Arthur urges Merlin to stop thinking about the problem and take a holiday, "Then, when you come back, we can think of something to prevent Nimue" (294).

Once again, the ironies abound in this exchange. The event that Merlin forgets to tell Arthur about is his own impending seduction at the end of the novel by the Queen of Air and Darkness, his half-sister, Morgause, the event, according to White, which was really at the root of the destruction of the Round Table.[15] The result of this incestuous union is Mordred, who mortally wounds Arthur in the last battle (an event never actually depicted in *The Once and Future King*). In the denouement of the final book in the published version, *The Candle in the Wind*, Arthur confesses to Lancelot and Guenever that he had tried to have Mordred killed via a proclamation which demanded that all babies born on a certain day "be put on a big ship and floated out to sea" (579). Merlin had only managed to warn Arthur of the threat of Mordred when

everything was too late. Whilst Merlin is cheerful about the effects of his imminent fate on the eve of the battle, he forgets to tell Arthur of the parallel case which will not only destroy everything, but bring back the threat of ugly violence which Arthur's plan, backed up by Merlin's approval of it, appeared to have solved. We are also forced to consider the implications of Merlin's claimed omniscience. When Arthur asks why he does not do anything about Nimue, Merlin tells him the parable of the man who encountered the surprised figure of death in Damascus, fled to Aleppo to escape the spectre, only to meet him there and learn that death had looked surprised because he had been told to meet him in Aleppo on that day and therefore had not expected to meet him in Damascus. Arthur deduces from this tale that Merlin's trying to escape Nimue is not much good and his tutor assents: "Even if I wanted to . . . it would be no good. There is a thing about Time and Space which the philosopher Einstein is going to find out. Some people call it Destiny" (295).

If this is so, then why do we have to worry about Merlin telling Arthur that Morgause is going to seduce him? What actually happens is that Arthur's attempts to prevent the future taking place make matters even worse than they need to have been and ensure disaster: the innocent Adam who was Wart has turned into a monstrous Herod.[16] The implication is that had Merlin remembered to warn Arthur properly, then neither the seduction nor its ghastly aftermath would have taken place. We only have Merlin's word that he can see the future as it will *definitely* take place. The narrative demonstrates that he is not necessarily always right, in a moral and factual sense, as his own actions and those of his pupil illustrate. Either way, Merlin is trapped by his own logic and cannot be seen as the key to all the mythologies of the work.

III

For all his fine ideals, Arthur is clearly either a badly flawed ruler or one who is unable to escape the inherent dangers of kingship.[17] At the start of *The Queen of Air and Darkness*, we are presented with

opposing viewpoints of the issues behind the Gaelic wars. In King Lot's castle in the Orkneys, the children, Gawaine, Gareth, Gaheris and Agravaine tell their version of the story of the events leading to the birth of Arthur, Uther's rape of Igraine, their grandmother, and the narrator comments, "They considered the enormous English wickedness in silence, overwhelmed by its *denouement*" (220). Arthur confesses that the Orkney faction do have a case against his father, but Merlin corrects him, alleging that King Lot's reasons are no more than personal ones and merely repeat the cycle of violence that Uther started off: "if we go on living backward like that, we shall never come to the end of it." Instead, they should use the results of past aggression in order to unite:

> '[T]he point is that the Saxon Conquest did succeed, and so did the Norman Conquest of the Saxons . . . . Also I would like to point out that the Norman Conquest was a process of welding small units into bigger ones—while the present revolt of the Gaelic Confederation is a process of disintegration. They want to smash up what we may call the United Kingdom into a lot of piffling little kingdoms of their own. That is why their reason is not a good one.'
>
> He scratched his chin, and became wrathful.
>
> 'I never could stomach these nationalists', he exclaimed. 'The destiny of Man is to unite, not to divide.' (235)

Arthur is clearly persuaded by such logic when he decides to harness might in the service of right to Merlin's obvious approval (see above). One might also note that in accepting that nothing can be achieved without power, he is not that far from endorsing the argument of Mr. P. that "There is nothing . . . except . . . power." But must the reader accept Merlin's verdict as correct and endorsed by T. H. White as most readers seem to have assumed? To do so we must assume that there is no intentional irony in the phrase "living backwards" when Merlin speaks about the Gaelic league as an atavistic alliance, for he himself only knows what he does through "living backwards." More to the point, is it obvious that larger national units are necessarily better than smaller ones and inflict a lesser violence upon their subjects or upon each other? Merlin repeatedly points out to Arthur the costs and horrors of war, but he may well have created a benign monster who cannot escape from a logic he is told to condemn in his attempt to impose a system of order

on disparate peoples. In a devastating addition to the 1958 text, White includes an exchange before the Battle of Bedegraine between Kay and Merlin which deserves quotation at some length. Kay tells Merlin that he has just thought of a good reason for fighting a war and Merlin, who initially freezes, asks him to explain exactly what it is:

> 'A good reason for fighting a war is simply to have a good reason! For instance, there might be a king who had discovered a new way of life for human beings—you know, something which would be good for them. It might even be the only way of saving them from destruction. Well, if the human beings were too wicked or too stupid to accept his way, he might have to force it on them, in their own interests, by the sword.'
>
> The magician clenched his fists, twisted his gown into screws, and began to shake all over.
>
> 'Very interesting', he said in a trembling voice. 'Very interesting. There was just such a man when I was young—an Austrian who invented a new way of life and convinced himself that he was the chap to make it work. He tried to impose his reformation by the sword, and plunged the civilized world into misery and chaos'.

Merlin then continues to contrast the aggressive imposition of ideas on people by Hitler to the passive process of reformation inaugurated by Jesus Christ who simply made ideas available to people: "Kay looked pale but obstinate. 'Arthur is fighting the present war,' he said, 'to impose his ideas on King Lot'" (273-74).

This is an extraordinarily scandalous passage which has received only perfunctory analysis from critics.[18] Initially it sounds as if the rather intellectually limited Kay is about to illustrate the extent of his misunderstanding of Merlin's teaching, but as the passage continues it becomes clear that Kay has actually understood the import of Merlin's teachings far better than Merlin himself: Arthur is indeed more like Hitler than Jesus, despite Merlin's fondness for religious comparisons. One cannot escape from the need to use force in governing because systems of order do not appear from nowhere: in seeking to unite one may actually destroy, so that Merlin's assumption of a linear narrative progression of history towards greater reason, bigger "imagined communities," better government and so on is disrupted (as it is, in fact, by his own choice of the examples of Hitler and Jesus Christ).

Merlin's desire to prove that it is easy to distinguish between good and bad motives for war is shown to be more problematic than he pretends it is. In the same way his increasingly strident assertions of his moral correctness undermine his attempts to educate his pupils by allowing them to find things out for themselves: in the final analysis, they are supposed to discover what the tutor wants them to discover (but, ironically, Kay seems to have proved Merlin's point by disagreeing with him).

In fact, the lessons of *The Sword in the Stone* pave the way for Kay's revelation: the Wart's second transformation was into a merlin so that he could learn from the birds of prey. White portrayed these as British army officers who are in some ways nearly as disturbing as the Nazi ants and certainly not obvious counters to the despotic abuser of power, Mr. P. Worst of all the birds proves to be the Wart's own pet falcon, (Colonel) Cully, who turns out to be an insane, dangerous bigot, perhaps based on Powell and Pressburger's creation, Colonel Blimp.[19]

Arthur's problem is that he cannot escape from the legacy of his father, Uther, or his own violent past as it comes to light in *The Candle in the Wind*. There is surely a bitterly pointed irony in Arthur's attempt to replace the violence of chivalry with the process of justice because it is the very process of the law which neutralises the effective force of Lancelot and enables Agravaine and the Orkney children to triumph. White expands considerably Malory's brief narration of Agravaine and Mordred's disclosure of the affair between Arthur and Guenever.[20] When Arthur explains that he is replacing trial by combat with trial by jury, "Agravaine, exulting in his cold mind, thought, 'Hoist with his own petard!'" (589). Against such ruthlessness, Arthur is helpless, not least because he is entrapped within the cycle of violence:

> 'Agravaine: you are a keen lawyer, and you are determined to have the law. I suppose it is no good reminding you that there is such a thing as mercy?'
>
> 'The kind of mercy', asked Mordred, 'which used to set those babies adrift, in boats?'
>
> 'Thank you, Mordred. I was forgetting.'
>
> 'We do not want mercy,' said Agravaine, 'we want justice.' (590)

Just as Merlin forgets to tell Arthur about the threat to his plans from Morgause/Mordred, so does Arthur forget in trying to codify the legal system, eradicate violence and unify the British Isles. Ultimately he is forced to appeal to a series of private principles, precisely what he has just eliminated from the formalised code he has established:

> 'But if I may speak for a moment, Mordred and Agravaine, as a private person, the only hope I now have left is that Lancelot will kill you both and all the witnesses—a feat which, I am proud to say, has never been beyond my Lancelot's power. And I may add this also, as a minister of Justice, that if you fail for one moment in establishing this monstrous accusation, I shall pursue you both remorselessly, with all the rigour of the laws which you yourselves have set in motion.' (591)

Yet again, this retelling and elaboration of Malory is shrouded in complex ironies, not least because it was Arthur who had earlier argued against Merlin that the Gaelic faction had a legitimate grievance which could not be dismissed as purely personal (see above 217). It is clear that the behaviour of Mordred and Agravaine shows that there is no straightforward advance of civilization towards harmony and peaceful government and that the mechanisms of justice can be used to undermine the abstract idea of justice. Arthur—who shows that having established the means of justice he is keen to work against them—cannot escape from the cycle of violence. Mr. P.'s words come to seem more and more like the riddle of the Sphinx. As *The Candle in the Wind* progresses, it becomes clear that Mordred's thrashers are the obvious equivalents of the Nazi ants encountered in *The Sword in the Stone*, but at an earlier stage: "Their aims were some kind of nationalism, with Gaelic autonomy, and a massacre of the Jews as well, in revenge for a mythical saint called Hugh of Lincoln. There were already thousands, spread over the country, who carried his badge of a scarlet fist clenching a whip, who called themselves Thrashers" (628).[21] Nevertheless, enough questions have been posed to show that separating the legitimacy of the violence of Arthur's centralising government and that of the Celtic fringe is not as easy a task as one would like it to be.

IV

The Once and Future King can be read as an elaborate discussion of the problems resulting from the assumption of a national identity. In the reverie that concludes the published text of the tetralogy, Arthur feels that he is finally able to pinpoint what causes war: "It was geography which was the cause—political geography. It was nothing else. Nations did not need to have the same kind of civilization, nor the same kind of leader, any more than the puffins and the guillemots did. They could keep their own civilizations, like Esquimaux and Hottentots, if they would give each other freedom of trade and free passage and access to the world. . . . The imaginary lines on the earth's surface only need be unimagined" (676). Here, I would suggest, it is at least a possibility that such free indirect discourse has the author's approval and is not yet another passage which demands an ironic reading (but see above 210-11). Arthur feels that he has sorted out the problems to his satisfaction and goes out to meet his death with equanimity.

But can the reader accept this as an adequate conclusion to the complex and tortuous discussions of the book? Sylvia Townsend Warner found the ending of the published text inconclusive and felt that *The Book of Merlin*, for all its faults, would have drawn together White's themes rather better given its explicitly didactic purpose as a fictional treatise on the nature of war.[22] The 1958 text ends with an adaptation of the Latin epitaph said to be found on Arthur's tomb: in Malory's text this reads, "HIC IACET ARTHURUS, REX QUONDAM REXQUE FUTURUS" ("Here lies Arthur, the once and future king"); White adapts this to "EXPLICIT LIBER REGIS QUONDAM REGISQUE FUTURI" ("Here ends the book of the once and future king") and underneath this is stated "THE BEGINNING,"[23] perhaps an indication that the book is there for the reader to learn from, avoiding the mistakes that Arthur made and accepting the perpetual existence of problems which human nature simply cannot solve.

However, Arthur's thoughts on the origins of war, if they are not meant to undercut the speaker, are hard to accept given what has gone before in the narrative. They appear to negate the greater part of the sequence's continuing discussion of war and national identity. Throughout the four

novels, White uses the matter of Britain to show how difficult government over disparate peoples is because they are competing for occupation of the same territory, i.e., in terms of Arthur's rather naive final thoughts, their political geographies overlap. When Merlin gives Arthur a potted history of the British Isles, he argues that first the Gaels fought among themselves before being invaded by two waves of Saxon invasions mixed up with a Roman intervention, before the arrival of the Normans, represented in the book, by Arthur's father, Uther Pendragon. Arthur becomes confused and asks why the Gaels should fight him "when it was really the Saxons who hunted them" and Merlin explains: "So far as the ancient Gaels are concerned, they just regard both your races as branches of the same alien people, who have driven them north and west" (233-34).[24]

Although Merlin goes on to dismiss such "nationalism," revealing that he is in fact the son of a demon father and Gaelic mother (236), it is quite clear that Arthur's ultimate response to the problem of national identity does not answer the question of what constitutes the imagined community of a nation and at what point such a national community can become a self-determined and self-determining unit. Arthur uses the term "imagined" in opposition to "real" as if such notions could be "unimagined" and a reality reasserted—although he also simultaneously acknowledges the impossibility of living without such distinctions and boundaries. White's adaptation of Malory in the (published) conclusion of his work effectively shelves the problem by spiriting both king and nation out of the present and into the past and future. Neither exist as current realities, only as once and future fictions, so that all we are left with is the contradictory notion that we need national identities but can also leave them behind when we want to. Arthur is referring back to the freedom he experienced with the Utopian geese, who do not recognise boundaries, but his experience as a ruler illustrates that their way of life is no more plausible than White's own attempt to escape from the violence of fascism by retreating into the wood to train a goshawk.[25]

In *The Book of Merlin*, where Arthur is whisked away into the set of the badger he originally met in *The Sword in the Stone* to discuss the problem of war with Merlin and a select group of animals, such

contradictions are dealt with at greater length. White had been reluctant to abandon this novel and, having been forced to do so, transferred the central episodes where Arthur is transformed into an ant and a goose into *The Sword in the Stone*, where, arguably, they lose their polemical force as a diptych illustrating the two extreme possibilities of national identity. Despite its patently unfinished state and obviously distorted relationship to the published omnibus, *The Book of Merlin* perhaps represents a more accurate approximation of its author's intentions than the published conclusion.[26] Arthur has two equal and opposite experiences in the book. First, he is transformed into a Nazi ant (an episode later transferred to the revised version of *The Sword in the Stone* published in *The Once and Future King*), where aggressive nationalism is a constantly ingrained ideology. Then he spends time with the pacific geese, where he falls in love with his tutor, Lyo-lyok, who answers all the questions Arthur puts to her. Arthur reflects on the inescapable nature of his own patriotic feelings and is dismayed to discover that they go beyond his affectionate bonds for Guenever, Lancelot and even Lyo-lyok. Despite all that he has learnt among the geese his patriotism remains exactly the same as it was before when he decided that it was his duty to fight for his country: "He was an Englishman, and England was at war. However much he hated it, or willed to stop it, he was lapped round in a real but intangible sea of English feeling which he could not control. To go against it, to wrestle with the sea, was more than he could face again" (*Book of Merlin* 102).[27]

This appears to be a recognition that the assumption of a national identity and the need to defend right with might cannot be avoided and obviously refers directly to the Second World War. Whereas at the end of the published version of *The Once and Future King*, national boundaries were assumed to be imagined and therefore expendable entities, here such forces are beyond the control of the individual mind. However, Arthur has changed the territory over which he rules: he is no longer the king of Britain, but of England so that his struggle with Mordred changes from a battle over a contested space to a war between separated and separable countries. The Gaels have moved beyond Arthur's nation and Merlin's belief in the easily distinguishable nature of good and bad wars once more applies.

Arthur makes a choice to return to his country rather than escape and it is clear that he has made the right decision because "He had been made for royal joys, for the fortunes of a nation" rather than "private happiness" (*The Ill-Made Knight* 539). Merlin becomes increasingly ridiculous in his vilification of man, nationalism and war, and the animals start to poke fun at his theories (*Book of Merlin*, ch. 19). Merlin himself accedes: "He knew now, since the royal hero had returned victorious in his choice, that his own wisdom was not the end. He knew that he had finished his tutorship" (*Book of Merlin* 163). Merlin's wisdom is not the end because he has little understanding of the problem of national identity.

The Book of Merlin, unrevised, sketchy and its themes closely tied to a specific situation, gives a more coherent answer to some of the issues least satisfactorily resolved in the published conclusion to *The Candle in the Wind*, but only at the expense of ignoring other problems, principally the vexed question of how to resolve the contested space of national identities and eliding the distinction between Britain and England. (In *The Ill-Made Knight* we are told that "The Saxons and Normans of Arthur's accession had begun to think of themselves as Englishmen," 447.) The sequence is both nostalgic and prophetic: nostalgic for an ideal England/Britain that never was, captured in the rural childhood of *The Sword in the Stone* and prophetic that eventually Arthur will return to govern an ideal nation.[28] In revising the work for publication, particularly in transforming the essentially comic *The Witch in the Wood* into the gloomily tragic *The Queen of Air and Darkness*, White came to focus much more heavily on the problematic and competing states of the nation which lie between these two poles. White initially dismissed the possibility that he might fight for a patriotic ideal in his letters and placed his ideal of art outside such boundaries: "I asked myself before I got the "flu: if I fought in the war, what would I be fighting for? Civilization. Not England, qua geographical boundaries; not freedom, that is always in the mind; not anything except what I call civilization."[29] Nevertheless, he came to discover that civilization could not exist unless it had a particular form. White was consequently forced to return to the question of that form time and again in his fictional explorations of such matters. How to conceptualise British nationality

became both the blind spot and the vanishing point of the fictional world of *The Once and Future King*, something it could neither properly substantiate nor do without.

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NOTES

[1]T. H. White, *The Once and Future King* (London: Collins, 1958) 353. All subsequent references to this edition in parentheses. On White's representation of himself as Lancelot, see Elisabeth Brewer, *T. H. White's The Once and Future King* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 1993) 83-84; on his reactions to his upbringing see Sylvia Townsend Warner, *T. H. White: A Biography* (London: Cape / Chatto and Windus, 1967) 30-31, 54, 83 *et passim*. I have greatly benefited from the discussions I have had with my undergraduate students who took my special option course, "Arthurian Literature: Myth and Interpretation," especially Joanna Terry, James Shingler and Heather Savage. Thanks also to Tim Woods who read an earlier draft and saved me from numerous errors.

[2]*Once and Future King* 327. See also White's entry in his journal, 27 September, 1939, which lists the characteristics he intended to give Lancelot; cited in Brewer, *T. H. White's The Once and Future King* 82-83.

[3]Warner, *T. H. White: A Biography* 30-31, 82-83, 86, 97, 209-11, 232.

[4]Warner, *T. H. White: A Biography* 121-22, 146; François Gallix, ed., *T. H. White, Letters to a Friend: The Correspondence Between T. H. White and L. J. Potts* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1984) 105-06, 116-17.

[5]Cited in Brewer, *T. H. White's The Once and Future King* 11; see also Warner, *T. H. White: A Biography*, ch. 8; "The Story of the Book," in T. H. White, *The Book of Merlin* (London: Collins, 1978) 17-18. All subsequent references to this edition in parentheses.

[6]For details and commentary on the changes see Brewer, *T. H. White's The Once and Future King*, chs. 2-7.

[7]Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer, *The Return of King Arthur: British and American Arthurian Literature since 1900* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 1983) 294.

[8]Warner, *T. H. White: A Biography* 235.

[9]Stephen Knight, *Arthurian Literature and Society* (London: Macmillan, 1983) 205.

[10]Brewer, *T. H. White's The Once and Future King* 155, citing *The Book of Merlin* 135.

[11]The episode with the Nazi ants was clearly of great importance for T. H. White. It started out as a key moment in *The Book of Merlin* as a stark contrast to the freedom of the pacifistic geese (see below 222-23), but when that volume was left unpublished, it was transferred to *The Sword in the Stone* and became part of Wart's education.

[12]For an overview of White's ideas see Brewer, *T. H. White's Once and Future King*, ch. 8.

[13]Most of this material was added in the rewriting of the novel which deliberately focusses on the problem of might versus right and Arthur's growing awareness of the problem.

[14]John Julian, *A Dictionary of Hymnology* (London: Murray, 1907) 822-23.

[15]Brewer, *T. H. White's The Once and Future King* 49.

[16]Martin Kellman, *T. H. White and the Matter of Britain: A Literary Overview* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon Press, 1988) 107.

[17]See C. N. Manlove, "Flight to Aleppo: T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*," *Mosaic* 10 (1977): 65-83, at 74-77; John K. Crane, *T. H. White* (Boston: Twayne, 1974) 79, 108-10; Kellman, *T. H. White and the Matter of Britain* 107-10, for various analyses of this.

[18]See, for example, Crane, *T. H. White* 91-92; Brewer, *T. H. White's The Once and Future King* 73.

[19]I owe this point to my student, James Shingler.

[20]Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, ed. Janet Cowen (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), Book XX, ch. 1.

[21]See also the passage on 548-50.

[22]Warner, *T. H. White: A Biography* 189-90.

[23]Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, II, 519. For details on the epigraph see John Withrington, "The Arthurian Epitaph in Malory's *Morte Darthur*," *Arthurian Literature* 7 (1987): 103-144.

[24]See also the passages on 211, 249-50, 559-69. White expands both time and historical possibility to enable him to include Saxons, Normans and Gaels as distinct peoples within the realm of Britain: Uther the Conqueror has supposedly reigned from 1066 until 1216 (198). For a discussion see Brewer, *T. H. White's The Once and Future King*, ch. 9, "White's Historical Imagination" 188-206; Kellman, *T. H. White and the Matter of Britain* 87, 101; Maureen Fries, "The rationalization of the Arthurian 'Matter' in T. H. White and Mary Stewart," *Philological Quarterly* 56 (1977): 258-65, at 262.

[25]For an alternative reading of the purpose of Wart's sojourn among the geese see Francois Gallix, "T. H. White et la legende du Roi Arthur: De La Fantaisie Animale au Moralisme Politique," *Etudes Anglais* 34 (1981): 192-203, at 200-01.

[26]On this problem see Duncan Wu, "Editing Intentions," *Essays in Criticism* 41 (1991): 1-10.

[27]"The trouble is that my mind does not want to join this war, and is able to face isolation of not joining it, but my heart floats in the subconscious of my race," letter to David Garnett, June 20, 1940, cited in Warner, *T. H. White: A Biography* 169.

[28]Merlin has just finished *The Prophecies of Merlin* at the end of *The Book of Merlin* and he reads out extracts to Arthur (160-61). These are based on those in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), Pt. 5, 170-85. Further reflections on English rural nostalgia can be found in David Gervais, *Literary Englands: Versions of "Englishness" in Modern Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 1993); M. A. Crowther, "The Tramp" in Roy Porter, ed., *Myths of the English* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992) 91-113.

[29]White to Potts, September 21, 1939, cited in Warner, *T. H. White: A Biography* 146.

Connotations
Vol. 6.2 (1996/97)

The Texts of Peter Martyr's *De orbe novo decades* (1504-1628): A Response to Andrew Hadfield*

MICHAEL G. BRENNAN

In his informative reading of Richard Eden's English translation of Peter Martyr's *De orbe novo decades*, Andrew Hadfield rightly takes as his starting point the view that "the question of how to read" a colonial text must be firmly placed at "the centre of any investigation into attempts at reconstructing a history of the Americas" (1). In this reply, I wish to develop Hadfield's argument by considering some of the problems of interpretation faced by a modern reader in relating Eden's English translation of 1555 to the original Latin volumes written between about 1500 and 1526 by Peter Martyr (an Italian working in Spain); and then to consider how subsequent English and Latin editions published between 1577 and 1628 variously repackaged Martyr's and/or Eden's work for their own historical moment and readership. In this way, I hope to demonstrate how Hadfield's post-colonial awareness of the complexities of the language(s) of early-colonial discourse may also be informed by a sensitivity towards the historical and bibliographical evidence offered by these individual volumes as, variously, examples of early-humanist historiography, politically motivated English reinterpretations of Spanish imperialism, Protestant colonialist propaganda, and even as opportunist money-making ventures by astute stationers. Above all, the various editions, translations, and adaptations of *De orbe novo decades* published between 1504 and 1628 reflect a series of key intellectual redefinitions of the inherently unstable and continually evolving perspectives of European writers on the political, spiritual, and commercial significance of New World discoveries.

*Reference: Andrew Hadfield, "Peter Martyr, Richard Eden and the New World: Reading, Experience and Translation," *Connotations* 5.1 (1995/96): 1-22.

I. The Publication of Martyr's Works: 1504-1530

A consideration of the intellectual environment within which the original drafts of Martyr's *De orbe novo decades* were composed—in terms of prevalent attitudes to the compilation of historical and geographical works—is essential for an informed study of their significance to early-colonial discourse. During the first half of the sixteenth century, Hispanic historiography of Latin America lay almost exclusively in the hands of a socially dominant Catholic minority, frequently drawn from members of the mendicant orders or the Society of Jesus. Their primary concern, both spiritual and temporal, was to utilize the interpretation of the past as a means of informing present and future action. A new literary form developed, commonly known as the "History of the Indies," in which chroniclers produced, to modern eyes, a strangely eclectic blend of chronological narrative, descriptions of landscapes, justifications of military actions, political interpretations, and anthropological curiosity over the customs, beliefs, and social practices of the native population. The years between 1504 and 1530—encompassed by the earliest publication of a fragment of Martyr's *Decades* (Venice, 1504) and the posthumous Alcalá edition of 1530 containing all eight decades—spanned one of the most crucial periods in the intellectual and stylistic development of New World historiography.

At the heart of this new form of historical writing lay an autobiographical and epistolary style of narration (self-consciously reminiscent of the classical ideology of Caesar's letters) in which the explorers, and later *conquistadores*, sought to convey to those at home (and, implicitly, to preserve for posterity) their remarkable experiences.[1] But another distinct level of (re-)interpretation and control over early-colonial discourse needs to be defined when we consider that some of the earliest chroniclers of New World discoveries, including Peter Martyr (and, incidentally, Richard Eden), never themselves set foot in these new territories. Instead, their stated purpose (evolving from their combined roles as public servants and intellectually curious humanists) was to provide a discriminating, but often heavily "official," channel through which the increasing volume of first-hand accounts of exploration and conquest from the New World could be carefully sifted, presented, and even rewritten or censored. It is, I believe, through this pivotal role—in

blending the immediacy of personal experience with the demands of state control—that Martyr offered his most important lessons to later historiographers.

The reign of Ferdinand and Isabella provided Spain with its first real sense of a national union, through their own persons, of Castile and Aragon. In one of his earliest letters Peter Martyr explained how he had chosen to leave his native Italy in 1587 because it was a divided country in favour of Spain, now fruitfully unified. Several other reasons doubtless played a part in Martyr's decision to remove himself from Italy to this new European world, almost certainly including a desire to involve himself in the Spanish war against the Moors, along with a direct offer of lucrative employment from Inigo López de Mendoza, Conde de Tendilla and younger son of the Marqués de Santillana. But, most importantly, Spain offered to Martyr an opportunity to test and define himself as a court and church servant in a new and increasingly expansionist environment. This personal experience of an apparently still infinite world of exploration and self-definition, so eloquently expressed in the 1530 Alcalá edition of the *Opus epistolarum* (his collected correspondence), also stimulated Martyr's literary concern in the *De orbe novo decades* to validate personal experience as a means of informing national and religious policy in New World exploration.[2] In the words of Colin M. MacLachlan, the broadening of the Spanish world to encompass a new continent required "an intellectual reordering of reality"; and it was to this great literary enterprise that the early drafts of Martyr's *De orbe novo decades* were dedicated.[3]

Turning now to Martyr's own published works, it is important to note that he never professes to write as a professional historian or chronicler but prefers to present himself as adopting the epistolary form of telling a simple story through letters ("I never tooke penne in hande to wryte lyke an historiographer, but only by epistels scribeled in haste, to satisfie theym, from whose commaundementes I myght not drawe backe my foote").[4] In the tenth book of the first decade, Martyr details how he came to write the earliest parts of *De orbe novo decades*. In particular he emphasises that the first two decades were penned as private correspondence in response to requests for information from Italian friends and patrons about the strange and exciting Spanish discoveries

undertaken during the first ten years of the new century. These epistles, through their (presumed) circulation in manuscript and later in print, would have been read as a kind of precursor to the periodical press. But for the modern reader, any attempt to relate these manuscript letters and their subsequent printed versions to the *De orbe novo decades* as translated by Richard Eden requires several progressive levels of bibliographical interpretation.[5]

The bulk of Martyr's personal manuscript letters to friends and patrons, survive now only in the *Opus epistolarum* (Alcalá, 1530; reprinted by the Elzevir publishing house at Amsterdam in 1670), which includes some 813 Latin letters dating from 1488 to 1525, a period covering almost the entirety of Martyr's working life in Spain. As with so many other printed letters of the period, there can be no certainty over their proximity to the original holograph correspondence which they profess to record. Even the evidence offered by the preliminaries of the *Opus epistolarum* is confusing. Here it is claimed that the letters were gathered together by the Marqués de Mondejar and Antonio de Lebrija but, as Henry R. Wagner has persuasively argued, there is good reason to believe that the volume may have been printed, at least in part, from Martyr's own copy letter-book. Regardless of the actual means of their compilation, we cannot know how extensively they were edited, reordered, or even rewritten by those friends, stationers, and patrons who were involved in the compilation of the 1530 Alcalá edition. Furthermore, even though over 50 of these letters deal specifically with New World exploration and discovery, they have only rarely been collated against the narratives printed in *De orbe novo decades*.[6] Hence, perhaps the most authoritative and immediate of Martyr's personal responses to Spanish exploration remain largely inaccessible to the modern English reader.[7]

The publishing history of *De orbe novo decades* up to the 1516 edition is no less complicated. The first published section was printed in Italian at Venice in 1504 as *Libretto de tutta la navigatione de Re de Spagna de le isole et terreni nouvamente trovati*, a chronicle-like abstract of only the *First Decade*.[8] As with the letters, the level of textual intervention by other hands in this publication remains an intriguing issue, with some historians dismissing it as merely a piratical printing.[9] But Anzalo Tevisan (also known as Trurgiano), a secretary of the Venetian embassy

to Spain, recorded in a letter to Domenico Malipiero at Venice how he had come across an interesting account of the voyages of Columbus and Pinzón by Martyr. Tevisan claimed to have copied it and then translated it himself into Italian before sending his manuscript version to Venice for publication. Both Tevisan's manuscript and his letter to Malipiero have survived, and it seems feasible to surmise that Martyr may have been aware of this project, even if he played no direct part in its fruition.

Three years later at Vicenza was published *Paesi novamente retrovati: Et novo mondo de Alberico Vesputio florentino intitulato* (1507), an account of various Portuguese voyages, with as its fourth book, an exact reprint of the *Libretto*.[10] This 1507 volume formed the foundation of a broader European dissemination of Martyr's work, with later editions printed at Milan in 1508 (Italian and Latin) and 1512 (Italian), at Nuremberg in 1508 (German), and at Paris in 1515 (French). However, it is important to note that this text of the *First Decade*, divided into 30 brief chapters, rarely concerned itself with much beyond a basic narrative of Colón's and Pinzón's voyages up to 1501. Significantly for the sections of the *De orbe novo decades* discussed in Hadfield's article, virtually all of Martyr's later material on the natives, their customs, and the landscape of the New World was either omitted or not available to Trevisan (or perhaps not as yet written by Martyr).

It is only with the folio volume, *P. Martyris Angli Mediolanensis Opera* (Seville, 1511), that we come to an edition of the *First Decade* almost certainly printed with the direct involvement of Martyr himself. But even this version of the text needs to be viewed within the overall context of its publication as merely one section of the "collected works" of an increasingly renowned scholar. For the first time, the *First Decade* is endowed in this volume with some of the trappings of what we would now expect from "travel writing." For example, it is preceded by an informative account of Martyr's famous 1501/2 embassy to Egypt, *Legatio babylonica*; and a leaf placed in some copies between signatures f and g of the *First Decade* contains on its recto a map of the West Indies and on its verso an epistle explaining the map to Cardinal Ximénez.[11] Rounding off what was essentially a humanist miscellany celebrating Martyr's diverse talents was a collection of Latin verses either by or on Martyr (reprinted at Valencia in 1520), celebrating his erudition and role

in Spanish public life. Up to 1511, then, the somewhat erratic publication of Martyr's writings seems to have served two distinct purposes: firstly, the feeding of natural public curiosity over strange and unknown lands; and, secondly, the celebration of Peter Martyr himself as a man of eclectic intellectual interests.

The first authoritative edition, from a modern perspective, of the first three decades was published by the stationer Antonio de Lebrija, with Martyr's collaboration, as *De orbe novo decades* (Alcála, 1516).[12] It is primarily upon this edition that Martyr's subsequent reputation as an historian rests. The second and third decades, clearly attractive in purely commercial terms in offering their readers exciting, up-to-date news from the New World (the last letter was dated 13 October 1516), were endowed with the added prestige of an address to Pope Leo X. Furthermore, the overall dedication of the whole volume "To the moste noble Prince and Catholike Kynge, Charles" emphasized Martyr's desire (as well as those of his patrons and stationer) to collect together "these marveylous and newe thynges" as a means of confirming to the rest of Europe the might of the Spanish monarchy and the extent of its still-growing colonial aspirations. In his eloquent dedication, Martyr triumphantly utilizes the gift of his book as a public assertion of Spanish claims over New World territories:

> We offer unto yowe the Equinoctiall line hetherto unknowen and burnte by the furious heate of the soonne and unhabitable after the opinion of the owlde wryters a fewe excepted: But nowe founde to bee most replenisshed with people, faire, frutefull, and most fortunate, with a thowsande Ilandes crowned with golde and bewtifull perles, besyde that greate portion of earth supposed to bee parte of the firme land, excedynge in quantitie three Europes. Come therfore and embrase this newe worlde.[13]

The contrast pointedly made here between the speculative accounts of "the owlde wryters" and Martyr's more empirically based "modern" decades is a crucial one, deliberately seeking to place the 1516 Alcála edition of *De orbe novo decades* at the very turning point of "old" and "new" perspectives on geography and travel. Furthermore, this edition's function was unmistakeably expansionist in intent, promulgating several key concerns of the inquisitive and acquisitive role of Spanish exploration. At the centre of its narratives lay an awareness of the

pressing need to define, in spiritual, moral, and political terms, the essential nature of the indigenous population. The tenth book of the first decade, for example, opens with a powerful evocation of the New World as a kind of pre-lapsarian Eden ("there were many newe landes founde, and nations which lived naked and after the lawe of nature," Arber 103), but one flawed only by the presence of "savage man," who is characterized by that most potent and colonially defining of human horrors, cannibalism ("For all the beastes of the Ilandes, are meeke and withowte hurte, except men which (as we have sayde) are in many Ilandes devourers of mans fleshe," 103). Pointedly linked with "the beastes of the Ilandes," the natives provide at this point a mirror to European (and specifically Spanish) men only in their violence and warlike accomplishments

It is clear that the publication of the 1516 Alcála edition of *De orbe novo decades* formed part of an eloquent international expression of Spanish commitment to a programme of colonial evangelization.[14] Martyr's heavy references to the royal concern for the establishment of groups of settlers in urbanized colonies ("It was the kynges pleasure that they shulde remayne in these landes, and buylde townes and fortresses," Arber, p. 104), recast Spanish acquisitive, gold-driven imperialism as a manifestation of Christian missionary zeal:

> Oh God: howe large and farre shal owre posteritie see the Christian Religion extended? Howe large a campe have they nowe to wander in, whiche by the trewe nobilitie that is in theym, or mooved by vertue, wyll attempte eyther to deserve lyke prayse amonge men, or reputacion of well doinge before god. (Arber 105)

At the same time, as Hadfield delineates (12) in his discussion of the incident (from the third book of the *Second Decade*) involving Vasco Núñez de Balboa and the son of the local king, Comogrus, Martyr's 1516 narratives may also be interpreted as simultaneously urging Charles V to be cautious in his colonial policies, implicitly linking the processes of imperial expansion with the inherent, and perhaps unavoidable, dangers of national fragmentation. Such concerns are also apparent in the *Fourth Decade*, probably written in May 1520 and printed at Basle in 1521 as *De Nuper sub D. Carolo Repertis Insulis, simulatque incolarum*

moribus, R. Petri Martyris.[15] Prefaced with a dedication by its printer to Margaret, the daughter of Maximilian, (and lavishly packaged with an ornamental title-page border reputedly designed by Holbein), the *Fourth Decade* was specially written to describe "the new country." It details, for example, the kinds of objects brought back by the *procuradores* of Cortés and gives a well informed description of the country so far as was known on 10 July 1519, when Cortés and his followers departed.[16] In effect, the *Fourth Decade* marks a self-conscious shift in Martyr's narratives from a concern with the intellectually inquisitive aspects of Spanish exploration to its essentially acquisitive nature as a tool of colonial exploitation.

If the historical significance of the publication of the 1521 edition of Martyr's *Fourth Decade* is heightened by its coincidence with the ruthless military suppression of Mexico in the same year, then the 1530 Alcalá edition of all eight decades, *De orbe novo Petri Martyris ab Angleria Mediolanensis Protonotarii Cesaris senatoris decades*, may be regarded as the harbinger of the culmination of Spanish imperial policy in the New World. Published three years before the conquest of Peru, the 1530 edition would have suggested to many of its European readers that it was really only a matter of time before the might of the Habsburg empire seized control of quite literally the whole world.[17]

This posthumous 1530 volume, probably put together by Antonio de Lebrija, offered conclusive evidence of Martyr's international reputation as an interpreter, rather than merely as a chronicler, of the growth of Spanish colonialism during the first quarter of the sixteenth century.[18] Of paramount importance, in purely geographical terms, was Martyr's well-founded scepticism towards the claim that Columbus had discovered a new route to Asia. His widely adopted coinage of the phrase *"Novi Orbis,"* denoting a land unknown to Ptolemy and the ancient writers (rather than necessarily a separate, undiscovered continent), made an indelible contribution to the language and geographical concepts of New World narratives. Other chroniclers and historians, including de las Casas, Galvano, Grynaeus, Montalboddo, Münster, Oviedo, and Ramusio, used him directly (and sometimes without acknowledgement) as a source for their own narrative accounts. Martyr's original works continued to be published throughout the 1530s,

although his popularity seems to have been on the wane by 1540 and his accounts of the New World were eventually superceded by the more widely circulated ones of Oviedo and Gómara.[19]

II. The English and Latin Editions of Martyr's Works: 1555-1628

The first of Richard Eden's translations about the New World to be published in England was not Martyr's *Decades* but part of Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia*, published under the title, *A treatyse of the newe India* (1553) and described by Boise Penrose as the "first really serious geographical work to be printed in England."[20] Eden was doubtless encouraged to turn to Martyr by the success of this clearly written translation of Münster's work, but his motives were also specifically linked to the opportunities for patronage and influence offered by the royal marriage of Mary and Philip in July 1554. Appointed as William Cecil's private secretary in 1552, as Hadfield notes (pp. 12-13), Eden appears to have already been closely associated during the Protectorate of Northumberland with several individuals active in exploring the opportunities for the commercial exploitation of colonial ventures. After gaining "through the favour of certain Spanish nobles" a position in Philip's English treasury, Eden's most public means of overtly committing himself to the new Catholic regime was his translation of Martyr's *Decades*.[21] Hadfield rightly emphasises how Eden strove in the preliminaries to his translation to harness England with the imperial achievements of Spain as a means of boosting the then flagging domestic economy. ("But if I shuld here particularly and at large declare howe Englande is in fewe yeares decayed and impoverysshed, and howe on the contrary parte Spayne is inryched . . .," Arber 54).[22]

The contrast in tone between the preliminaries of Eden's 1553 translation of Münster's *A treatyse of the newe India* and Martyr's *Decades* of 1555 is stark. In the earlier work, Eden predictably emphasised the riches that had been derived by Spain from the New World but he neither adopted the word "colony" nor advocated direct English involvement in overseas colonization. However, only two years later Eden's preface sought to recast Martyr's text as conclusive proof of the

efficacy of colonization.[23] Even his marginal glosses now stridently trumpeted the spurious material and spiritual gains brought to the native Indians by colonization (e.g., "The benefites that the Indians have receaved by the Spanyardes," Arber 50; and "The Indians subdued to the fayth," 52). Eden's twenty-nine pages of laborious introduction (in comparison with Martyr's three) blatantly sought to refashion the intellectual framework of the original *Decades*, primarily as a means of countering Protestant anti-Spanish sentiment. In Eden's edition, the *conquistadores* are praised, as Hadfield notes (14), "in a manner that is alien to both Peter Martyr's preface and his actual text." Furthermore, the idea of "exchange" is keenly adopted by Eden to imply that this process of voracious colonial conquest had been engendered largely through the beneficent workings of trade and commerce. As Hadfield rightly concludes (15): "The propagandist implications of Eden's words are obvious: the conquest of the Americas will be easy, will bring untold benefits and involves no moral dilemmas . . . the English have every reason to copy their great European rivals."[24]

Eden's recasting of the messages to be drawn from Martyr's narratives, as might be expected from such a determined (if newly converted) propagandist for Anglo-Spanish relations, is distinctive for its partiality and apparent indifference to the intellectual integrity of its source materials. Nor did Eden's translation even seek to convey the culmination of Martyr's careful revisions and additions to his own work since Eden apparently did not know of the 1530 Alcalá complete edition of the *Decades*. Otherwise, he would have recognized the *Fourth Decade* as the one first printed in Basle, which he called the third decade in his translation. Instead, working probably exclusively from the 1533 Basle edition, Eden was using a text of the first three decades itself based, in the main, upon the 1516 Alcála edition. [25]

For Eden, working in 1554/55 from a narrative source that was by then almost forty years out of date, Martyr's *Decades* provided perhaps little more than a convenient basis for the theory ("assertion" is probably a more accurate word) that the actions of colonizers could provide a model for social unity; and that imperial expansion, cloaked in the guise of missionary zeal, could stimulate both internal and external cohesion. As Hadfield's eloquent reading of the encounter between Balboa and

Comogrus's son so powerfully illustrates, the native in Eden's translation becomes a figure of multiple and contradictory identities: an alien form of human life, embroiled in self-destructive violence and ripe for salvation through forced conversion; a "noble savage" capable of holding up a mirror to European colonialist excesses; or even a passively willing convert to Spanish domination (symbolized by Comogrus's own act of self-negation and reverence in changing his name to Charles). In Eden's hands, Martyr's subtle exposition of humanist concepts of historical narration and his sense of an ongoing geographical (re-)definition of the known world are subverted into the mercenary service of a partisan view of Anglo-Spanish relations in the mid-1550s. Just as Comogrus's submissive name-change symbolised his total acceptance of European rule, so Eden invites his own readers to embrace without further question the example of Spanish imperialism—and, it might be argued, to betray (at least from an early-Elizabethan perspective) their own sense of an English Protestant national identity.

While Eden's 1555 volume surrounded the *Decades* with its own specifically pro-Spanish definitions of colonial expansionism, printed translations into other languages of Martyr's work—most notably into Italian (Venice, 1563, a reprint of a 1534 text) and Dutch (Antwerp, 1563, from the 1534 German edition)—continued to foster Martyr's reviving reputation throughout both Catholic and Protestant Europe as a reliable interpreter of early New World discoveries.[26] His authority was further bolstered by the influential 1574 Cologne edition of *De rebus oceanicis et novo orbe, decades tres [i.e., four] Petri Martyris ab Angleria Mediolanensis.*[27] Perhaps stimulated by the positive reception of this Latin edition, in 1576-7 Richard Willes undertook what appears to have been a shrewdly calculated conversion of Eden's 1555 Marian, pro-Spanish translation into a more acceptable volume for an early-Elizabethan, Protestant readership.[28] Willes was Eden's literary executor and, if the account of his career by E. Irving Carlyle in the *Dictionary of National Biography* is to be accepted, Willes's shifts in religious and political loyalties—an Oxford educated Jesuit who renounced his Catholicism to make a profession of Protestant conformity—were as complex as Eden's had been during the Protectorate of Northumberland and the reign of Mary.

Willes's dedication of the 1577 edition to Bridget, Countess of Bedford, makes abundantly clear his two major objectives in republishing Eden's 1555 text. Firstly, it seems reasonable to assume that he wished to associate Martyr's *Decades* with the current popular interest occasioned by the publication of Humphrey Gilbert's *A discourse of a discoverie for a new passage to Cataia* (1576), *STC* 11881, and Martin Frobisher's first two voyages in search of this route (1576, 1577). But above all, Willes also sought to confirm the academic status of geography as an intellectual discipline worthy of the attention of university scholars and court patrons. He strongly emphasised, therefore, his desire to provide a reliably updated and corrected reference manual of New World matters for Elizabethan Protestant readers of the 1570s.[29] Concluding with an overt plea for personal preferment, Willes hoped that when he died, "some other professor of Cosmography" would do the same for his writings (sig. [***]3^{r}).

Following a minor 1582 Basle edition in German (based on the 1521 Basle text in Latin and the 1534 Strasbourg text in German of the *Fourth Decade*), what might be regarded as the culmination, in terms of geographical worth and editorial care, of the publishing history of Martyr's works was reached in the 1587 Paris edition, *De orbe novo Petri Martyris Anglerii Mediolanensis, protonoarij, & Caroli Quinti senatoris decades octo, diligenti temporum observatione, & utilissimis annotationibus illustratae*, edited by Richard Hakluyt with a Latin dedicatory epistle to Sir Walter Raleigh.[30] In this address, dated 22 February 1587, Hakluyt casts a sharp eye over both the contradictions inherent in Spanish imperialism and the scholarly achievements of Peter Martyr. The following passage illustrates Hakluyt's judicious tone:

> For he [Martyr] has published to the whole Christian world in his learned commentaries all that the Spaniards have achieved, whether praise- or blame-worthy, in a space of four and thirty years, on land and on sea, partly in the discovery of the vast regions of the New World, partly in subjecting them to the power of Castile, starting his account from the very first beginnings, and diligently preserving both the careful description of places, and the succession of events . . . he depicts with a distinguished and skilful pen and with lively colours in a most gifted manner the head, neck, breast, arms, in brief the whole body of that tremendous entity America, and clothes it decently in the Latin dress familiar to scholars. And so often as the events themselves demand he

> examines the hidden causes of things, inquires into the hidden effects of nature, and from the innermost shrines of his erudite philosophy he draws comments which he frequently introduces like brilliant ornaments of his style the fairest of gems.(363)[31]

Hakluyt's carefully crafted words of commendation take the reader back in time, past the transitory and partisan manipulations of Eden's 1555 English translation, to appreciate once more Martyr's importance as a recorder of first-hand accounts of exploration and conquest. Nor does Hakluyt hesitate to raise the complexities inherent in interpreting what we would now call (and what he also appears to recognize as) a "colonial text":

> If turning aside from the plants of the earth and the brutes of the field, we consider what he says of mankind and our own species, what Cicero, what Sallust, what Caesar or Tacitus has written with greater elegance, brevity, lucidity or more weightily or with greater fidelity of the manners of peoples, the positions of cities, the foundations of colonies, the cults of idols, the rites of sacrifice, the passions of war, the kinds of armaments, the feuds of neighbours, the jealousies of families, the results of battles, the states and the changes of kingdoms? . . . In many passages he praises the constancy of the Spaniards and their stubborn spirit, and with the warmest approbation he recounts their endurance in thirst, hunger, dangers, toils, watches, and in their frequent troubles. But, at the same time, he also records their avarice, ambition, butchery, rapine, debauchery, their cruelty towards defenceless and harmless peoples, and occasionally the disasters suffered by their warriors and the slaughter of their armies at the hands of uncivilised races, and those too unarmed, and, so far is he from the suspicion of adulation, that he hunts out with the utmost perseverance crimes committed by them. (363-64)

While, of course, Hakluyt's dedication to Raleigh is very much in keeping with English attitudes towards Spain in the year before the attempted Armada invasion, it also deftly reshapes Eden's original intention in translating the *Decades* into English. Hakluyt explains that he put together this edition:

> . . . partly that other maritime races, and in particular our own island race, perceiving how the Spaniards began and how they progressed, might be inspired to a like emulation of courage. For he who proclaims the praises of foreigners, rouses his own countrymen, if they be not dolts. (365)

But unlike Eden who could offer his English readers only a collaborative and subordinate association with the might of the Spanish empire,

Hakluyt holds up Martyr's *Decades* as an inspiration for an independent and vigorous English imperialism.[32] And at the very centre of this nationalistic spirit is placed the presiding figure of Raleigh, who in 1584 had been granted a patent to take possession of unknown lands in America in Queen Elizabeth's name, leading to the ill-fated Virginia settlement of Sir Richard Grenville of 1585:

> There yet remain for you new lands, ample realms, unknown peoples; they wait yet, I say, to be discovered and subdued, quickly and easily, under the happy auspices of your arms and enterprise, and the sceptre of our most serene Elizabeth, Empress—as even the Spaniard himself admits—of the Ocean. (367)

Hakluyt's address coincided with a second but no more successful attempt to colonize Virginia in 1587, under the governorship of John White at Roanoke. It also may be interpreted as providing, albeit indirectly, an authoritative support to Thomas Hariot's *A brief and true report of the new found land of Virginia* (1588), *STC* 12785, widely regarded as one of the most determinedly propagandist colonial texts of the mid-Elizabethan period.

Hakluyt's 1587 Latin edition of Martyr's *Decades* also played a major part in the Jacobean resurrection of Martyr's reputation, when in 1612 Michael Lok, a former Governor of the ill-fated Cathay Company (1577) and Consul for the Levant Company at Aleppo (1592-94), assembled a new English translation, based in part upon Eden's 1555 edition, with the last five books translated from Hakluyt's 1587 text.[33] Jacobean interest in American colonialism had been strong since James's refusal in 1604 to recognize Spanish claims to a monopoly of trade and territory in most of the New World; and Michael Lok's personal associations with Hakluyt dated back well into the reign of Elizabeth.[34] An English settlement had been made at Jamestown in Virginia in 1607, recorded in Captain John Smith's *A true relation of Virginia* (1608); and it is clear from Lok's Latin dedication to Sir Julius Caesar (A3^{r}-4^{v}) and his preface "To the Reader" (B1^{r}) that Lok sought to republish Martyr's *Decades* as timely propaganda for this project. Detailing how Martyr's book "containeth the first discovery of the west Indies, together with the subjection, and conquest therof," Lok proposes:

> All whiche, may bee exemplary unto us, to performe the like in our *Virginea*, whiche beeing once throughly planted, and inhabited with our people, may returne as greate benefitte to our Nation in another kinde, as the Indies doe unto the Spanyard. (sig B1^{v})

Alongside these colonial concerns, we should also note that the 1612 edition probably only came about because of some specific commercial considerations within the Stationers' Company. In 1611 Thomas Adams, then a Junior Warden of the Company, had acquired the copyrights of the late George Bishop, including shares in Hakluyt's *Voyages*, Camden's *Britannia*, and the *Chronicles* of Holinshed and Stow. A compact quarto volume of Martyr's *Decades* would have fitted well with these and other of Adams's own copyrights at this period, which included Richard Knolles's, *A historie of the Turkes* (1611), a Latin edition of Castiglione's *The Courtier* (1612), and Philemon Holland's translation of Pliny's *History of the World* (1611).

This 1612 text was reissued, probably in about 1625, in the first instance as a means of using up unsold stock.[35] In 1625 Andrew Hebb succeeded to Thomas Adams's shop, the Bell in St Paul's Churchyard, to whom he had formerly been apprenticed. In subsequent years, Hebb either owned or had shares in several major works once possessed by Thomas Adams, including Camden's *Britannia* (1637), Spenser's *The shepheardes calender* (1631), and the *Works* (1632) of Josephus. But it also seems probable that Hebb's commercial instincts in publishing Martyr's *Decades* were fuelled by the taking over in 1624 of the Virginia settlement (then about 1,200 people) by the Crown as England's first royal colony.

Similarly, this same version of Martyr's *Decades* was again reissued in 1628, this time by the stationer Michael Sparke (notorious in 1633 as the publisher of William Prynne's *Histrio-mastix*), at a time of considerable English colonial activity in the region of the West Indies and the mainland of South America.[36] Following Raleigh's final voyage to the Orinoco in 1617-18, Roger North had succeeded in planting a small colony on the Amazon in 1619; and in 1627 he founded an incorporated Guiana Company. Within the traditional geographical realms of Spanish imperialism, the English made claims on Barbados and St. Christopher (1624-25), and Nevis, Antigua and Montserrat (1627-32), culminating

in 1627 with King Charles I's grant to the Earl of Carlisle of a proprietary patent for the colonization of all the Caribees.[37] Following this 1628 reissue, Martyr's *Decades* were not reprinted in English until the 1812 edition of Hakluyt's *Voyages*.

To conclude this bibliographical survey of Martyr's *Decades*, we may return briefly to the opening (1) of Andrew Hadfield's article, where he quotes David Read's advice: "we should be extremely cautious about hypostatizing a single, stable version of colonialism out of the flux that surrounds the early English activity in North America." By adding to Hadfield's informative critical perspectives a bibliographical context for the English (and more broadly European) access to Peter Martyr's *Decades*, this reply seeks to emphasise how an awareness of the specific circumstances of the publication of each individual edition or reissue of the *Decades* may inform our understanding of Spanish, Elizabethan, and Jacobean attitudes towards New World geography and colonialism.[38] The complex publishing history of Martyr's *Decades* between 1504 and 1628 clearly illustrates how a critical decoding of the language(s) of colonialism may also be complemented by a bibliographical awareness of the often divergent ways in which a text was made available in print to successive generations of readers.

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NOTES

[1]Anthony Pagden, *Lords of all the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500-c.1800* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995) 11, traces how Rome provided "the idealogues of the colonial systems of Spain, Britain and France with the language and political models they required."

[2]In his discussion of the preface to the 1516 edition of *De orbe novo decades*, Hadfield (10) provides a useful list of geographical and intellectual oppositions inherent to Martyr's presentation of his subject matter ("Spain / Italy, Unity / Fragmentation, Expansion / Contraction, Christianity / Paganism, Knowledge / Ignorance," etc.). Lorenzo Riber, *El Humanista Pedro Martir de Angleria* (Barcelona, 1964) provides a concise survey of Martyr's career and writings.

[3]Colin M. MacLachlan, *Spain's Empire in the New World: The Role of Ideas in Institutional and Social Change* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988) ix. MacLachlan (5) traces this impulse in historiography to "reorder reality" in part to the establishment of the University of Alcalá de Henares in 1498, which provided Erasmian humanism with a Castilian institutional base.

[4]*The First Three English books on America [?1511]-1555 A.D. Being chiefly Translations, Compilations, &c., by Richard Eden, From the Writings . . . of Pietro Martire . . . Sebastian Münster . . . Sebastian Cabot . . .*, ed. Edward Arber (Birmingham, 1885) 104 (henceforth Arber). I have modernizing Arber's text, to the standards detailed in note 2 of Hadfield's article.

[5]A bibliographical survey of Martyr's published works is provided in Pedro Mártir de Anglería, *Décadas del Nuevo Mundo: Vertidas del latin a la lengua castellana por el Dr. D. Joaquín Torres Asensio* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Bajel, 1944) xxiii-lii, henceforth *Décadas* (1944). Henry R. Wagner, "Peter Martyr and His Works," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 56 (1946): 239-88, should also be consulted, along with the relevant entries in vol. 17 of the *National Union Catalogue, Pre-1956 Imprints* (henceforth *NUC*) and vol. 5 of the *Catalogue of the British Library, Pre-1956 Imprints* (henceforth *BL Cat.*).

[6]See *Décadas* (1944) xxx-xxxi; *BL Cat.* 5. 531-2; *NUC* 17. 18; and Wagner 286-87. The most accessible modern edition of the letters is the *Epistolario*, Estudio y traducción por José López de Toro, 4 vols, Documentos inéditos para la Historia de España (Madrid, 1955-57). *Lettres de Pierre Martyr Anghiera relatives aux decouvertes maritimes des espagnols et des portugais*, tr. P. Gaffarel and F. Louvet (Paris, 1884-85) includes 43 letters on maritime discoveries translated from the 1670 edition of *Opus epistolarum*.

[7]Three letters in the Spanish edition of Martyr's letters (vol. 3, no. 540, pp. 159-60; no. 547, pp. 175-76; and no. 560, p. 203), for example, refer to Vasco Núñez de Balboa, whose exploits form a central part of Hadfield's article (2-12).

[8]Only two surviving copies of this 1504 edition are known: in the Library of San Marco at Venice (lacking title-page), and in the John Carter Brown Library, Providence, RI (Brown University), from which copy Lawrence C. Wroth edited a facsimile edition with introduction (Paris, 1929/30). See *Décadas* (1944) xxiv.

[9]See, for example, Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Southern Voyages A.D. 1492-1616* (New York: OUP, 1974) 19.

[10]Martyr later claimed that this printing was taken without his consent from a draft owned by a Venetian ambassador (presumably Trevisan) but, strangely, he made no mention of the 1504 printing of his *First Decade*. See Wagner 278-79, and *Décadas* (1944) xxv. Hadfield (19n2) states that the first three decades were published separately in Venice (1504), Seville (1511), and Alcalá (1511) [in fact, 1516] but he does not mention this 1507 Vicenza edition and its various reprints at Milan, Nuremberg, and Paris.

[11]See *Décadas* (1944) xxvi; *NUC* 17. 18; and Wagner 243-44.

[12]See *Décadas* (1944) xxvii. These three decades were translated into French and published at Paris in 1532 (see *NUC* 17. 16); and then reprinted in the original Latin at Basle in 1533. Some extracts were also printed in Italian in 1534 (see *NUC* 17. 17).

[13]Arber 63-64, prints a translation of this dedication.

[14]See Anthony Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination. Studies in European and Spanish-American Social and Political Theory 1513-1830* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990), chapter 1, "Dispossessing the Barbarian" 13-36.

[15]See *Décadas* (1944) xxix. The *Fourth Decade* was reprinted in the Basle 1532 edition of the *Novus orbis*; and was appended to the Antwerp edition (1536) of Brocard's

Descriptio Terrae Sanctae; and to the Rotterdam 1596 edition of the *Novus orbis*. See *NUC* 14. It was also included, with only minor changes, in the 1530 edition.

[16]See Wagner 252-55, for Martyr's sources for the *Fourth Decade*.

[17]See Pagden, *Lords of all the World* 44, for evidence of this image of the globally voracious Spanish.

[18]See *Décadas* (1944) xxx; and Wagner 256-58, for the contents of all eight decades. There is also an English translation of this edition by Francis Augustus McNutt, *De Orbe Novo: The Eight Decades of Peter Martyr D'Anghera*, 2 vols (1912; rpt. New York: B. Franklin, 1970).

[19]See Wagner 270; and Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990) 222. Morison, *Southern Voyages* 20, notes other borrowings from Martyr. *Décadas* (1944) xxxiii-xxxvi, details major editions of Martyr's works published between 1532-37.

[20]Sebastian Münster, *A treatyse of the new India . . . after the description of S. Munster* (1553, S. Mierdman f. E. Sutton), *STC* 18244. Boies Penrose, *Travel and Discovery in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1952) 314. See also Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise* 253-54.

[21]*The decades of the new worlde or west India. Written in Latine and tr. by R. Eden* (1555), *STC* 645. The potential commercial returns (and high production costs) for this 1555 edition are indicated by the number of stationers involved in its distribution: *STC* 645 (G. Powell for R. Jug), *STC* 646 (variant, with colophon, for W. Seres), *STC* 647 (for E. Sutton), and *STC* 648 (for R. Toy). See *Décadas* (1944) xxxvii; and Wagner 282.

[22]See also David Gwyn, "Richard Eden Cosmographer and Alchemist," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 15.1 (1984): 13-34.

[23]David B. Quinn, *Explorers and Colonies: America, 1500-1625* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1990) 102, notes how Eden made "the first clear call since [John] Rastell for English colonization in North America."

[24]Eden may have also been prompted to plead for the commercial exploitation of South America by a concomitant English interest in northern trade expansion, as indicated by the granting in 1555, in the name of Philip and Mary, of the charter of the Muscovy Company.

[25]A miscellany of other pro-Spanish material was also published with Eden's 1555 translation, including (Arber 201-04) Pope Alexander's Bull of Donation; (208-42) a translation of Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés's *The Natural history of the West Indies* (1526); (214-32) Antonio Pigafetta's *A briefe Declaration of the Vyage [sic] or Navigation made abowte the Worlde* [1519-22]. See Arber ix.

[26]See *Décadas* (1944) xxxviii-xl.

[27]See Hadfield 19n2; *NUC* 17. 15; and *BL Cat.* 5. 528.

[28]*The history of travayle in the West and East Indies . . . Done into Englyshe by R. Eden. Newly set in order, augmented, and finished by R. Willes* (1577), *STC* 649. See *Décadas* (1944) xl; and *Records of the Court of the Stationers' Company 1576 to 1602—from Register B*, ed. W. W. Greg and E. Boswell (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1930) 2.

[29]Willes corrected Eden's error over the *Fourth Decade*, added an accessible abridgement of the last four decades, and provided in his "Preface to the Reader" (sig. Ooo3^{r} ff) an extensive list of corrections to the 1555 text. He also sought to reassess the geographical accuracy of Martyr's observations ("My profession enforced

me to cut of some superfluous translations, and to fill up the rest of his doinges with P. Martyr's other writinges [along with Eden's translation of Ludovico Barthema's *Travels in the East in 1503*], and finally to furnishe his want with my owne store," sig. [**]1^{v}).

[30]See *Décadas* (1944) xli for the 1582 Basle edition. See *ibid.* xli and *NUC* 17. 15, for the 1587 Paris edition. Hakluyt's edition has been reprinted (New York, 1869).

[31]*The Original Writings & Correspondence of the Two Richard Hakluyts*, vol. 2, with an introduction and notes by E. G. R. Taylor, The Hakluyt Society, 2nd ser., vol. 77 (London, 1935) 356-69. See also *The Hakluyt Handbook*, vol. 1, ed. D. B. Quinn, The Hakluyt Society, 2nd ser., vol. 144 (London, 1974) 293.

[32]James A. Williamson, *The Tudor Age* (London: Longman, 1953; rpt. 1979) 351-55 provides concise analysis of the economic background to mid-Elizabethan colonial tracts. He notes (353) how in 1584 Hakluyt addressed to the Queen, at Raleigh's instigation, his *Discourse of Western Planting*, advocating English exploitation of the New World as an answer to poverty and over-population. In 1585 Adrian Gilbert had also been granted a patent for the North West Passage.

[33]*De novo orbe, or the historie of the west Indies. Comprised in eight decades. Three, tr. into English by R. Eden, the other five, newly added by M. Lok* (1612), *STC* 650. See *Décadas* (1944) xlii.

[34]In 1582, for example, Lok had contributed a map detailing the possibilities for a North-West Passage to Hakluyt's *Divers Voyages*, which recounted John Cabot's original explorations and the potential of the New World for colonizing. See Williamson, *Tudor Age* 351.

[35]*The historie of the West-Indies. Published in Latin by Mr Hakluyt, tr. into English by M. Lok, Gent* (1625?), *STC* 651, reissued the pages of the 1612 edition, with the first quire cancelled and a new title-page, omitting entirely Richard Eden's name. Lok's preface "To the Reader" was retained. There has been considerable confusion over the date of this reissue: *Décadas* (1944) xliii, describes this edition, without explanation, as both "1626" and "1628"; and *NUC* 16-17, lists it as both "1605" and "1612."

[36]*The famous historie of the Indies: Published by L.M. Gent [i.e. M. Lok]. Second edition* (1628), *STC* 652, another reissue of the pages of the 1612 edition, with a new title-page. *Décadas* (1944) xliii, misdates this reissue as "1620." See also Wagner 283. Michael Sparke evinced a prolonged interest in colonial texts, publishing John Smith's *History of Virginia* (1624), Luke Foxe's *North West Fox* (1635), and Mercator's *Atlas* (1635).

[37]J. A. Williamson, *A Short History of British Expansion*, vol. 1: *The Old Colonial Empire* (London: Macmillan, 1922; rpt. 1930) 156, 211.

[38]This reply also seeks to clarify a persistent vagueness (or indifference) towards the publishing history of English translations of Martyr's *Decades*. To cite only two examples from well-respected authorities on the subject: Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Southern Voyages* 207, while examining Balboa's discovery of the Pacific, casually states that he has used "Richard Eden's translation of 1612" (in fact, Michael Lok's translation of Hakluyt and adaptation of Eden); and Boucher, *Cannibal Encounters* 25, states that the *Decades* were "translated by Richard Willes in 1577 and more completely by Michael Lok in 1612," without any mention of Richard Eden.

Connotations
Vol. 6.2 (1996/97)

An Answer to Maurice Hunt's "Modern and Postmodern Discourses in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*"*

DAVID LAIRD

I'm grateful to Maurice Hunt for his interrogation of issues linked to my piece on *The Winter's Tale*.[1] I'm also fascinated by what he takes to be its direction—different from the trail I try to mark. Starting with a review of my discussion of various discourses within the play, he acknowledges the attempt to locate those discourses in relation to similar or cognate discourses, vocabularies and styles of utterance, in other, non-theatrical texts of the period. The fascination begins when he comes to what he calls the larger strategy, namely, "one that involves postmodern and modern language practices" (83). He goes on to claim that my purpose is to locate particular discourses in an "implied grid of modern and postmodern languages in the play" (86).

The formulations are misleading. I do not identify postmodern practices in the play. My concern is with language or language practices in relation to historical origins and contexts. The approach is insistently local and historical, scaled to a particular linguistic and political environment, its terms and registers less free floating, less open-ended, than those upon which Hunt draws. If postmodernism becomes an issue, it is in connection with a line of argument put forward by recent critics who seize on disputed passages, dismiss them as meaningless, and conclude that the play is incoherent, that it resists what Stephen Orgel refers to as "a common sense interpretation."[2] Hunt is right to say that I seek to counter or, perhaps, qualify such claims by showing that the various discourses are key elements in the design of the play as a whole, functioning not only to locate individual characters but also to construct a network of meanings that connect the play to its time.

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*Reference: Maurice Hunt, "Modern and Postmodern Discourses in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*: A Response to David Laird," *Connotations* 5.1 (1995/96): 83-94.

Hunt and I disagree about these discourses; I argue that they are oppositional and competing; he takes them to be merely variants of each other, more similar than different, or, as he puts it, "the modern and postmodern idioms defined by Laird are, in a certain sense, problematically alike, so much so that other paradigms for defining modern and postmodern speech acts in the play recommend themselves" (84). Here I feel a decided tug in the direction of unfamiliar targets and concerns.

Hunt attributes to the essay distinctions that are not present and remains unpersuaded by those that are. He contends that the language practices of Hermione and Leontes are essentially similar. Both speakers are linguistic absolutists, alike in their insistence on oath-taking and oath-keeping and in their struggle to freeze meanings. It is no great stretch to conclude that they are also modernists. Their speech acts are "relatively intelligible and determinate in meaning," attributes which, according to Hunt, constitute the essential ingredients of modernism (83). Having decisively dealt with Leontes and Hermione, he shifts focus to the playwright: "In what sense does the 'absolute' language of the playwright Shakespeare differ from that of his mad alter ego Leontes?" (89). Hunt's answer is, of course, that there is no difference—Shakespeare becomes a modernist and, like Leontes, is determined to control the play of meanings. Where Leontes fails, Shakespeare succeeds, fixing meanings on paper, making them "essentially absolute in the form of the First Folio" (89). Here we're treated to the rather bizarre suggestion that among Shakespeare's accomplishments is the posthumous exercise of an inscription control that settles questions of meaning once and for all. At this point, we're encouraged to disregard chronology even as we venture beyond the boundaries of the original project.

The categories Hunt introduces shed an uncertain light on issues over which the play must have created intelligent concern for at least some members of its first audiences. To the extent that the play does manage to communicate, does resolve the linguistic negotiations it enters into, Hunt may have grounds for claiming it as an example of modernism. My objection is only that the label invites a certain vacuity or blankness. What my paper undertakes is, perhaps, more substantive, certainly more venturesome. It seeks at least a partial recovery of originary meanings and significations. It is premised on the notion that the effort to restore

a text to its historical and linguistic setting is something other than a fool's errand. It fastens on language practices that are local, that figure in the foreground of contemporary political controversy and debate.

If I have a quarrel with postmodern critics, it is with their reluctance to reckon with what a text might communicate or represent in certain contexts. There is a tendency to turn to other things before considering even the possibility that a text might meet the requirements of social discourse and intelligibility within a particular community. At risk is the recovery of meanings which, though inconclusive and contingent, open vistas, ways of seeing and responding, unblinkered by the urgencies and preoccupations of the present.

A case in point is the language used by Paulina in her efforts to minister to Leontes' rage. Although she is often portrayed as a "scold" character, her language is susceptible to historical interpretation. It brings into play discursive practices prescribed for the treatment of delusion in the medical literature of the period. When she speaks as Leontes' "physician," she claims an occupational and institutional authority grounded in the therapeutic and the healing arts. Reckoning with that authority and what it implies is likely to change or, at least supplement, a more familiar interpretation of her role.

One further comment. Hunt implies that I ignore puns and wordplay, unquestionably prominent features of the play. He then goes on to discuss Hermione's pun on*ward/word*. It is curious that what he says about its multiple meanings is an abbreviated version of the explication included in my essay. Similarly, he fails to recall or he misreads that part of the essay dealing with Leontes' paranoid fear of ambiguity—verbal as well as social and domestic.[3] On this point Hunt seems rather elusive, saying of Leontes that "puns are his chief vehicle for creating absolutist meanings" (87). I would agree if the claim is that puns together with the crossing or disordering of meanings they invite are understood to signify the instabilities, private and public, by which Leontes imagines himself threatened. My paper contends that the ambiguities that rattle the surface of his discourse are symptomatic of pressures leading him to adopt an absolutism that is reductive, unequivocal, and decisive. Ambiguities put monarchy at risk, unmanage the manageable, disorder the instruments of order. They are intricately implicated in the problem

of rule. The bitter, accusatory wordplay that darkens the tenor of Leontes' discourse represents not only a disordering of language but of monarchical authority as well. It invades and corrupts the loftier reaches of discursive space.

The various and conflictual ways in which wordplay is deployed throughout the play put additional strain on Hunt's argument about similar language use. Hermione's wordplay describes an openness, a range of possibilities, a discursive space with room to maneuver. Leontes' puns betray a bitterness, a sense of outrage, an anguished bewilderment and discord. In the first instance, the fluidity of language is liberating, in the other it threatens sanity and rule.

Leontes' recourse is to an absolutist rhetoric intended to rid language of its duplicities and indeterminacies, to name and stabilize a variety of social and political relationships. This defensive strategy takes on a special meaning when viewed in relation to similar projects undertaken by players on the stage of history. We might recall, for example, that James I at the opening of Parliament, March, 1604, assured his subjects that he would make of language an instrument of accurate, clear representation, banishing from his discourse such diseases as duplicity and ambiguity:

> . . . . it becommeth a King, in my opinion, to use no other Eloquence then plainnesse and sinceritie. By plainnesse I meane, that his Speeches should be so cleare and voyd of all ambiguitie, that they may not be throwne, nor rent asunder in contrary sences like the old Oracles of the Pagan Gods. And by sinceritie, I understand that uprightnesse and honestie which ought to be in a Kings whole Speeches and actions . . . .[4]

Like the Stuart monarch, Leontes locates himself with those upon whom the integrity of political and legal discourse must depend.

Leontes' determination to control discourse and his insistence on transparency and referentiality arise not because he is unaware of the instability of language or incapable of submitting to its drifting and uncertain currents, but precisely because he is. He brands such submission "mere weakness" and proceeds to act according to his own reductive version of events (II.iii.2).[5] Events move disastrously beyond his control, collapsing the categories and techniques by which an absolutist discourse reckons with, even tries to change reality. The

discourses upon which the play settles are less prone to failure. They acknowledge the contingency of language; their claims are provisional, unfinished, no longer rigid or enforcing.

In so far as this present exchange affords a glimpse beyond our own discursive practices, we give a form of witness to the authority and purposiveness of *The Winter's Tale*. In that aspect at least, we defer to the play, are subject to the sweep of its multiple meanings, even as we submit to *Connotations*.

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NOTES

[1]David Laird, "Competing Discourses in *The Winter's Tale*," *Connotations* 4.1-2 (1994/95): 25-43.

[2]"The Poetics of Incomprehensibility," *SQ* 42 (1991): 431-37.

[3]See Laird 30-31.

[4]*The Political Works of James I*, ed. Charles Howard McIlwain (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965) 280.

[5]*The Winter's Tale*, ed. J. J. P. Pafford, Arden Edition (London: Methuen, 1953).

Connotations
Vol. 6.2 (1996/97)

Joan Didion and "Company": A Response to John Whalen-Bridge*

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"TO BE CONTINUED" are the last words on the final page of Norman Mailer's long novel *Harlot's Ghost*. The ending is thus rendered problematic even beyond the author's characteristic ambiguities of outlook. But the phrase—as noted in John Whalen-Bridge's fine essay—resonates as well with questions regarding "Adamic" tradition as it plays into Mailer's later work, and as it persists (covertly or otherwise) in contemporary American writing more broadly surveyed.

Professor Whalen-Bridge, in his introductory and concluding remarks to "The Myth of the American Adam in Late Mailer," stresses the issue of "American Exceptionalism" with a view to defending Mailer's recent work (*Harlot's Ghost* in particular) against accusations of such heresy. Fair enough, to be sure, so far as it is true that authors in the "classic" American tradition have tended toward reflex refusal to recognize the political dimension of identity and experience as a primary force in American social and cultural dynamics. But in the main body of his discussion, while he persuasively maintains the continuity of his argument that Mailer "declares the futility of any search for 'a virgin land' or 'a world elsewhere' beyond political consequences" (to whatever extent "classic" American writers claim the reverse), Whalen-Bridge also considers *Harlot's Ghost* in a range of other interesting terms inviting a different order of response. American literary "continuations" of more than one sort, fanning out through the work of more than one author, are suggested by his discussion.

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*Reference: John Whalen-Bridge, "The Myth of the American Adam in Late Mailer," *Connotations* 5.2-3 (1995/96): 304-21.

Joan Didion has said that Mailer possesses (along with Fitzgerald, she suggests) an "instinct of the essence of things, that great social eye. It is not the eye for the brand name, not at all the eye of a Mary McCarthy or a Philip Roth. It is rather some fascination with the heart of the structure, some deep feeling for the mysteries of power."[1] This is borne out in Whalen-Bridge's probing of Mailer's fascination with ("treatment of" would be at once too pale and too conclusive a phrase) the Central Intelligence Agency in *Harlot's Ghost*. The CIA is the immediate subject of this novel, but in Mailer's analysis it is also an encompassing type—in something like the sense of Puritan typology, hence much more than merely a comparative "model" or "analogy"—of the subversion of American ideals in the name of those ideals, as if this were an inevitable result of the conflictive "essence" of American self-projection, since the founding of the Republic if not indeed since the first Colonial arrivals. *Harlot's Ghost* itself in this respect stands in a "classic" American tradition of engagement with certain primary American postulates, Emerson's notion of "the simple genuine self against the whole world" (as quoted by Whalen-Bridge) among them.

That Mailer's attraction to such an idea—at its core and in the context of its articulation no less a political than an apolitical notion—is adversarial and argumentative as well as participatory and affirming in no way negates its power (this too potentially as political as not). In the same way, Ralph [Waldo] Ellison's *Invisible Man* simultaneously affirms and refutes Emerson's famous exhortation, "Build therefore your own world," Ellison's epilogue feeding back into his prologue both the utter exhaustion of the attempt so to "build" and a sense of unexhausted possibility still fraught with political implication. So too Thomas Pynchon, in *The Crying of Lot 49*, celebrates as much as he ironically undermines the efforts of Oedipa Maas to decode her encrypted world (and hence to reconstruct it), even as Henry James, his initially ironic portrait of Isabel Archer notwithstanding, commits in the end to the counternarrative of *her* consciousness, a source of selfhood in the world, not simply of self-isolating refuge from it.

So as well, in novels by Joan Didion ranging from *A Book of Common Prayer* to *Democracy* to her recently published *The Last Thing He Wanted*, characters (including the author herself)—alienated from their American

identities yet also *as* Americans *de afueras*, outsiders, in various regions of American "interest" and "intelligence"—probe the gaps they themselves inhabit between American ideological theory and practice, between official American projections on the world and the world as otherwise available to more detached personal observation. Such protagonists no less than Mailer's Harry Hubbard are of the "Company" (in CIA parlance but in a far different sense than institutionally professed) of those for whom the twin dilemmas—and chimeras—of absolute autonomy on one hand, pure community on the other, are at once inescapable and necessarily unresolved.

There is indeed, as Whalen-Bridge puts it, "a political strain within the Adamic tradition," to whatever degree that tradition may be generally defined in terms of its presumption to transcendence of the political. Within this strain in turn, however, there has long been a lively argument in which many if not most American writers have taken part, an argument often if not always turning on tensions between the claims of self as against those of society, the essence of political life even where unacknowledged as such, rather than a presumption to choice for or against political *engagement*. And not just as a matter of conflict between figures who may be imagined (whether or not actual contemporaries) as argumentatively opposed in debate, but something also to be heard and seen in the conflicted voices and visions of many of these figures individually considered. The currency of Perry Miller's well-known "pairings" aside—William Bradford and Captain John Smith, Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin—or extrapolations forward in time from such paradigms of the "inward" vs. the "outward" view, each at odds with yet inherent in the other, Mailer's melding in Harry Hubbard of these prototypically American impulses, the "Company man" and the self-narrating isolato, not only fits the pattern but proclaims it. Who or what is "Adam," after all, but a character or concept consisting of two contradictory yet interdependent potentialities?

Whalen-Bridge unassailably makes the case for *Harlot's Ghost* as an exception to the proposition that (as he summarizes it) "Adamic ideology . . . stands between American novelists and political fiction of the first rank." (It is not altogether clear, from Whalen-Bridge's point of view

or that of those to whom he ascribes this proposition, what authors might best exemplify the first rank of political writing—Conrad? Kafka? Graham Greene? John LeCarré? What of someone like Robert Stone, if not indeed Mailer or, say, Didion?) But his essay serves less to establish an exception to a rule than to create new perspectives on the "rule" itself. It shows that *Harlot's Ghost* is a journey into "the heart of the structure" (in Didion's phrase) rather than a singular detour around it. But in the process it also suggests that "Adamic ideology," far from standing *between* the American novel and its prospects for political insight, is in fact by its very nature the problematic premise, not the oversimplifying prior assumption, to long-standing American novelistic inquiry into what John P. McWilliams has called (with primary reference to James Fenimore Cooper) the issue of "political justice in a republic."[2] American politics are profoundly, to this day, a reflection of America's deep preoccupation, not in literature alone but significantly enough in literary terms, with the notion of "a world elsewhere," in the manifest political consequences of its unattainability as well as in its recurrent, romantic allure.

This is demonstrable in the "classic" tradition, as Whalen-Bridge in effect makes clear through his triangulation of *Harlot's Ghost* with R. W. B. Lewis on one side and Lewis's detractors on the other. Whalen-Bridge means neither to bury nor to praise Lewis, but intends in the main instead to contextualize both viewpoints as parts of the problem at the self-embattled heart of Mailer's text. From Edwards to Emerson, but also in such as Cooper or Parkman, Melville or Margaret Fuller, James or Wharton, Howells or Clemens (to say nothing of the interrelations of Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain), seekings in the world and strainings beyond it clash and recombine, ultimately and always *within* a social reality that reasserts its claims, rather than *"Beyond!"* (the motto finally more subverted than sustained in *The House of Mirth*). In the work of these and other American figures—whether or not in the taking of explicit positions, more likely in the dramatization of divided awareness (which is not necessarily evasion or avoidance)—something like what Whalen-Bridge ascribes to Mailer, by way of quoting Richard Slotkin's advice to critics, is apparent: "We can only demystify our history by historicizing our myths—that is, by treating them as human

creations, produced in a specific historical time and place, in response to the contingencies of social and personal life."

More to the point here, however, in terms of a brief "response" to a skillful demonstration of the political reality of the apolitical impulse in the case of Mailer, is perhaps a word of contemporary comparison with a set of novels, and a novelist, on the surface utterly unlike *Harlot's Ghost* or its author, yet similarly drawn (once again in Didion's description of Mailer) by "some fascination with the heart of the structure, some deep feeling for the mysteries of power." (As with, say, James on Hawthorne, Twain on Cooper or Joyce Carol Oates on Chekov or Joyce, the speaker is also or even primarily speaking of his or her own art.)

In *A Book of Common Prayer* (1977), *Democracy* (1984) and *The Last Thing He Wanted* (1996), differently but with a cumulative consistency, Didion has sought to see the point at which history and personality converge, where lines of political force cross trajectories of presumptively autonomous self, in such intersections for her both the fact and the fiction of American pathologies of dream and delusion. That she finds a certain emptiness there—"cold at the very heart where one expects the fire,"[3] as she says in *The White Album* of emeralds on display in Bogotá—is part and parcel of her sense of the "truth," not a sense on her part that she has missed the mark.

Indeed, seeking the depths in a stone from outside the strength of its crystalline structure, feeling pulled into those depths along one's line of sight, like being *de afuera* from an America with which one is nonetheless involved, not least through acts of witness to its influence elsewhere in the world, has something in common with Harry Hubbard's position, both "in" and "out" of the present-day CIA as such to be sure, but also in the mythicized history and historicized myth of America more transhistorically understood, as well as deep within himself.

In uncertain narrative alliance with Grace Strasser-Mendana in *A Book of Common Prayer*, each in turn sparring with Charlotte Douglas over what "may or may not" in fact have happened, personally or in connection with covert American action in Central America, Didion explores the permeability in both directions of the membrane between

political action and personal self-definition, capacities for individual or collective self-deception abundant on all sides. In *Democracy* (in the title a reference to Henry Adams's novel of the same name), Didion appears as author of her own book, working within narrative contingencies and complicities toward clarification of Inez Victor Christian's position, vis-à-vis herself and in relation to America, affiliation with which she both assumes and denies in the aftermath of the war in Vietnam. In *The Last Thing He Wanted*, again self-named and functioning in the narrative itself as the "not quite omniscient author," Didion deals the cards yet also plays them as they lay. She tries to tell in counterpoint with others (in such tellings lies the tale, here and elsewhere in her work) of Treat Morrison and Elena McMahon, of their reciprocal subsumptions of personal and political "information" and "interest," in a Caribbean setting suffused with interminglings of American history and myth.

To some degree in the writing of all three novels, even in the published books as "finished" physical objects, Didion ongoingly conducts *both* an "Alpha" and an "Omega" manuscript (just as two such manuscripts make up Mailer's *Harlot's Ghost*). Each version refracts gaps in the other as together they drive toward a comprehensive understanding, confidence in the availability of which is at the same time radically undercut. A sense of "TO BE CONTINUED" is inevitably implied as each book concludes, beyond the extent to which this "sense of an ending" may be said to be common in the American novel from the start. And while they are anything but "sequels" or a "trilogy," the lack of traditional closure in each of these three works (if "closure" in fiction is even remotely "traditional" by now) endorses more than it calls into question the value of "continuing" speculation.

Such speculation is focused not only on what "may or may not" have happened (as Didion so often puts it), or indeed on the political or personal consequences (sometimes one and the same) of the sheer fact that "what happened happened" (in Michael Herr's phrase from *Dispatches*). It also entails—as it must in Didion's art no less than in that of Mailer, or for that matter (in receding-mirror sequence) than in Pynchon, Ellison or others in a *counter*-Emersonian tradition which is nevertheless a form of Adamic engagement—a continuing inquiry into

the discrepant spaces between American ideological theory and practice, between the self-narrations of myth and history. These are the regions, along the borders and in the margins, in which the American Adam, perhaps as well an American Eve, have always been problematically inscribed.

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NOTES

[1]Didion, Joan. "A Social Eye." *National Review* (20 April 1965) 329-30.

[2]McWilliams, John P., Jr. *Political Justice in a Republic: James Fenimore Cooper's America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

[3]Didion, Joan. "In Bogota," *The White Album* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979) 193.

Recently published in:

Anglistische Studien

Edited by Inge Leimberg

Inge Leimberg, *"Heilig öffentlich Geheimnis": Die geistliche Lyrik der englischen Frühaufklärung.*
Anglistische Studien, vol. 11. ISBN 3-89325-453-6. 562 pp. DM 128.00.

In this study the religious poetry of the English "Metaphysicals" is seen against the background of its own period as well as interpreted by way of close reading. Therefore, surveys and detailed analyses of individual texts go together. The main theme of Metaphysical Poetry is man's religious existence in the real presence of life. This is realized by showing the inviolable secret of revealed truth to be mirrored in everyday reality which rationalism and empiricism claim for their own. As a representative of New Philosophy which widened the rift between science and revelation, Bacon is frequently mentioned in this study. Opposite to his *Novum Organum* stands Kepler's *Harmonices Mundi* (dedicated to James I in 1619) as a basic text for the understanding of Metaphysical Poetry. It is Kepler, too, who provides the idea that God made heaven and earth playing with the *signaturis rerum*. This a homogeneous pattern for the poetic imitation practised by the Metaphysicals, and therefore a valuable criterion for the interpretation of their religious poetry.

Christiane Lang-Graumann, *"Counting Ev'ry Grain": Das Motiv des Allerkleinsten in George Herberts* The Temple.
Anglistische Studien, vol. 12. ISBN 3-89325-505-2. 350 pp. DM 98.00.

In George Herbert's *The Temple* the smallest particle in its different figurations as, for instance, atom, drop, crumb of dust, letter of the alphabet, or moment in time is a major motif. Its function in the structure of *The Temple* may be compared to a "golden chain" which makes for both unity and multiplicity in thought and meaning. The study thus focuses on the structural, semantic and metaphorical energy of the texts and tries to demonstrate, by way of close reading in a historical perspective, the multilevelled significance of the motif and its poetic presentation for the understanding of Herbert's art. Poems discussed in detail are "The Temper I," "Employment I," "The H. Scriptures I & II," "Church-monuments," "The Glimpse," and "The Odour."

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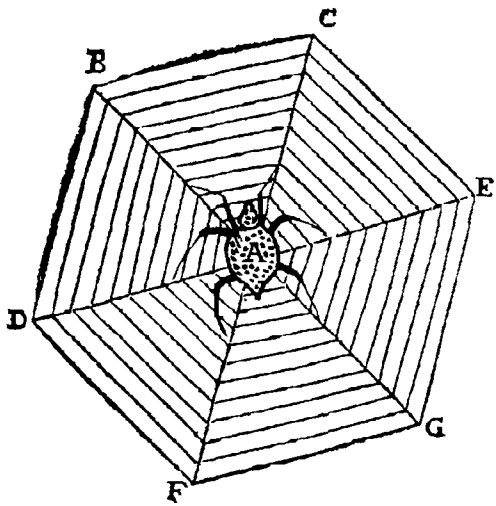

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