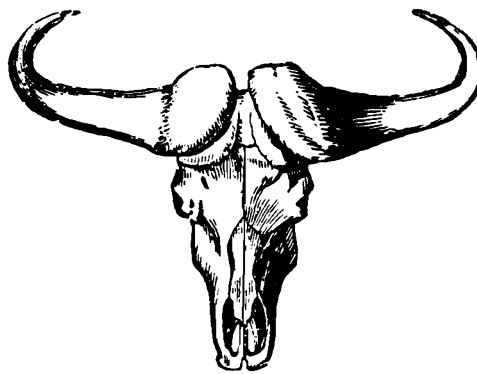
Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate



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ARTICLES

DISCUSSION

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"I am not Oedipus": Riddling the Body Politic in *The Broken Heart*

LISA HOPKINS

In 1988 Verna Ann Foster and Stephen Foster published an extremely incisive article in *English Literary Renaissance* in which they argued that close parallels between the situation in John Ford's play *The Broken Heart*, and the political history of the later years of Elizabeth I, made Ford's Sparta a clear analogue for Elizabethan England.[1] In particular, they pointed, as others have done before, to similarities between the tragic love-stories of Ithocles and Calantha and Orgilus and Penthea, and the real-life histories of the Earl of Essex, his sister Penelope Devereux, and the Queen herself. This, they suggested, is essentially the "truth" to which Ford refers in his prologue to the play.[2] They also perform the very unusual critical manoeuvre of reading *The Broken Heart* partially in relation to Ford's later play *Perkin Warbeck*, which dramatises the negotiations for the marriage of Margaret Tudor to James IV of Scotland;[3] this enables them to argue that the two works together represent both the beginning and the end of the dynastic path which eventually took the Stuart dynasty to the English throne.[4]

While agreeing substantially with every point of the Fosters' very telling analysis, I should like to take it one step further, by arguing that a concern about the relationships between different nations is not confined to *The Broken Heart*, or even to *Perkin Warbeck*, but is a recurrent element of Ford's dramatic work as a whole. I hope to develop their rare attempt at a syncretic reading of the apparently highly diverse Fordian canon to argue that, marginalised though it may occasionally appear, there is in fact a central focus in his work. What Ford seems to find of compelling interest is the nature of title and transmission of land, and the disputes which are likely to arise from conflicting territorial

interests. Intersecting centrally with Ford's own training as a lawyer, these concerns, and the related questions of colonisation, inheritance practice, and the admissibility of female rule, structure his repeated representations of land rights in the process of being claimed, willed or inherited, whether at home or abroad. This leads to a sustained focus not only on the *moment* of the change of dynasty but also on the *mechanics* of it, viewed within a far wider perspective on the underlying logic and structural particularities of the whole process of land inheritance.

I shall begin by examining Ford's own personal connections both with people interested in colonisation and with people interested in domestic land title, and then move on to a consideration of how such concerns are manifested and reflected in his plays, particularly in his use of the figure of Oedipus, who in contemporary thought was often associated with the question of land ownership and the true identity of the ruler. Finally, I shall attempt to develop a reading of *The Broken Heart* as a play which stages a variety of issues associated with land ownership and transfer, especially by will, in ways which recall and invite reflection on the processes involved in the accession of James I—although the political delicacy of the topic naturally prevents these from being fully worked through.

I. Ford and the Colonists

"What may be here thought fiction, when time's youth / Wanted some riper years, was known a TRUTH."[5] If *The Broken Heart* alludes to the story of Penelope Devereux and Philip Sidney, it is worth remembering that Sidney—son of Sir Henry Sidney, a prominent member of the Muscovy company—had strong colonialist interests.[6] The primary story of the play thus has its origins, essentially, at the outset of the English colonial enterprise; moreover, Ford throughout his life was associated with a wide variety of people who were intimately involved in colonial ventures.

One of the most important links between Ford's circle and the New World was Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel. Ford co-dedicated the

early *Honour Triumphant* (1606) to him, and members of Arundel's household or clientage, as I have demonstrated elsewhere, recur again and again in Ford's literary career in ways that suggest a connection between the two men more substantial than that which often seems to be indicated by the conferral and receipt of a dedication.[7] Arundel had a strongly developed interest in the colonial enterprise. His most recent biographer has spoken of

> his passion for the colonization of exotic lands. When he was young, Sir Walter Raleigh had been one of his heroes. Arundel had taken his eldest son to the castle at Winchester to witness Raleigh's execution in 1617 . . . . After the death of Raleigh he had kept his silver watch as one of his most precious relics . . . . It was Arundel's last venture into colonization which Van Dyck commemorated in a painting of 1639.[8]

The idea of leading colonists to Madagascar recurred from time to time in Arundel's life, almost always in connection with the ups and downs of his rather tumultuous political career. Gordon McMullan remarks that "the correlation between radical preference in politics and interest in colonial venture is striking,"[9] and this is certainly true in Arundel's case: his preference for aristocratic rule, his entrenched discontent at the failure by first James and then Charles to restore him to his hereditary dukedom of Norfolk, and his perilous financial situation all led him to look wistfully overseas.[10] Madagascar was also one of the destinations of the eleven exploratory expeditions equipped by George Clifford, third Earl of Cumberland, whose only child Anne was later to become the second wife of Ford's dedicatee Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery and Pembroke.[11] (The longstanding connections between the Herbert family and Ford's maternal relatives the Stradlings, who were South Welsh neighbours, bolster the link provided by the dedication).

Others who were politically associated with Arundel developed similar interests. The Earls of Newcastle (by his earlier title of Lord Cavendish) and Pembroke, dedicatees of *Perkin Warbeck* and *Christ's Bloody Sweat* respectively (Pembroke was also, with Arundel, one of the sharers of the dedication of *Honour Triumphant*) are listed among "the chief Adventurers" of the Virginia Company.[12] Pembroke's circle included

Sir Thomas Roe, who had visited the Great Moghul in India,[13] and Newcastle was one of the supporters of Sir Edwin Sandys in his bid for the position of Treasurer of the Company, a move which in itself had radical implications, given James I's dislike of Sandys' politics and his furious injunction, "Choose the devil, if you like, but not Sir Edwin Sandys."[14] Ford himself contributed commendatory verses to Captain Charles Saltonstall's *The Navigator* (1636), "a work explaining both the theoretical and practical aspects of "the famous Art of Navigation."[15] Additionally, Ford was connected, through his grandmother's family the Stradlings of St Donat's, with Sir Thomas Button, the explorer of Hudson Bay, a Glamorganshire man whose wife, Mary, was the sister of Henry Rice, an historian in whom both Pembroke and Arundel took an interest;[16] and it was Ford's great-uncle on his mother's side, Lord Chief Justice Sir John Popham, who had presided over Raleigh's trial. A Captain George Popham, who may well have been another relative, gave details of the Guiana coastline to Robert Dudley's expedition, and brought back news about El Dorado.[17]

Ford's Welsh connections, too, could well have led him to awareness of the Elizabethan *magus* John Dee. Dee made a solitary, bizarre attempt to ground the entire colonial enterprise in Welsh legend and tradition by invoking the mythical figure of Prince Madoc, popularly supposed to be the original discoverer of America, to legitimate Elizabethan claims to empire.[18] The Stradlings themselves were also personally associated with travel; Sir Edward Stradling in his account of the *Winning of the Lordship of Glamorgan* includes the story of his ancestor Sir Harry, who died at Famagusta on his way back from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (something undertaken also by others of the family).[19] A Stradling daughter resided at Louvain with Jane Dormer, Duchess of Feria, who was both the wife of a Spanish grandee and the niece of Sir Henry Sidney;[20] and Sir Edward Stradling's heir, Sir John, wrote complimentary epigrams to such major figures in the history of exploration as Drake, Hawkins, and the two Welsh captains Thomas Morgan and Roger Williams,[21] as well as interesting himself in the relative seagoing capabilities of the Dutch and the Spanish, and the question which of the two posed the greater threat to English dominion over the oceans.[22] Sir John also wrote a treatise, "The Storie of the Lower Borowes of

Merthyr Mawr," centring on a local property dispute, which precisely concerned the rights and wrongs of land ownership and the means by which these could be established.[23]

Gordon McMullan has recently argued that Jacobean theatre as a whole was particularly interested in representing the encounters of the Old World and the New, almost always in a largely negative light. He comments that "several apologists for colonization cite "plaiers" as specific enemies of Virginia. Ralph Hamor's *True Discourse of the Present Estate of Virginia* (1615) rails at "Papists *and* Plaires, Ammonites *and* Hororites, *the Scumme and dregges of the people,* [who] *mocke at this holy Businesse.*"[24] The reference to Ammonites and Hororites here makes it sufficiently clear that "Papists" and "Plaires" are effectively being used as similarly demonising terms, but it can also serve to remind us that Ford was associated not only with the theatre but possibly, as I have argued elsewhere, with Catholicism as well.[25] Though some Catholics might, according to the account quoted by McMullan, disapprove of exploration, others saw in it a promising opportunity for the militant evangelism of the Spanish to win new converts to the faith: there were, for instance, alarmed Protestant complaints "that the natives of the Congo are converted with Catholic pomp that "is able to allure any simple Man or Woman, even with the very sight thereof."[26] For this reason amongst others, perhaps, one would expect Ford to have been acutely alive to the issue of colonisation.

II. The New World in Ford's Plays

At first sight, Ford's personal connections with people involved in the English colonial enterprise may seem to have left little mark on his work. There are traces, however, throughout his plays of an informed interest in exploration. Cyrus Hoy sees one such allusion in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore,* Ford's play about the love between an incestuous brother and sister, Giovanni and Annabella:

> O, the glory
> Of two united hearts like hers and mine!

> Let poring book-men dream of other worlds;
> My world and all of happiness is here ...
> ['*Tis Pity* V.iii., p. 151]

This of his love for Annabella; and one is reminded of the famous lines in Donne's "The good-morrow":

> Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
> Let Maps to other, worlds on worlds have showne,
> Let us possesse one world, each hath one, and is one.[27]

What is explicitly referred to in the Donne is surely implicitly present in the Ford also; the "other worlds" are not merely those which may be dreamed of, but those which have actually been discovered. Donne's son George supplied commendatory verses for *Perkin Warbeck*, and other links between the families may serve to strengthen the probability that Ford here does not merely remind us of Donne but is, in his typically magpie way, deliberately alluding to him.[28]

A more obvious reference to discovery comes in Ford's last play, *The Lady's Trial*. The braggart Spanish soldier Guzman (like Perkin Warbeck, a pretender to splendid ancestry) refers to:

> Our cloak, whose cape is
> Larded with pearls, which the Indian cacique
> Presented to our countryman De Cortez
> For ransom of his life . . . .[29]

The play turns again to the language of exploration, when the deceitful Adurni says to the virtuous heroine Spinella, whom he is trying to seduce:

> Now could I read a lecture of my griefs,
> Unearth a mine of jewels at your foot,
> Command a golden shower to rain down,
> Impoverish every kingdom of the East
> Which traffics richest clothes and silks . . . .
> (II.iv., p. 41)[30]

Less visibly, it may also be possible to discern the pressure of new ideas concerning race and identity elsewhere in Ford. In his recent book on the historical Perkin Warbeck, who claimed to be the younger of the

Princes in the Tower, Ian Arthurson offers the striking thesis that "Exploration and Africa are the connecting factors common to all who knew Perkin."[31] It is immediately after his description of the death of Perkin that Ford's source Bacon, with only the briefest of intervening paragraphs, goes on to discuss the New World explorations of Cabot and Columbus.[32] While there is little enough trace of this in Ford's play, it would nevertheless be possible to argue that its careful depictions of English, Scots, Irish, Welsh, French, Burgundians and Spaniards, in complex counterpoint with each other, register a concern with issues of national identity.[33]

Perkin Warbeck's combination of innate dignity and dubious legitimacy also offers close parallels with one of the thorniest questions thrown open by the English colonial venture, that of the proper position of native rulers, in whom the claims of class and of race came into direct conflict. Gordon McMullan sees this as one of the major concerns of Fletcher's play *The Island Princess*, which, he argues, allows Fletcher to explore "the peculiarly complex question of the psychological payoff that the colonists had to make between their contempt for natives who seemed to them to be less than human and their reverence for royalty of any nationality and creed."[34] It is an issue similar to that raised in *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, where the good king Euarchus argues for a relativity of royalty that reduces princes to the status of commoners if they once leave the land of those who naturally owe them allegiance,[35] and it seems to be encoded within the text of *Perkin Warbeck* itself in the play's teasing reference to the case of the Earl of Menteith and Strathearn. In a controversy which came to a head just as Ford was writing his play, the Earl, through the marriage of one of his ancestresses, laid claim to the *de jure* monarchy of Scotland, despite the *de facto* possession of the Stuarts. Ford, as Peter Ure has shown, briefly but unmistakably alludes to the affair.[36] The Menteith / Strathearn case offered a particularly vivid illustration of the fact that the question of ownership of territory was not confined to the colonial enterprise; it was also very much a live issue nearer home, in the prolonged struggle over Ireland and, in particular, in the political manoeuvrings surrounding King James' beloved Union, which the Fosters see as so directly imaged in *The Broken Heart*.[37] Both at home and abroad, therefore, Ford and his audience

would have been aware of numerous debates about the complexities of ownership, rule, and right—issues so knotty that they could, famously, be resolved by only one man: Oedipus, who will prove to be a crucial point of reference in the complex plot of *The Broken Heart*.

III. Cujus est terre?

When Tecnicus in *The Broken Heart* prophesies disaster to both Ithocles and Orgilus, his former pupil claims not to understand him. The play will prove Tecnicus' warning to have been abundantly justified: Orgilus' lust for revenge, after Ithocles thwarted his marriage to Penthea, will bring about the deaths not only of himself, Ithocles, and Penthea, but of the Princess Calantha, heir to the throne, who was in love with Ithocles and dies of a broken heart, leading the rule of Sparta to pass to her cousin Nearchus, Prince of Argos. Orgilus, however, dismisses the caution with the curt "Dark sentences are for Apollo's priests. / I am not Oedipus" (IV.ii.140-41). T. J. B. Spencer's note on the line comments, "the proverbial expression derived from Terence, *Andria* 194 (I.2.23): *Davus sum, non Oedipus* (who solved the riddle of the Theban sphinx)." The riddle which Oedipus solved was a complex one; famously, it concerned human identity, with situational undertones, like the riddle in *Pericles* (and like the plots of both *'Tis Pity* and *The Broken Heart*) of incest; but it also contained within itself the answer to a problem about *national* identity, and the proper ownership of land. The rule of Thebes had been a matter of fierce dispute since Cadmus sowed the dragon's teeth; it was to continue to be so when Oedipus' sons Eteocles and Polynices fought each other to death for the right to the succession. When Oedipus breaks the Sphinx's power over the land he apparently achieves a brief interlude in this history of disputed ownership; in fact, however, he can equally be seen as merely redefining the same debate in more complex terms. The very title of *Oedipus Tyrannus* forces us to make certain assumptions about the nature of Oedipus' claim to the throne which the unfolding narrative proves to be utterly false. Oedipus is revealed by the end of the play as not the *tyrannus* of Thebes—the *de facto* ruler—but the *basileus*, the hereditary, *de jure* monarch who can

claim through his legitimate descent from the last male ruler. He is, moreover, a monarch whose identity is, in appropriately Renaissance style, literally inscribed on his body, in the deformity of the feet which clinches his identification with the lost child of Laius and Jocasta.[38] Ironically, of course, this does not in itself ensure the succession; Eteocles and Polynices both proceed to claim the throne on precisely these grounds and thus, *Gorboduc*-like, plunge the state into civil war. (Their story is, suggestively, alluded to in the very first paragraph of Thomas Gainsford's *History of Perkin Warbeck*, one of the principal sources for Ford's own *Perkin Warbeck*).[39] Oedipus' ostensible moment of triumph in disempowering the Sphinx and asserting his own rule instead proves merely to have laid bare the problematics of rule and of land ownership itself, just as the accession of James VI to the throne of England similarly brought such questions to the fore, since "as a foreigner he faced a common law prohibition about alien land inheritance in England."[40]

There is clear evidence that it was precisely in these terms that at least some Renaissance authors viewed the story of Oedipus. Such a context is certainly applicable to Thomas More's famous remark to his daughter Margaret, *"Non sum Oedipus, sed Morus,"* with the clever pun on the similarity between his own surname, More, and the Greek word for folly, Moria, which had already been exploited in Erasmus' *Moriae Encomium*. More's play on words was made precisely at a time when he had explicitly refused to intervene in questions of sovereignty by neither subscribing to the Act of Succession nor overtly condemning it. Moreover, he develops the Oedipus reference by his resonant comparison of Henry VIII with a lion—the Sphinx had the body of a lion joined to a human head.[41] Riddles in general, though not that of Oedipus in particular, featured again in the 1549 rebellion of Robert Kett, as Steven Mullaney points out: "the rebellion . . . was guided from beginning to end by 'fayned prophecies' that seemed to promise success to the rebels' cause but were in fact 'as ambiguous as those uttered by older and more famous soothsayers.'"[42] There is also an interesting reference to the myth of Oedipus to be found in the writings of Elizabeth I herself, translating Plutarch:

Edipus busy serche did wrap him in most harmes.
For whan of himself he axed, as he no Corinte wez
But guest, he met with Laius, who after kild he had,
And mother his own in marriage tok, with whom he got kingdom
With dowary hers; whan than happy he thoght he was,
Againe he questioned who he was, wiche whan his w[ife] wold let,
More earnest he, the old man as guilty he wer rebuked,
Omitting no good menes to make bewrayd al that was hid.[43]

Of course this is a translation rather than an original interpretation; but it would be hard to believe that the Renaissance queen, whose own right to the throne had been a matter of so much dispute, did not note with interest the statement that the kingdom came to Oedipus by right of his wife's dowry.

A similar undercurrent attaches to Ben Jonson's use of the motif, when he has Arruntius in *Sejanus* say "By Jove, I am not Oedipus enough / To understand this Sphinx" at precisely the moment when the succession to Tiberius, in the immediate aftermath of the death of his son Drusus, is to be discussed.[44] Far more explicit, though, is a comment found in the seventeenth-century life of Sir Rhys ap Thomas written by Henry Rice, protégé of the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke, where he refers to "the russling days of Henrie the Sixt and Edward the Fourth, when we weare at our *Cujus est terre*? Abner's question: and noe Aedipus then living to resolve the same."[45] This work, written by a man with intimate connections both with the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke and with Ford's Stradling relatives, touches on the period treated by Ford in *Perkin Warbeck*. Unlike Bacon, but like Ford, it uses the correct version of Sir Rhys ap Thomas' name, which may suggest that Ford was borrowing from it; so its specific equation of Oedipus with solving questions of land ownership is particularly noteworthy.

Questions of land ownership and of rightful rule recur throughout the Ford canon. Both *'Tis Pity* and *The Lady's Trial* are set in Italian cities which are pointedly represented as non-autonomous: the Genoa of *The Lady's Trial* is subject to Florence, the Parma of *'Tis Pity* to the nepotistic power of the Papal Legate. In *Perkin Warbeck*, not only the crown of England but the ownership of the Scottish border towns are at stake, after James IV opportunistically seizes the presence of Perkin Warbeck

at his court as an opportunity to harry the north of England. In *The Broken Heart*, the events of the central love stories are tellingly framed by an alternative narrative of land acquisition, first by warlike means, as figured first in the Spartan general Ithocles' conquest of Messene, and ultimately by the peaceful inheritance of the throne of Sparta by Argos. No sooner can King Amyclas announce that "Laconia is a monarchy at length" (I.ii.13) than its royalty must give way to effective annexation by Argos.

Orgilus disclaims an Oedipal identity (just as the relation between the brother and sister Ithocles and Penthea, despite her husband Bassanes' suspicions and the potential parallel with *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, is not, in this play, incestuous). The Fosters argue that this is a play which, while repeatedly evoking similarities between dramatic characters and historical personages, always defies definitive identifications and equations by jumbling up and redistributing the salient features and characteristics; this is, perhaps, true also of mythical personages, and the issues at stake are in any case too delicate to admit of blatant topical equivalences of any sort. Orgilus is, though, significantly associated with riddling. At his sister Euphranea's wedding, he remarks that she looks

> As if her chaster fancy could already
> Expound the riddle of her gain in losing
> A trifle maids know only that they know not. (IV.iii.61-63)

But whereas Oedipus, in his representation by Sophocles, is centrally concerned with identifying himself with the good of the state, Orgilus consistently ignores the political dimension of his actions and sees them entirely in terms of private revenge, resolutely pursuing his own agenda of punishing Penthea's brother Ithocles for preventing their marriage and forcibly bestowing Penthea on the middle-aged, jealous Bassanes. Orgilus is not indifferent to the lure of a wider arena, but his intersection with it is, notably, confined by his consistent, hypocritical encouragement of Ithocles to see himself as a public being. His own world is the very different one of cloaks, scholars' retreats, private gardens, and trick chairs in secluded places—pointedly contrasted with the public, civic nature

of the deaths which the bereaved Princess Calantha eventually engineers for him and for herself.

Defining himself purely in terms of personal identity, Orgilus also disclaims a national identity. Refusing to identify himself with his country of origin, he becomes the only character in *The Broken Heart* for whom a change of social environ is not fraught with significance. He opens the play by proposing to go to Athens. To his father Crotolon, the very name of Athens immediately invokes a whole series of customs and agendas:

> Athens? Pray why to Athens? You intend not
> To kick against the world, turn Cynic, Stoic,
> Or read the logic lecture, or become
> An Areopagite, and judge in causes
> Touching the commonwealth? (I.i.5-9)

The reputation of Athens will be confirmed for us later, too, when Amyclas refers to "those inventions / Which flow in Athens" (III.iii.58-59). To Orgilus, however, Athens means precisely not participation in public life, but escape from it: he represents himself as wishing to cease functioning as an irritant in the relationship of Bassanes and Penthea, and Athens is merely the place which he names as an interim asylum. Indeed we soon learn that for Orgilus, the idea of place has become irrelevant, as he concludes the scene with:

> Souls sunk in sorrows never are without 'em;
> They change fresh airs, but bear their griefs about 'em.
> (I.i.117-18)

For Orgilus, place, like public life, is immaterial; only the personal dimension exists.

In notable contrast, in the first conversation we see between Bassanes and Penthea themselves, place of residence does become an issue: This house, methinks, stands somewhat too much inward.

> It is too melancholy. We'll remove
> Nearer the court. Or what thinks my Penthea
> Of the delightful island we command?
> Rule me as thou canst wish. (II.i.103-07)

This speech, ostensibly concerned merely with the affective relationship between Bassanes and Penthea, touches on some more public issues, with its potent blending of "the court," the command of an island, and the final injunction to "rule me as thou canst wish." Spencer's notes compare this with Bianca's discontent in *Women Beware Women*, and additionally comment that "there is a certain geographical aptness in Ford's making a Greek nobleman own an island"; there is also a certain thematic appropriateness in the speech's negotiations of rule. Bassanes has inaugurated the exchange with conventional Petrarchan praise of Penthea; she demystifies the situation by referring to herself unambiguously as his "handmaid" (II.i.91). By offering her the rule over him, Bassanes attempts to re-interpellate her in the language of the erotic relationship he would wish to exist between them. This is, though, ironically undercut by the fact that the word "Rule" is in itself imperative, a command from him to her—as she makes clear when she immediately ripostes, "I am no mistress. / Whither you please, I must attend" (II.i.107-08). Equally, the mention of "rule" in connection with "islands" can be seen as an extension of the play's obvious concern with territorial rights, concern present even in its rudimentary comic relief: the returned soldier Hemophil promises, "I'll make thee mistress of a city; 'tis / Mine own by conquest" (I.ii.130-31), only to be rebuffed by Christalla with "By petition; sue for't / *In forma pauperis*. City? Kennel" (I.ii.131-32). Here, too, the association between women and land ownership echoes both the frequent figuring of colonies as feminine, and the use of maps and globes in the iconography of Elizabeth I.

Bassanes' strategies in attempting to represent Penthea as his mistress rather than his possession can be seen as paralleled by Penthea herself, in an apparently very different situation. Twice in this play Ford (himself, in whatever way, connected with the law)[46] represents women making their wills. On the first occasion, Penthea uses the device of the will as a deliberate obfuscation of her true intent; making her first legacies her youth and her fame enables a reading (albeit only temporarily) of her final donation of her brother Ithocles to the Princess Calantha as something similarly abstract. This, as in the similarly ornate language of Orgilus on the subject, obscures the potential political dynamite of the non-dynastic marriage which she here seems to advocate (III.v.35-78).

The conceit of Penthea's will both prefigures, and conditions our reception of, Calantha's testament. Again, her intentions are disguised; while Penthea concealed the arrangement of a marriage as a will, Calantha, with neat irony, presents her testament to her cousin Nearchus as the "articles I would propose to treat on / Before our marriage" (V.iii.40-41). Her speech brings us back to where the Fosters began:

> I would presume you would retain the royalty
> Of Sparta, in her own bounds: then in Argos
> Armostes might be viceroy; in Messene
> Might Crotolon bear sway . . . (V.iii.42-45)

As the Fosters point out, these arrangements echo the political dispositions attending the proposed union of the English and Scottish crowns, and the government of Ireland. Perhaps, though, we should read the speech not only as referring to the Stuart succession and the union, but also within the context of the precise ways in which that succession took place.

James VI and I's claim to the throne stemmed from a marriage—that between James IV of Scotland and Margaret Tudor which is alluded to at the end of Ford's *Perkin Warbeck*[47]—but it was also confirmed, in many accounts of the event, by a verbal will—precisely the same sort of verbal will as Penthea and Calantha both make. (Penthea even draws attention to the aural nature of hers, pointing to a paper which she has in her hand but will not read [III.v.45-46]). Elizabeth I's alleged verbal nomination of James on her deathbed has been seen by Leonard Tennenhouse as doubly significant: on one level, she "acted in accordance with a view of the crown as an object of property, which was therefore dispensed according to the will of its owner. By naming James rather than an English claimant, however, she also acted according to the law of primogeniture."[48] Whatever the truth of the various stories that Elizabeth made verbal or physical signs confirming James as her successor,[49] there was a widespread expectation that his right would be disputed, and considerable relief when he assumed the throne without even the threat of civil war or of an alternative candidature. Both Mary I and Elizabeth I had, after all, been plagued with recurrent alleged sightings of their dead brother Edward VI; Mary had found her right

to the throne contested by the supporters of Lady Jane Grey; Elizabeth had been haunted by the rival claims of Mary, Queen of Scots and even of the Spanish Infanta; and the first Tudor king had been plagued by impostors, one of whom Ford himself had dramatised in *Perkin Warbeck*. Indeed, as Henry Rice's comments about "the russling days of Henrie the Sixt and Edward the Fourth" reminds us, it had been quite some considerable time since there had been such a thing as an undisputed right to the throne (Henry VIII's accession might have been peaceful enough, but his relentless purges of his Plantagenet relatives clearly demonstrate his lack of security). In this respect, James I's peaceful progress through his new kingdom was not only welcome but positively novel.

There had, however, been other potential candidates for James's throne, and the story of one of them in particular may well be pertinent to Ford's concerns in *The Broken Heart*. Lady Arbella Stuart, of whom Elizabeth I is reported to have said that she would "one day be even as I am,"[50] was the cousin of two of Ford's dedicatees, the Earl of Newcastle and the Duke of Lennox, and had been rumoured to be romantically involved in her youth with the Earl of Essex,[51] whom the Fosters propose as the original model of Ford's Ithocles. In many respects, Lady Arbella's story seems to come at least as close to Penthea's as that of Essex's sister Penelope, with a forbidden marriage driving her, it seems, to madness and self-starvation;[52] and there was an interesting link between her and Penelope in that both received dedications from the Catholic sonneteer Henry Constable.[53] Lady Arbella's story certainly caught the public imagination, and has been suggested as a likely source for plays as diverse as *The Duchess of Malfi*,[54] *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*,[55] *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*,[56] Fletcher's *The Noble Gentleman* and *Cymbeline*.[57] For anyone involved in the law, its twists and turns would have been especially intriguing: at one point she actually applied for a writ of habeas corpus,[58] while her elopement provoked much discussion about what precisely she could be considered to be guilty of.[59] Moreover, Arbella's entire history was intimately bound up with the complexities of Renaissance testamentary law and practice, especially as they related to issues of land transmission and of succession.

Arbella's grandmother, Elizabeth Hardwick, Countess of Shrewsbury, better known as Bess of Hardwick, had experienced great childhood poverty due to the illegal will of her father: "Wills were solely for the disposal of worldly goods and chattels; land, which in principle belonged to the Crown, could not be willed. And yet, indirectly, this is what John Hardwick attempted to do."[60] Bess herself was very friendly with the Grey family, and was to suffer intermittently from the repercussions of the disaster incurred by its members when the dying king Edward VI was persuaded to make a will naming Jane Grey as his successor, in direct contradiction of his own father Henry VIII's earlier testamentary dispositions: Bess was at one time imprisoned for having been made the unwilling confidante of a pregnant Lady Catherine Grey. Much later, when Bess wished to establish the right of Arbella to the inheritance of her father, Charles Stuart, Earl of Lennox, after his premature death, the will was again the instrument of choice: Arbella's paternal aunt Mary, Queen of Scots, "believing that she had the divine right and authority of a reigning Queen, made a will putting Charles Stuart in the succession and admitting the right of Elizabeth Lennox [his widow] to the earldom."[61] Bess's own will was eventually used in a similarly instrumental way, offering the Queen a legacy which was coupled with a request to receive Arbella at court again, after she had been previously sent away for arrogance: "Bess was using her will to help Arbella."[62] In fact later disagreements between the two women led Bess to alter her will, but title and succession were to recur as bargaining counters between them when Arbella secured from her cousin James I a blank patent to a peerage which she used to make her uncle, Bess's favourite son William, a baron, in exchange for a nominal forgiveness and an expensive present from her grandmother. When Bess died soon after this, her last thoughts were of her will, but they were not altogether happy ones: she was very anxious that her son William should make sure that no-one interfered with it[63]—a concern which indicates both the cultural centrality of the will and a fear that its operations may be uncertain ones, that even this final attempt to encode one's desires in binding form may prove mutable and malleable.

The story of Arbella Stuart parallels that of *The Broken Heart* not only in the motifs of madness and self-starvation and in its intersections with

the Essex affair but also in the crucial importance to both of the figure of the will-making woman. The testamentary dispositions of Mary, Queen of Scots, of Bess of Hardwick and of Elizabeth I herself are echoed in the pointed coupling of the bequests of Penthea and Calantha, the latter determining a kingdom (just as Mary, Queen of Scots had tried to do when she willed her right to the English crown to Philip II). A similar concern was also to be found in the historical sources used by Ford in the writing of *Perkin Warbeck*, though here the testator was Perkin himself, who found that the price for aid from the Emperor Maximilian I was the requirement for him to draw up a will leaving Maximilian heir to the throne of England if he himself died childless. Whether or not Arbella's story was indeed the "known . . . truth" of *The Broken Heart*, it certainly parallels the "strange truth" of *Perkin Warbeck*, although in each case that truth is riddled: instead of Macbeth's "fiend that lies like truth,"[64] we have, it seems, a dramatist who tells truth like lies.

Undoubtedly, then, Ford is indeed reworking in this play the accession of James I, which the Fosters term "the most important political event of his youth,"[65] and which had, moreover, been actively manoeuvred for by Essex himself.[66] The parallels between *The Broken Heart* and the events of the earliest years of the seventeenth century are clinched by the fact that the play's major literary source also derives from that period. Chapman's *The Widow's Tears* has not previously been identified as an influence on *The Broken Heart* (though Hardin Craig comments on general similarities between the two playwrights),[67] but the similarities are striking. A Spartan wooer who is strongly associated with Scotland,[68] and who is cousin to his Altitude the Viceroy, finds himself out-manoeuvred by a native low-born upstart, but forbears to take offence because "the place, thou know'st, protects thee" (I.ii.97); all these things have close echoes in Ford's play. Centrally concerned with the remarriage of widows, which it takes as a sign of women's inherent fallibility, *The Widow's Tears* also offers an interesting perspective on Penthea's insistence that she would never marry Orgilus under any circumstances; it has two waiting-maids, Ianthe and Sthenia, whose situation loosely parallels that of Christalla and Philema, and its ultimately malleable female ruler and the Viceroy also offer telling parallels to *The Broken Heart*'s episodes of female succession and creation of viceregal power.

Most strikingly, there is an extraordinary lacuna in the play's narrative action when Tharsalio's conquest of Eudora's affections, which we have been led to believe will be the climax of the action, takes place entirely offstage and can only be deduced by later conversations, with exactly the same obliqueness and silence that will later characterise Ford's dramatisation of the relationship between Calantha and Ithocles. Instead, attention is deflected to the Cynthia-Lysander plot, which features Cynthia following her apparently dead husband into the tomb and threatening to starve herself there. This leads the disguised Lysander to adjure her, "Die not for hunger, like a Spartan lady" (IV.ii.106)—like, indeed, Ford's Penthea, who starves herself to death.[69] The story of the presumed widow thus offers motifs found in both Penthea and Calantha. Chapman's play is confidently dated to 1605 (introduction, p. xi), and pokes obvious fun at James, as with barbed comments such as "there's a number of strange knights abroad" (IV.i.27-28), so Ford's use of plot motifs from it explicitly underlines *The Broken Heart*'s concern with the earliest years of the Stuart succession.

Ford, then, not only offers a revisioning of what actually took place but also evokes the artistic milieu of the period and, most crucially, explores the mechanics of how and why.[70] As in others of his plays—most of all *Perkin Warbeck*, whose setting in "The Continent of Great Britain" clearly announces its concerns with empire—he raises the crucial questions of both the Stuart succession and the English colonial enterprise: the nature of the right to land. Nearchus' claim to the throne of Sparta is, as that of James himself was generally thought to be, a double one, resting both on heredity and on a verbal nomination by his predecessor. As such, it proves enforceable, unlike that of Perkin Warbeck, whom Ford may perhaps have believed to be inherently royal,[71] but who was unable to assert any authority. Nevertheless, one might perhaps be tempted to think that the doubleness of the claim might well make it not stronger, but, paradoxically, weaker, since it raises the troubling possibility that neither heredity nor inheritance might be sufficient alone. The suggestion is certainly not developed in the play—to do so would have been far too risky—but in both *Perkin Warbeck* and *The Broken Heart* there are sharp reminders about the problematics of inheritance. Dalyell in *Perkin Warbeck*, grieved that despite his distant

ancestral connection with the royal family, he is not thought fit to court the king's cousin Lady Katherine Gordon, laments:

> But kindreds are not ours, when once the date
> Of many years have swallowed up the memory
> Of their originals.[72]

And Orgilus in *The Broken Heart* suggests the possibility of Ithocles' succession with the reminder that "The sovereignty of kingdoms in their nonage / Stoop'd to desert, not birth" (IV.iii.106-07). Orgilus also dismisses "puddle / Of generation" (IV.iii.108-09), while Calantha in her death scene further adds to the complexities by raising the old chestnut of women's right to rule (a question also implicitly addressed at the end of Ford's play *Love's Sacrifice*, where the succession passes to the husband of the heiress Fiormonda rather than to her). This was an issue that had been particularly important in the case of Arbella Stuart: a recent biographer of her grandmother claims that "had Arbella been a boy then Elizabeth would have had to accept the child as her heir."[73]

Here, too, one could adopt the Fosters' strategy of reading *The Broken Heart* and *Perkin Warbeck* in conjunction with each other to produce a searching exploration of the problematics of the right to rule. Here, and in his plays as a whole, Ford represents a variety of means of acquiring and enforcing power—through political domination, through marriage, through annexation, through conquest, through inheritance, through hereditary succession; and the twin presences in his texts of sustained reference to colonisation and to the New World and of representations of the making of Stuart Britain may well invite us to subject both processes to the same sorts of analysis. Such a strategy was not unknown in Ford's circle; Joseph Hall's *Mundus Alter et Idem* (1605), dedicated to the Earl of Pembroke, represents a dystopia in which fickleness is criticised. As Gordon McMullan comments, "the marginal notes suggest that this is a satire of courtly behaviour, but the immediate context of criticism is obviously the many accounts of colonists' relations with the Indians."[74] The problem for a contemporary reader, of course, is that without such helpful marginal comments, we may well feel less sure of our ground in offering so politicised an interpretation; but Ford's

development throughout his work of the parallel themes of royalty and land acquisition may well encourage us to read him as deliberately riddling the body politic—following, indeed, Sir Philip Sidney's cue to prefer fiction to history—to encourage us to perceive such connotations, and to be ourselves the Oedipus who must decide the answer to the question "cujus est terre?" The model for such a reading process is provided by the text itself: it is the epistemological mechanism of Nearchus' line at IV.ii.212,

> And though they shall not know, yet they shall find it.

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NOTES

[1]Verna Ann Foster and Stephen Foster, "Structure and History in *The Broken Heart*: Sparta, England, and the 'Truth,'" *ELR* 18 (1988): 305-28.

[2]For discussion of what Ford means by "truth" here and of the likelihood of an allusion to Penelope Rich, see especially Frederick M. Burelbach jr., ""The Truth" in John Ford's *The Broken Heart* revisited," *N&Q* 212 (1967): 11-12; Giovanni M. Carsaniga, "'The truth' in John Ford's *The Broken Heart*," *CL* 10 (1958): 344-48; Katherine Duncan-Jones, "Ford and the Earl of Devonshire," *RES* 29 (1978): 447-52; Cyril Falls, "Penelope Rich and the poets: Philip Sidney to John Ford," *Essays by Divers Hands*, ns 28 (1956): 123-37; R. Jordan, "Calantha's Dance in *The Broken Heart*," *N&Q* 214 (1969): 294-95; Michael Neill, "New light on 'The Truth' in *The Broken Heart*," *N&Q* 220 (1975): 249-50; Shanti Padhi, "*The Broken Heart* and *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*: Ford's Main Source for the Corpse's Coronation," *N&Q* 229 (1984): 230-31; and Stuart P. Sherman, "Stella and *The Broken Heart*," *PMLA* 24 (1909): 274-85.

[3]Ford's works have tended to be treated in isolation from each other, though a notable exception to this is provided by G. D. Monsarrat in "The Unity of John Ford: *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and *Christ's Bloody Sweat*," *SP* 77 (1980): 247-70.

[4]See Foster and Foster 306.

[5]John Ford, *The Broken Heart*, ed. T. J. B. Spencer (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1980), Prologue, ll. 15-16. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

[6]For comment on these and how they inform the "Astrophil and Stella" sequence, see Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995) 80.

[7]See my "A Source for John Ford's *Love's Sacrifice*: The Story of Carlo Gesualdo" (published under my maiden name of Lisa Cronin), *N&Q* 233 (1988): 66-67; Lisa

Hopkins, "'Speaking Sweat': Emblems in the Plays of John Ford," *Comparative Drama* (Spring, 1995): 133-46; and Lisa Hopkins, *John Ford's Political Theatre* 19.

[8]David Howarth, *Lord Arundel and his Circle* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1985) 167. However, Raleigh was in fact executed in London.

[9]Gordon McMullan, *The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1994) 193.

[10]Howarth, *Lord Arundel* 167-68.

[11]D. J. H. Clifford, ed., *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford* (Far Thrupp: Alan Sutton, 1990) 2. Lady Anne's diary contains several references to her intimacy with people associated with Ford's circle: New Year's Day 1617 saw her in company with Lady Arundel and Lady Northumberland, both wives of Ford dedicatees, and Lady Rich, daughter-in-law of another; Twelfth Night she was with Lady Arundel and Lady Pembroke at the lodgings of the Duke of Lennox, another dedicatee (*Diaries* 44); she records the marriage of Ford's dedicatee Lord Hay (*Diaries* 64); and in 1619 she mentions a visit from the brother and sister-in-law of the Earl of Newcastle, to whom *Perkin Warbeck* was dedicated (*Diaries* 66). She also visited Lady Raleigh (*Diaries* 72), and in extreme old age was still able to identify the room in which the Earl of Arundel's mother had been born (*Diaries* 266-67). Lady Anne took an interest in her father's sea voyages and expressed her wish of having them all written up (*Diaries* 65).

[12]McMullan, *The Politics of Unease* 205.

[13]Louise Schleiner, *Tudor and Stuart Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994) 155.

[14]McMullan, *The Politics of Unease* 202-03.

[15]See L. E. Stock, Gilles D. Monsarrat, Judith M. Kennedy and Dennis Danielson, eds., *The Nondramatic Works of John Ford* (Binghamton, N.Y.: MRTS, 1991) 355.

[16]See Ralph A. Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas and his Family* (Cardiff: U of Wales P, 1993) 130.

[17]Charles Nicholl, *The Creature in the Map* (1995; London: Vintage, 1996) 60 and 274-75.

[18]See Gwyn A. Williams, *Madoc: The Making of a Myth* (1979; Oxford: OUP, 1987).

[19]Graham C. G. Thomas, "The Stradling Library at St Donat's, Glamorgan," *National Library of Wales Journal* 24.4 (Winter 1986): 402-19, 411. See also Glanmor Williams, "The Stradling Family," in *The Story of St Donat's Castle and Atlantic College*, ed. Roy Denning (Cowbridge: D. Brown & Sons, 1983) 17-53, who notes (31) that Sir Edward's "close friendship with Francis Drake, Walter Raleigh, and Richard Grenville suggests a lively interest in sea-borne trade and, possibly, exploring enterprises."

[20]G.T. Clark, *Thirteen Views of the Castle of St Donat's, Glamorganshire* (Shrewbury: Adnitt and Naunton, 1871) 20.

[21]Glanmor Williams, "Sir John Stradling of St Donat's," *Glamorgan Historian* 9 (1973): 11-28, 20.

[22]Williams, "Sir John Stradling" 24.

[23]Williams, "Sir John Stradling" 18-19. For discussion of the general antiquarian interest in land ownership, see Melanie Hansen, "Identity and Ownership: Narratives

of Land in the English Renaissance", *Writing and the English Renaissance*, ed. William Zunder and Suzanne Trill (Harlow: Longman, 1996) 87-105, 91.

[24]McMullan 207. Jeremy Maule's recent discovery of a poem by Ford on the death of Fletcher argues for a closer connection than has been previously realised between the two men. (See Jeremy Maule's forthcoming essay, "'To the memory of the late excellent poet John Fletcher': A New Ford Poem?" I am very grateful to Jeremy Maule for the chance to have seen this before publication.) Fletcher's New World interests, therefore, may also have been an influence on Ford.

[25]See Lisa Hopkins, *John Ford's Political Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994), especially ch. 1.

[26]Hall, *Things of Darkness* 61.

[27]Cyrus Hoy, "'Ignorance in Knowledge': Marlowe's Faustus and Ford's Giovanni," *MP* 57.3 (1960): 145-54, 151.

[28]See Martin Butler, "The Connection between Donne, Clarendon and Ford," *N&Q* 232 (1987): 309-10. I am indebted for this reference to Jeremy Maule. Lady Anne Clifford records a visit from Donne (*Diaries* 60).

[29]William Gifford and Alexander Dyce, eds, *The Works of John Ford*, 3 vols. (London, 1895; rpt. New York, 1965), 2: II.i., p. 28. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

[30]This and other references to colonialism in *The Lady's Trial* are discussed at greater length in Lisa Hopkins, "Italy Revisited: John Ford's Last Plays," *The Italian World of English Renaissance Drama*, ed. Michele Marrapodi and Ton Hoenselaars, forthcoming from University of Delaware Press.

[31]Ian Arthurson, *The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy 1491-1499* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1994) 38.

[32]*The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, vol. 6 (London: Longman *et al.*, 1890) 196.

[33]For discussion of this aspect of the play, see Willy Maley, "'The Common Stage of Novelty': Ireland in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries," forthcoming in *Shakespeare and Ireland: History, Politics, Culture*, ed. Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray (Macmillan, 1997).

[34]McMullan, *The Politics of Unease* 225.

[35]Sir Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) 834.

[36]Peter Ure, "A pointer to the date of Ford's *Perkin Warbeck*," *N&Q* 215 (1970): 215-17.

[37]Foster and Foster 306.

[38]For marks on royal bodies, see for instance Lisa Hopkins, "The Disguised Royalty Motif in the *Arcadia*," *Narrative Strategies in Early Prose Fiction*, ed. Wolfgang Gortschacher and Holger Klein (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen P, 1995) 187-94.

[39]Thomas Gainsford, *The true and wonderful history of Perkin Warbeck . . .* [1618], Harleian Miscellany, vol. 6 (1745) 499. There is also a "letter from Oedipus' son Eteocles to his brother Polyneices" in H. C.'s *The Forrest of Fancy*, 1579 (see Pamela Benson, ed., *Italian Tales from the Age of Shakespeare* [London: J. M. Dent, 1996], introduction ix).

[40]Stuart M. Kurland, "*Hamlet* and the Scottish Succession," *SEL* 34 (1994): 279-300, 281.

[41]See Maria-Claude Rousseau, "Thomas More, Enigme et Paradoxe: *Non Sum Oedipus, Sed Morus*," *Le Paradoxe au Temps de la Renaissance*, ed. M. T. Jones-Davies (Paris: Jean Touzot, 1982) 87-103, 90-91.

[42]Steven Mullaney, "Lying Like Truth: Riddle, Representation and Treason in Renaissance England," *ELH* 47 (1980): 32-47, 36. See also Paola Pugliatti, *Shakespeare the Historian* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996) 47.

[43]*The Poems of Queen Elizabeth I*, ed. Leicester Bradner (Providence: Brown UP, 1964) 66-67.

[44]Ben Jonson, *Sejanus His Fall*, ed. Philip Ayres (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990) III.64-65.

[45]Griffiths, *Sir Rhys ap Thomas* 157.

[46]The nature of this connection is best explored in M. Joan Sargeaunt, *John Ford* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1935) 14-16.

[47]The fact that James's claim derived from this marriage was not an obscure piece of information, but something widely known: for the ceremonies attending his accession, Dekker and Jonson's *The Magnificent Entertainment* featured an image of Henry VII handing James a sceptre, and Anthony Munday's *The Triumphs of Re-United Britannia* refers to "the blessed marriage of Margaret, eldest daughter to King Henry the Seventh, to James the Fourth, King of Scotland, of whom our second Brute (Royal King James) is truly and rightfully descended" (both printed in Richard Dutton, ed., *Jacobean Civic Pageants* [Keele: Keele UP, 1995] 53 and 126).

[48]Leonard Tennenhouse, "Strategies of State and political plays: *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VIII*," *Political Shakespeare*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1985) 109-28, 114. Pugliatti (*Shakespeare the Historian* 84-85) points out the analogous importance of a will in *King John*.

[49]See for instance Neville Williams, *Elizabeth I, Queen of England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967) 352, for a discussion of the evidence. A further small link between Calantha and Elizabeth might be discerned in the similarity which Michael Neill proposes between the former's death and that of the Queen's maid of honour Margaret Ratcliffe; it might also be arguable that the use of Penthea's body for purposes of vengeance recalls that of the suggestively-named Gloriana in *The Revenger's Tragedy*.

[50]*The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart*, ed. Sara Jayne Steen (Oxford: OUP, 1994) 20.

[51]Steen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart* 21, and David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast* [1977] (Cromwell: The Newark P, 1988) 211.

[52]For Lady Arbella's intermittent refusals to eat, see Steen (ed.), *Letters* 34-35; for discussion of her alleged madness, see Steen (ed.), *Letters* 82 and 97.

[53]See Steen (ed.), *Letters* 56; for the relationship between Constable and Penelope Rich, see Cyril Falls, "Penelope Rich and the Poets: Philip Sidney to John Ford," *Essays by Divers Hands*, ns 28 (1956): 125-37, 130.

[54]See J. W. Lever, *The Tragedy of State* (London: Methuen, 1971, rpt. 1987) 87, and Sara Jayne Steen, "The Crime of Marriage: Arbella Stuart and *The Duchess of Malfi*," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 22 (1991): 61-76.

[55]Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991) 201.

[56]Marion A. Taylor, "Lady Arabella Stuart and Beaumont and Fletcher," *PLL* 8 (1972): 252-60.

[57]See Steen (ed.), *Letters* 96.

[58]Steen (ed.), *Letters* 67. The letter in which Lady Arbella makes this request is reproduced on p. 256.

[59]Steen (ed.), *Letters* 70-71.

[60]Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast* 4.

[61]Durant, *Bess of Hardwick* 93.

[62]Durant, *Bess of Hardwick* 222. For an incisive and consistently fascinating exploration of Renaissance thoughts on will making, see the final chapter, "A constant will to publish: Shakespeare's dead hand," in Richard Wilson, *Will Power: Essays on Shakespearean Authority* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

[63]Durant, *Bess of Hardwick* 200.

[64]See Mullaney, "Lying Like Truth" 38-44, for the role of riddles in *Macbeth*.

[65]Foster and Foster 31.

[66]See for instance Eric S. Mallin, *Inscribing the Time: Shakespeare and the End of Elizabethan England* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1995) 141.

[67]George Chapman, *The Widow's Tears*, ed. Ethel M. Smeak (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1966) introduction xiii. Rowland Wymer, in *Webster and Ford* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995) 119 also suggests that the death of Orgilus may be deliberately reminiscent of Chapman's Bussy D'Ambois.

[68]*Widow's Tears*, II.iv.191 note. All further references to the play will be to this edition.

[69]Elizabeth I was also popularly believed to have starved herself to death for love of Essex. In *The Devil's Law-Case*, a play by Ford's early collaborator Webster, Leonora prays, "let me die / In the distraction of that worthy princess / Who loathed food, and sleep, and ceremony, / For thought of losing that brave gentleman / She would fain have saved, had not a false conveyance / Expressed him stubborn-hearted" (John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi and Other Plays*, ed. René Weis [Oxford: OUP, 1996], 3.3.270-75).

[70]Ford's earlier play *The Lover's Melancholy* seems to perform a similar remembering and riddling, this time of the end of James's reign and the transition to that of his son Charles, which is, arguably, loosely imaged in the play's dramatisation of the new rule of the uxorious Palador after that of his father, with its sexual scandals.

[71]For this possibility, see Hopkins, *John Ford's Political Theatre*, chapter 2.

[72]*Perkin Warbeck, John Ford: Three Plays*, ed. Keith Sturgess (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970) I.ii.34-35.

[73]Durant, *Bess of Hardwick* 90.

[74]McMullan, *The Politics of Unease* 237.

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"The country I had thought was my home": David Mura's *Turning Japanese* and Japanese-American Narrative since World War II

GORDON O. TAYLOR

> Unless the stone bursts with telling,
> unless the seed flowers with speech . . .
> Joy Kogawa, *Obasan* (1981)

The poet David Mura, in *Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei* (1991), projects in prose a range of issues bearing on contemporary Japanese-American identity, and on the view from within such a sensibility of contemporary American culture. The book is based on Mura's year-long visit to Japan in the mid 1980s on a U.S./Japan Creative Artist Exchange Fellowship, a sojourn which became, beneath the surface of his grant-related activities, a quest for what he calls a "lost center" of personal history. His childhood in a Jewish neighborhood of Chicago, and his Eurocentrically oriented college years, had hardly been focused on his Japanese-American background, still less on roots traceable all the way to Japan.

On one level the book relates the experiences of that year through the retrospective lens of time passed since his return. On another level it looks back at America from Japan, and yet again at Japan from Minnesota (where he now lives) as he writes, sustaining the chronological narrative of the year abroad but tracing cross-currents of self-inquiry flowing across the Pacific in both directions. These swirls, sometimes storms, of bicultural consciousness deepen and complicate, more than they resolve, the many conflicts involved, as they move toward an open ending in which he feels himself neither "Japanese" nor "American," nor even necessarily a "Japanese American" in any simple sense of the term. The unhyphenated gap (except in the adjectival form) between these two words—"Japanese" . . . "American"—is more accurately

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suggestive of the psychic space out of which he writes than is the conventionally hyphenated phrase. Where that leaves him is ultimately unclear; or rather it *is* clear—in this and subsequent work, such as *Where the Body Meets Memory* (1996)—that this unresolved dilemma continues to be his main subject. Biculturalisms in question are further compounded as Mura and his wife Susan, of English and Hungarian-Jewish extraction, expect at the end of *Turning Japanese* the birth of a daughter, on whose behalf Mura muses as to the questions of identity *she* will eventually face.

Meanwhile, just where, or in what "America," David Mura resides—literally and literarily—is a question to be posed not only in relation to his own writing, but also in connection with 50 years and more of Japanese-American cultural expression, since Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941 and Executive Order 9066 was issued in 1942, setting in motion the removal of over 120,000 Americans of Japanese descent from the West Coast to internment camps inland, or since the "white flash [and] black rain"[1] swept over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. For the memory of the camps—bracketed by the twin catastrophes of Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima—remains deeply enmeshed in the process through which several generations of Japanese Americans have expressed a shifting sense of being Asian in America, or of being Asian American as well as American "pure and simple" in the wake of war between America and Asia. This is so whether the relocation is recalled from direct experience, or a version of the event and its aftermath is acquired from familial memory or from other social sources or interpretations. It is also true whether those who absorb and later recast such narratives do so in terms of embracing, or resisting, the idea of the internment as in some way central to the formation of their own identities, or—perhaps more often—in terms of both.

The image of concentration-camp wire—like Malcolm X's "memory of the bars" in slave ships long before his birth—persists in much Japanese-American writing half a century and more after the event. *Issei* (the immigrant generation, denied citizenship and right to own land even before the war), *nisei* (the second generation, American-born and thus U.S. citizens at the time of the relocations), *sansei* (the next generation, of which Mura is a member), *yonsei* (the next, to which his

daughter belongs)—all have by now contributed to a "collective autobiography" of the internment period and its subsequent reverberations, as reimagined in the 1950s and beyond.

Japanese-American consciousness in the wake of the war seems for the parents to have been focused on recovering a basis for their children's education, outwardly reaffirming (*kodomo no tame*, for the sake of the children) their future in America while turning their anger and bitterness within. For the children the postwar period often coincided with teenage years, focused on the immediacies of American life, infused with insecurity and the desire to belong; later on some would come to question more severely both the government, for its Draconian policy, and their parents, for their perceived silence in the face of such action. For the grandparents, perhaps, past and future were blended in a sense of *ukiyo*, the "floating world," which in old Japan had among its many meanings the intermingled desolations and consolations brought about by inevitable change.

What follows is a characterization—selectively cast in terms of representative texts ranging across the time since the war—of the literary contours, cross-generic and cross-generational, of a composite Japanese-American narrative, suggesting some of the ways in which that narrative reflects the psychic legacies of the internment and creatively redeploys them in acts of imagination. Into that context, then, a fuller discussion of Mura's memoir may be placed, and its refractions of other materials further considered.

* * *

Very little was written, at least in English, by the *issei*, the immigrants most of whom originally intended to return to Japan with money earned in America, some of whom did in fact repatriate during or after the war. Theirs was a silence anchored in loneliness and isolation, linguistic and otherwise, long antedating World War II. The lack of literary self-consciousness on the part of the *issei*, except insofar as others have sought to speak on their behalf (and most of these only recently), is itself a feature of the literary-cultural landscape of this period. An inverse form of self-expression—often powerful in its negativity, almost "posthumous" in its refusal to envision an American future (not that the *issei* were

included in official projections of that future)—it is variously registered in a range of works, a subliminal but persistent undertone in later Japanese-American expression.

Overtly launching Japanese-American postwar writing, although more in terms (in different ways and to different degrees) of personal witness than fully realized art, are two books from the 1950s, Monica Sone's memoir *Nisei Daughter* and John Okada's novel *No-No Boy*. Each stands at the head of a separate strand—which subsequent works will entwine in various ways—even if in the end, despite strong contrasts, they share some common ground.

Nisei Daughter, published in 1953, affirms the American future as if by sheer force of will, dramatizing the drive toward assimilation and acceptance which suffuses much *nisei* writing, and which much *sansei* writing continues to critique. Born in Seattle, given both a Japanese and an American name (Kazuko Monica, the Japanese portion meaning "peace"), Sone was a 22-year-old college student when sent to Camp Harmony in Washington state. Taking her Christian faith and traditional Japanese family structure as sometimes conflictive but generally stabilizing norms, she relates the events of her internment and its impact on her parents in ways suggesting a sensibility more resistant to the upheaval than that of either a much younger or a much older person might have been.

Yet she also conveys a desperation, perhaps most keenly felt by the *nisei*—citizens by birth who felt the fruits of the American dream within their grasp, or at least assured for their children—as the war set in motion the destruction of her world. "In the privacy of our hearts," Sone writes,

> we had raged, we had cried against the injustices, but in the end, we had swallowed our pride and learned to endure.
>
> Even with all the mental anguish and struggle, an elemental instinct bound us to this soil. Here we were born; here we wanted to live. We had tasted of its freedom and learned its brave hopes for democracy. It was too late, much too late for us to turn back. (124)

She records in her last chapters—"Eastward, *Nisei*" and "Deeper into the Land" —her "desperate struggle to be just myself" in an America which would "inject strength into my hyphenated Americanism instead

of pulling it apart" (216). Inverting the primal American trope of westward movement as an exploration of internal frontiers, Sone finds that by pushing east (immediate return to the West Coast was forbidden) she had "discovered a deeper, stronger pulse in the American scene." In her closing lines she states,

> I was going back into [America's] main stream, still with my Oriental eyes, but with an entirely different outlook, for now I felt more like a whole person instead of a sadly split personality. The Japanese and American parts of me were now blended into one. (238)

This is a satisfying outcome in terms of narrative resolution, although 1953, when the book appeared, is early on in the period of post-war adjustment, and for many the 1950s and well beyond would be a period still fraught with the same ambiguities and anxieties as existed before the war, massively exacerbated by the relocations.

Not surprisingly, the problem of literary portrayal—in whatever proportions the authors in question weigh out their "artistic" in relation to their "testimonial" or "witness-bearing" purposes, and mount their representational strategies accordingly—remains comparably complex. That Sone, for her part, tends in *Nisei Daughter* to avoid self-consciously literary effects in favor of a more "simply" sequential account of her experience in no way lessens the importance and interest of her text. And not for readers alone, but also for writers to come, more than one of whom (knowingly or not) define themselves, in more avowedly "literary" performances, in relation to some of the primal images of *nisei* awareness she has produced, to whatever extent they reject or revise her perspectives.

In John Okada's novel *No-No Boy*, which was published in 1957 but then seemingly disappeared without a trace until reissued in the 1970s, Ichiro Yamada, *nisei*, returns to Seattle after two years in prison for refusing to serve in the American army during the war. (Okada was a U.S. Army translator and interpreter in the Pacific.) The book's title refers to the questions 27 and 28 on the questionnaire to which all relocated Japanese Americans over the age of 17 were subjected, although the questions were aimed at *nisei* men of military age. Question 27 asked, "Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States, on

combat duty, wherever ordered?" Question 28 inquired, "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic sources, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any foreign government, power or organization?"[2] To say "no" to both, for whatever reasons—chief among them anger at the very fact of the camps, let alone conditions within them—was effectively to isolate oneself from any national affiliation at all (especially for the *issei* denied American citizenship, whose Japanese citizenship was placed at risk by "yes-yes"), except for those requesting repatriation to Japan.

Ichiro's re-encounters with family and former friends, and an ongoing struggle within himself as to whether or not he should have resisted, frame a plot through which Okada dramatizes with ironic economy a range of perspectives on "no-no" and its consequences. Isolated by his act, just as he has been alienated before and since by racial intolerance, Ichiro finds in his friendship with Kenji Kanno—a veteran whose gangrenous wound eventually proves fatal—a point of reconnection to his own future, however problematic it remains. Ichiro regrets his refusal of army induction, a "mistake" he feels has cut him off from his birthright as an American. But in his remorse, recalling the "madness" of the evacuation, is an incompletely articulated persistence in a belief that precisely *as* an American he had no other choice.

If he longs for acceptance and forgiveness, Ichiro also yearns for an America truer to its own professed ideals of equality and respect for individual conscience. He and Kenji, casually yet in bitter earnest, play a cat-and-mouse conversational game of who would trade with whom—the honored war hero with time running out, and the despised draft resister with 50 years of leftover life to kill. Kenji knows that for him it is an endgame, but to some degree he invests himself in the idea of a future he helps Ichiro regain. For each there is a sense of something gained, but it stems from the recognition that *each* did what he did, in some measure, for nothing.

At the end, as with many another American literary protagonist during different eras and in different genres (Richard Wright, for example, in *Black Boy* or *American Hunger*), the country and the inclusiveness of its culture are precariously at issue, as much as Ichiro's personal fate:

> A glimmer of hope—was that it? It was there, someplace. He couldn't see it to put it into words, but the feeling was pretty strong.
>
> He walked along, thinking, searching, thinking and probing, and, in the darkness of the alley of the community that was a tiny bit of America, he chased that faint and elusive insinuation of promise as it continued to take shape in mind and in heart. (250-51)

He is walking away from a closing scene of violence and death summing up the futility of lives consumed by rage and guilt over the war, the camps and the agonies of emergence into an adverse post-war social environment. The novel holds its acerbic edge to the last; unlike the expansiveness of eastward "space" into which Monica Sone proclaims her liberation in *Nisei Daughter*, the "alley" of Okada's America is too narrow and dark to allow for more than a "faint and elusive insinuation" of faith in the prospects for change in American hearts and minds, or for such affirmation to break "into words." Ichiro hardly experiences the "blending" Sone claims for her Japanese and American selves. But his surviving "glimmer of hope"—as he is released from imprisoning despair into an enabling compassion for others—informs the ending with a sense of renewed possibility, however provisional.

In the painful course of his re-engagement with America and himself, Ichiro's "no-no" becomes a self-contained "text," coherent and complete on its own hard-won, still-embattled terms, or perhaps still straining toward a kind of completion in personal terms that only a national transformation might ensure. Packed in on itself, it resists conventional narrative elaboration because it is incompatible with conventional affirmation. In some respects like the silence of the *issei* (or the demented denial of Ichiro's *issei* mother that Japan lost the war), this *nisei*'s "no-no" is one form, paradigmatic in its extreme compression, of Japanese-American "narrative" of the legacy of the camps. As such it relates in irreducibly negative terms what was felt by some to be the only available means of making a positive statement of what it actually meant (or should have meant) to be an American in 1942. It is also latent with*in*, a shadow *to*, other narratives predicated in one way or another, like Sone's, on "yes-yes," which in turn (one flowing into another like a Möbius strip) can be shadowed by a counterpart sense of "no-no."

No less than Okada, for instance, and despite her claim to have

transcended her internment, Sone felt in *Nisei Daughter* the frustration of sudden, inexplicable incarceration:

> I remembered the wire fence encircling us, and a knot of anger tightened in my breast. What was I doing behind a fence like a criminal? If there were accusations to be made, why hadn't I been given a fair trial? Maybe I wasn't considered an American anymore. My citizenship wasn't real, after all. Then what was I? (177)

Whereas *No-No Boy* spirals inward, steadily increasing ironic tensions which are relaxed only partially at the end, *Nisei Daughter* progressively uncoils the encircling wire, loosens the grip of acknowledged anger, moves further toward the future, in effect saying "yes" and "yes" less in answer to imposed questions than in enactment of new confidence—the product of earlier struggle—"to be just myself." Still, Sone's book, while it seems to resolve her "sadly split" sense of self, projects beyond its conclusion an awareness that post-war America can remain unreceptive to that forthright self-assertion. The question "Then what was I?" and a sense that "My citizenship wasn't real, after all" link Sone's version with Okada's, even as they appear to fall on either side of a literary watershed marked in part by the polemics of "no-no," and in part by Okada's relatively greater concern with atmospheric intensity and literary technique in what amounts to the emergence with his novel of a Japanese-American literary tradition.

A more symbolic form, less conscious or direct, in which many *nisei* families expressed their resistance without actually answering "no" to official questions was by fashioning small rock gardens before their shacks or barracks in the camps, repossessing some bit of beauty in the chaos which has swallowed them up. Remaking a miniature fragment of a world in which one could continue to believe, they were at the same time rejecting the world as it was, walling it out with a few chosen stones, shaping an inner space in which to embrace and *thus* overcome the insult, to "speak" in a way through silence of such constructed designs. The "language" of these stones, even if found in the dry desert stream-beds of the hostile terrain on which most camps were established, could also suggest in its Buddhist aspect the flow of water along paths of least resistance, or a phrase in Japanese lying somewhere between

"yes" and "no," *shikata ga nai*. Loosely translated "It can't be helped," this conveyed for some a passive resistance sometimes criticized by others as a kind of capitulation. Thus in the rocks is an ambiguity as well as an assertion. Both aspects inhere in the symbol-system of such arrangements, as literally created at the time and as metaphorically recast in literary art.

Farewell to Manzanar, coauthored in 1973 by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and her husband James D. Houston, depicts life in the California camp Jeanne Wakatsuki entered at the age of seven, but also her sense of herself and her world through the years since the war. This book was for some time popularly regarded as *the* representative Japanese-American text, although not by some Japanese Americans themselves, especially of late. In finding her way and coming to terms by revisiting Manzanar 30 years after she had arrived there, Wakatsuki provides an eloquent image of reconciliation laced with unassuageable hurt. Her family was one of those who built a rock garden, a place of their own in a place of dispossession. Returning now with her own young children, she finds traces of the stones in the sand, unable to tell if from "her" garden or another family's. Remnants of the collective as much as the personal past, each stone is "a mouth, speaking" (137), speaking of pain as well as of survival, saying perhaps at this distance in time both "no-no" and *shikata ga nai*, as if in a language she at first cannot recall. Scattered now, yet bedrock of a sort, ideographically written into the world, the rocks she finds are expressive of, in a way a repository for, the conflicted Japanese-American sense of self she has elsewhere in the telling of her tale both sought and sought to avoid. Seeing the "veined or polished stones"—turning them gently in the writing just as she turned them in her hands that day—she is free to leave the camp forever, and freer to tell her children a story she has tried to keep from herself. She finally says "farewell" to Manzanar by reinhabiting the broken design, within the larger landscape of exile in—as well as from—her own country.

Into the 1950s and for long thereafter, she had never wanted to be anywhere near the camp, seeking to merge in American life, running for carnival queen in high school, for example, her happiness at winning shot through with the same loneliness that had led her to compete.

Monica Sone, caught between two worlds, had nevertheless felt that she knew her destination, her dream untarnished by dint of her desire: "It was too late, much too late for us to turn back," she had said. For Wakatsuki (writing of a time close to that when Sone was writing her book), it was also "too late," as she tasted the bitter joy of being crowned carnival queen and then being left out of the private parties later on. Angry and hurt yet uncertain in the face of her father's objections to her low-cut gown—indeed to the whole affair since he thinks she has damaged if not destroyed her marriageability within Japanese custom, and clings to an image of her in traditional kimono—she reflects on her coronation, seemingly a confirmation of acceptance, but on another level a moment suddenly filled with emptiness:

> It was too late. Too late to be an *odori* dancer for Papa, too late to be this kind of heroine. . . . It was too late now not to follow this make-believe carpet to its plywood finale, and I did not yet know of any truer destination. (130)

Her dream devalued, her sense of self still more sadly split, her future (for the moment) as an American foreclosed, she is as driven as Sone had been, but toward a different, more deeply alienated (dis)connection to the land of her birth.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki, marking for Wakatsuki the end of the internment even as Pearl Harbor had ushered it in, leave her as well with a split relation to the event, as if in a way there were (as in a way there was) a ground zero on each shore of the Pacific from which to see the mushroom cloud. She reports the bombings laconically enough: "At least we were no longer *the enemy*," she says, anticipating Paul Fussell's later phrase—in the context of American deliverance from the Pacific war—"Thank God for the atom bomb."[3] Yet in the next chapter she tells of her brother's journey the following year to Ka-Ke, near Hiroshima, to see surviving relatives and join in the mourning for one who died, graveless in the firestorm. Questions of friend and foe for the moment aside, focus is on the indrawn family circle, more than on the outflung circumference of death and destruction. Elsewhere in the book—released from camp and referring to the lingering Manzanar mentality rather than to the bomb, but choosing an interesting image even so—she says, "the shape of that great dark cloud in my imagination

gradually receded, soothed away by a sky the same blue it had always been, lawns the same green. . . . That dread was gone," (112) but her "premonitions" of an altered American reality "proved correct," for how could things ever be the same in the mind of a girl so lately a prisoner of war, or in a world in which the "unthinkable" had actually occurred, even before it came to be so termed. The note of disillusionment persists into her adult perceptions and into her book, linking it more closely to materials appearing since 1973 than to Sone's account of 1953.

In a later essay titled "Beyond Manzanar: Views of Asian-American Womanhood" (1985), however, Wakatsuki refers with more confidence and self-(re)possession to the "space" from which she too has now spoken, in the earlier book but also separately from it, like Ichiro in the solitary confinement of "no-no," like Sone in the typographically small yet vast gulf between her Japanese and American names. Wakatsuki first associates this "space" with her mother's ability to separate the maternal role, in which she invested her identity, from the menial work she took to replace the family's income, abruptly reduced to nothing by the evacuation. Then she attributes the need for the psychological privacy of such a space to "a people who for centuries have had to create their own internal 'space' in an overpopulated island," a reference to Japan. Perhaps finally for Wakatsuki, returning by way of such musings to her own situation, it is a matter of placing polished words—"only the smoothest / pebbles, pure black ovals" (26), as the *sansei* poet Amy Uyematsu puts it in a poem about Manzanar called "Rock," like carefully selected stones against the open white space of the page, a space "beyond Manzanar" in which to find that one's true self lies in the seeking.

A novel whose author, the Japanese-Canadian writer Joy Kogawa, seems always to have known this, and whose *sansei* protagonist, Naomi Nakane, comes to discover it, is *Obasan* (1981). Set at the start in the western provinces of Canada in the 1970s, it consists as well of Naomi's ventures into the past, as she reinscribes herself in relation to what she learns about her family's imprisonment by the Canadian government in 1942, and about their earlier lives in both Japan and North America. Of her *issei* grandparents she has only photographic images and fragmentary memories, but of her *nisei* mother she has even less. Caught in Nagasaki and disfigured by the bombing while back in Japan, the

trip itself a reflection of the complex human ties underlying more abstract political affiliations, Naomi's mother is powerfully present in the narrative through her absence and the silence of others regarding her. In the oblique communications of an aunt Ayako (the "Obasan" of the title)—in effect both grandmother and mother to the girl who is now a woman in her forties—Naomi finds a precarious passage not only to her forebears but also to her mother's fate, so long withheld like the bitterness of the internment (*kodomo no tame*, for the sake of the children), and hence to her own North American future.

The death of her uncle, Ayako's husband Isamu, and her effort to comfort and assist her aunt, precipitate Naomi's interior quest, a process blending reminiscence over the past as she has up to now understood it and more solitary confrontation with questions she has never chosen or been forced to face. If the story is about the space in her life left empty by her missing mother, it is in equal measure about the partial refilling of that space by Naomi herself, as she achieves wider knowledge and deeper understanding of what her family endured. Although this entails a recognition that she too is marked forever by the internment—of which she has only moments of submerged memory, the accuracy of which she cannot know, so little will others tell her of the event—it more importantly results in a sense of her own power to create herself, less weighed down than lifted by a history she has learned to inhabit.

In a passage from an early chapter, Naomi accompanies Obasan into the attic in which Obasan has suddenly, after midnight and without warning or explanation, decided she must search for something. "It was in the attic, surely," mutters Obasan, ascending a narrow stairway and entering the musty space, occasionally murmuring "Lost," Naomi's first-person narration informing the reader that in Japanese as in English "lost" can also mean "dead." Rummaging through piled cardboard boxes, Obasan's hands make Naomi think of the "wings of a wounded bird, battering the ground in an attempt at balance," yet also of "hands that toil but do not embrace" (23-24), the hands of "every old woman in every hamlet in the world," less nurturer than archetypal keeper of domestic keys, "possessor of life's infinite personal details" in a house the contents of which are "like parts of her body, . . . specks of memory, . . . in her blood and bones" (15-16). Obasan locates and examines a bundle of

papers, looking for a long time at a yellowed card—"Isamu Nakane #00556," signed "McGibbons, Inspector, RCMP," her husband's ID from the relocation—but this is "not what she is looking for" (24), although it marks for the reader the internment's reduction of "identity" to a scrap of paper.

Whether or not fully awake, whether or not with a particular object in mind beyond the spasm of grief which has brought her here, Obasan turns from box to box more in darkness than with the aid of Naomi's flashlight. Kogawa simultaneously expands the sequence, through Naomi's interior voice, to focus on an intricate maze of spider webs, long undisturbed, a "cloudy scene of carnage" which repels Naomi as spiders dart in and out of the dark, but which also prompts reflections, as dust-motes swirl and the webwork trembles in the flashlight's beam, on reductions inevitably wrought by time, and on comminglings of the living and the dead:

> All our ordinary stories are changed in time, altered as much by the present as the present is shaped by the past. Potent and pervasive as a prairie dust storm, memories and dreams seep and mingle through cracks, settling on furniture and into upholstery. Our attics and living-rooms encroach on each other, deep into their invisible spaces. (25)

A trunk opened by Obasan reveals a patchwork quilt, made by Naomi's mother when her daughter was four years old, so moth-eaten and frayed as to seem another piece of "evil laundry" hanging in the dust-laden webs, a "graveyard and feasting-ground combined." But the quilt also stirs a memory of watching by the sewing machine as her mother's hands, "quick as birds, matched and arranged the small triangles of coloured cloth" (25-26), then bright and new.

Unable to help Obasan because Obasan will not say what she seeks, Naomi wants only to go back to bed,

> But we're trapped, Obasan and I, by our memories of the dead—all our dead—those who refuse to bury themselves. Like threads of old spider webs, still sticky and hovering, the past waits for us to submit, or depart. When I least expect it, a memory comes skittering out of the dark, spinning and netting the air, ready to snap me up and ensnare me in old and complex puzzles. Just a glimpse of a worn-out patchwork quilt and the old question comes

> thudding out of the night again like a giant moth. Why did my mother not return? (26)

The past "hungers for" Obasan, "feasts on her," filling Naomi's mind with an image of her aunt caught in the web, "dangl[ing] in the dark, like small insect bones, a fearful calligraphy" of the word "lost." So too Naomi feels herself threatened, if also tranquilly resigned in her present fatigue. As a child she had asked Obasan, "Please tell me about my mother," was "consumed by the question. Devoured alive." Descending from the attic to the "living" rooms below, she feels less imperiled by the question's return than newly moved to pursue the links, at once tenuous and binding like spider's silk, between that question and many others, including if not limited to the family's wartime experience.

Among feelings freshly aroused, as the book proceeds to map her inward journey, are hate for war and war hysteria, anger at those (like "McGibbons") who become their enforcing embodiments, along with sadness at the loss of her brother Stephen—and his loss to himself—through his refusal to acknowledge the "Japanese" in "Japanese Canadian," thus drifting away from her as she opens and airs the attic of her history. But there are other, self-renewing urges as well, tending to merge with larger cycles: of generational fulfillment, as the "child" assumes adult responsibility for Obasan, now ancient to the point of "translucence"; of natural communion, as the prairie landscape of western Canada comes to be for Naomi, as it had been for her uncle yearning for his shipbuilding youth in Japan, *umi no yo*, like the sea; of more cosmic scale, as from a place where she used to play she sees the moon, "a pure white stone" (echoing Wakatsuki's "pure black ovals"), as bound by more-than-physical gravity in a "dance" with waters running free within the earth, cradling her ancestors:

> My loved ones, rest in your world of stone. Around you flows the underground stream. How bright in the darkness the brooding light. How gentle the colours of rain. (246-47)

One senses here the significance, for literary art, of Naomi's brief meditation in the attic on the tools she finds there, brought by Obasan's father to Canada, one of which she somehow knows he used by pulling

it towards him, not pushing away: "There is a fundamental difference in Japanese workmanship —to pull with control rather than push with force" (24). And in this "brooding light," the remains of Wakatsuki's family's rock garden and others like it contain the calligraphy, now far from "fearful," in which may be read not only "lost" but "found."

In Cynthia Kadohata's *The Floating World* (1989), set in the western American states during the 1950s, Olivia Ann Fujiitano would appear to have absorbed, at an earlier age compared to Kogawa's Naomi and more intuitively than consciously, a similar self-knowledge. Twelve years old as the story begins, Olivia Ann lives on the road with her *nisei* mother and stepfather and her *issei* grandmother, as her strangely functional dysfunctional family roams in search of seasonal work. Among themselves they encompass the tyrannical rigidities of old-world Japanese tradition, the enigmas of arrival and *sur*vival in America, and the baffling mixtures of freedom and fate confronting the young in their efforts (as Sone said) "to be just myself."

In this first-person version of *ukiyo*, the floating world, about which Olivia Ann's grandmother often tells stories,

> The floating world was the gas station attendants, restaurants, and jobs we depended on, the motel towns floating in the middle of fields and mountains. In old Japan, *ukiyo* meant the districts full of brothels, teahouses, and public baths, but it also referred to change and the pleasures and loneliness change brings. For a long time, I never exactly thought of us as part of any of that, though. *We* were stable, traveling through an unstable world . . . , (3)

a post-World War II, post-relocation camp America which offers them no settled place. It is at once as if the war had never been and as if its residual force had randomly dispersed them, like pebbles strewn by time in *Farewell to Manzanar*.

A latter-day Huck Finn of sorts ("It was high time I left" are her novel-ending words), a Kerouac kid always on the move—a "no-no *girl*" if only she knew it—Olivia Ann is awash in the signs and symbols of American roadside culture and the blur of shifting landscapes, her sense of the past as yet unprecipitated from the flow and fragmentation of the present. She is shaping herself from the overlaps of her life with those of her makeshift yet oddly steadfast family, piecing herself together

on both sides of what Sone called her "hyphenated Americanism," inarticulate in Olivia Ann's case but deeply felt. Fluent in English, her "native" tongue, she tries after her grandmother's death to translate with her mother's help portions of the grandmother's diaries, written in Japanese. "I liked the *two* languages," she says, "how each contained thoughts you couldn't express exactly in the other" (109). Intuitively rather than ideologically, she tries to keep from losing either side of the Japanese-American equation (the "equivalency" of which, however, remains at issue), as she seeks to leave behind, yet also to cling to, a sense of herself as a stranger in a strange land.

The war and the camps—of which Kadohata as author had no direct experience yet which permeate her prose between the lines—figure only obliquely, dark-on-dark shadows like those on the highway at night, pulses in the blood, unspoken. Still, they are part of what molds and moves the narrative, from within and without, informing Olivia Ann's soundness of heart and voice, if not her unformed historical understanding:

> My parents taught me many things they hadn't meant to teach me and I hadn't meant to learn. One of those things was fear: their first big fear, during the war; and when my father was arrested; . . . concern that I would be all right in the future; and a hundred other interwoven fears. That was what I wanted to leave. (147)

Even her name, as she tries to shake free of a past she is also in the process of re-embracing, is unfixed. Her given names, Olivia Ann, are shadowed by her parents' original Japanese names, which her grandparents had to change to American names in order to enroll their children for school in Honolulu after Pearl Harbor. Her surname, Fujiitano, was itself created when her grandparents first arrived in the United States, from names her great-grandfather associated with "rich" and "happy," the dream of an American "Gold Mountain" not yet dimmed. Mostly, however, she needs no name, only a voice in a world where, as in the roadside rushing by, "No idea had definite form; every fact could dissolve into fiction" (35).

No less than for survivors of concentration camps in Europe or elsewhere (however crucial the differences may be), the American

relocation camps are part of what has cut Olivia Ann, perhaps in some measure Kadohata as well, loose from a world of fixed reference points, seemingly secure, the security and fixedness of which are illusions to which Americans are particularly susceptible, mistaking them for structures on which we may always rely. The camps are therefore also part of what links Olivia Ann—like other American protagonists before and since—to the fluid, floating world in which she darts and drifts, both toward and away from assimilations which would erase the past.

This past is a force-field of memory and forgetfulness ("Everything is forgetfulness," Obasan had said at the end of the scene in the attic), invisibly scattered and held together like a cloud of stars seen by light violently emitted eons ago. Or like a small heap of rocks sinking deeper into the sand at Manzanar, in which can be read the record of violence and its brief transcendence thirty, now more than fifty, years before. Or, yet again, like Olivia Ann's sense of her grandmother's diary entries, early on "vigorous and certain, full of answers and proclamations," then tending toward a balance of

> both questions and answers, and finally, toward the end of her life, only questions . . . .
>
> The wind was blowing hard—birds, clouds, cars, all going in the same direction. A sudden gust of wind made a dandelion field explode. (181)

Here—for Kadohata as literary artist, as in a sense for Olivia Ann as the artist of herself—are Naomi's self-submission to "questions," and "the seed flower[ing] with speech" in the epigraph from Kogawa's *Obasan* at the start. A Japanese-American canon continues to crystallize, in the sense of constant crystalline formation rather than of final fixity or stasis. But the energy in this image of a field of windblown seeds, each a floating world unto itself, may return us to discussion of David Mura's *Turning Japanese*, against the background of an arc (or an "underground stream") selectively traced from Sone to Kadohata.

* * *

At times in *Turning Japanese*, Mura can sound like Nabokov in *Speak, Memory*, or Naipaul in *A Turn in the South*, or indeed like Henry James

in *The American Scene*, at once displaced and self-displaced, more at home on the page, in a "world elsewhere" of the act of writing, than in either an adoptive or an ancestral "home." "America" seems in this vein more like a holographic projection of the artist's preoccupations than an actual terrain currently inhabited or observed. Or Mura can speak as the Midwesterner he is, "from Chicago, that inland city beside that inland sea," seeing in the mirror of the island nation of Japan "how much I am not reflected in American culture, how much it is not my culture" (369), whatever else he sees in the Westernized commercial surfaces or the Eastern spiritual or psychological depths, only partially accessible to him, of the land of his forebears.

Connecting and disconnecting each, however—the citizen of the world of his artist's imagination, and the sojourner bound not least by alienation into the culture *from* which he feels apart yet *of* which he *is* a part—is Mura's still-developing sense of Japanese-American heritage, rooted in both its solidarities and its fragmentations in the relocation-camp experience, for all that the first major wave of Japanese immigration to the United States took place closer to the turn of the century than to the 1940s. Mura had not yet been born in 1942, but on the eve of departure for Japan in 1986, reflecting on his prior "insistence on my Americanness," he notes (as if seeing it for the first time) that "my Japanese ancestry was there in my poems—my grandfather, the relocation camps, the *hibakusha* (victims of the atomic bomb) . . . it was obvious my imagination had been traveling there for years, unconsciously swimming the Pacific, against the tide of my family's emigration, my parents' desire after the internment camps, to forget the past" (9).

As a boy, he recalls, "Japan had never seemed that important to me." With relatives at holiday gatherings, for example, "I didn't notice that the faces around me looked different from most of the faces at school. . . . We were American. . . . Japan was . . . Godzilla, . . . [and] the endless hordes storming GIs in war movies, . . . tiny Asians with squinty eyes mowed down in row after row by the steady shots of John Wayne or Richard Widmark." By the 1980s he was aware of Japan's new image as an economic power, Godzilla and the Yellow Peril now become "a monster of industrialization" made up of "robot people" (8). "But none of this had much to do with me," he says. "After all, I was a poet."

> So, when I did win the fellowship, I felt I was going not as an ardent pilgrim, longing to return to the land of his grandparents, but more like a contestant on a quiz show winning a trip to Bali or the Bahamas. . . . Of course I was pleased about the stipend, but part of me wished the prize was Paris, not Tokyo. I would have preferred French bread and Brie over *sashimi* and rice, Baudelaire and Proust over Bashō and Kawabata, structuralism and Barthes over Zen and D. T. Suzuki. At least I had studied French in high school. (9)

Just as before leaving for Japan, however, he had suddenly sensed himself already immersed in the imagery of a defining Japanese-American experience ostensibly "over with" before he was born yet insistently welling up from within, so too throughout *Turning Japanese*, as in his poetry, the shape and the shaping power of that experience is evident, whether or not always directly in view.

Mura's chapter headings in *Turning Japanese*, in fact, are studded with quotations from earlier Japanese-American writers, often paired with passages from established European or Japanese authors, much as W. E. B. DuBois jointly punctuated each chapter in *The Souls of Black Folk* with a wordless bar of slave-song music and a "standard" (usually a 19th-century British) literary citation. As he works his way into and among these blocks of quotation from other Japanese-American writers—which are nevertheless, as epigraphs, typographically separated from his own narrative line—he is still finding his place within, even as he continues to contribute to, the orbits of the larger narrative, while at the same time resisting or rejecting certain of its paradigms. Mura's book is idiosyncratically personal to the point of resisting submergence in the collective interpretation (or in what often amounts to a collectively *un*conscious memory of the camps in which much is suppressed). But in his voice is also the flow of just such an autobiographical tributary, confluent with a collective story as well as identifiably—however conflictively—his own.

At the end of his memoir, David Mura speaks of how "turning Japanese," as he understands it, has led him to see that he is "not Japanese," but rather either "American or . . . one of the homeless, one of the searchers for . . . a world culture" (370). In truth he is both, now more comfortably inhabiting the space between (a floating world not totally unlike Olivia Ann's). Like Henry James observing America from

Europe, or writing of return in *The American Scene* (the comparison is far from fatuous, without in the least bending Mura's vision or style to a Jamesian model in order to define it), Mura—seeing America from Asia and reflecting on return—has come closer to being able at once to "balance" and to cut loose from the need to balance "a conversation which had been taking place before I was born, a conversation in my grandparents' heads, in my parents' heads" (370) about how and whether to be Japanese in America, a conversation including if not limited to the internment.

Throughout his account of time spent in Japan, Mura is less interested on the surface, or indeed at the heart of that matter, in replicating himself as "the American Adam" or some other archetypal American protagonist (French bread and Brie *and* rice and *sashimi*, rather than, say, Thoreau's simpler rations; Barthes *and* D. T. Suzuki, rather than, say, James's Spencer Brydon in "The Jolly Corner," confronting the specter of an alternative self who chose a different relation to the country of his birth, although a ghostly self-encounter of sorts does occur in *Turning Japanese*). But he thinks nevertheless while in Japan of nothing more than he thinks of "home," or the problem of a sense of "home," no matter how intensively he tries to engage Japanese language and culture, more through its *avant garde* forms than through classical Japanese tradition. And the problem of "home" is often enough posed in terms of the transgenerational consciousness of the relocation camps, and focused finally for himself more in terms of race than in terms of American national identity, "hyphenated" or otherwise.

In feeling himself merge in crowded Tokyo streets into a sea of faces looking like his own (unlike his wife, instantly apparent as a *hakujin*, or white foreign person, for all that in some ways she was more open to the actualities of Japan than he), Mura also feels himself immersed in a ghostly flow of Asian faces from the American past, matters of mutual "recognition" insistent in their expressions. With greater clarity from this distance than he had found possible in the U.S., even in the distillations of his poems, he sees in generational array both his own family history and that of the Japanese in "the country I had thought was my home" (6), an America which now both is and is not. As the

speaker says to his correspondent in a poem called "Letters from Poston Relocation Camp (1942-45)," from Mura's *After We Lost Our Way,*

> When you write back, please
> tell me what country I'm in.
>
> I feel so poor now.
> These words are all I own. (9)

Mura explains his closer identification as a *sansei* with his *issei* grandparents than with his *nisei* parents, putting it however in a collective *sansei* voice: "We love the Issei more unequivocally because they were defeated. They never recovered from the camps. They verify that the camps were horrible," not only in their physical conditions but in their arbitrary assertion of "overwhelming power and authority." "I, and many other Sansei, are more angry at the Nisei than at the Issei. Despite the obstacles in their path, the Nisei, our parents, were in some sense able to succeed in America, to enter the middle class" (226). In this view their compliance with Executive Order 9066 in 1942 was somehow more culpable than that of *their* parents, not only because they were younger and stronger but also because their success softened their view of their own violation, made it easier for them to forgive and forget. And yet, of course, the *sansei* were the beneficiaries of the *nisei*'s ascent into the middle class, making it harder for Mura—insofar as he feels himself an inheritor of a legacy of victimization—to link his own sense of powerlessness with what his parents endured, connecting it instead to the fate of his grandparents. This despite his hearing from a Japanese friend, a professor specializing in Japanese-American literature, "There are passages in *No-No Boy* that have so much passion. . . . There's no Sansei who writes like that" (305).

Reading Kafka's *The Trial* while working his way through this generational maze, he had seen that in "the light of Kafka, the story of the camps becomes a parable, whose meaning I must somehow solve."

> One day K. steps out of his door to find a notice: he must report to the authorities. Who are the authorities? He does not know, only that he must report to them. When he reports to them, they give him a number, tell him to come back tomorrow. When he comes back the next day, he is taken by

> bus to a train and then by train to a place with others who have been given numbers and notices [each of these events closely resembling those befalling Japanese-American evacuees] . He realizes he has been imprisoned. He is no longer singular, no longer private. . . . What is his crime? He is K. That is his crime.
>
> My father's name was originally Katsuji Uyemura. Then Thomas Katsuji Uyemura. Then Tom Katsuji Mura. Then Tom K. Mura.
>
> What is the job of the son of K.? To forgive his crime? To try him again? (227)

These alternatives then give way—as through this "parable" Mura "translates" them at once into more personal and more culturally familiar Western literary terms—to a greater sympathy for the position of his parents, for "how far they had to travel in their childhood, from the Japanese world of their Issei parents to the America of their schools, the streets of L.A. and Seattle" (370). It is less an issue of compromise verdict—somewhere between forgiveness and reindictment of the father—and more one of entering his own increased "space" on a continuum containing both, as each generation has sought to re-enact, while discovering the need instead to move beyond, the experience of the generation before.

The conversation in his grandparents' and parents' heads, over whether and how to be Japanese in America, had for Mura's generation become an argument which was "very one-sided, so that the Japanese side was virtually silenced. My stay [in Japan] helped me realize that a balance, which probably never existed in the first place [between cultures so fundamentally different, as he has discovered], could no longer be maintained" (370), even if part of his purpose in going to Japan was to find a missing part of himself, on which "side" of the "conversation" he finds it difficult to be sure.

> *What is it to write a "history" of a people? Is it to gather up individual stories and fit them together into a logical, coherent structural whole? But what if the stories are all lost* [recall the resonance of the word in *Obasan*], *if those who tell them have been silenced* ["Unless the stone bursts with telling" as in *Obasan*]? *And no one actually lives a story; a story is a sequence of events which can be arranged as a romance, a tragedy, a comedy, depending upon the viewpoint of the teller, who is constricted and guided by a number of biases.*

> *Is the story of the Japanese Americans a comedy? A triumph? Does the reconciliation of the Nisei with America represent a romance? Or is it a tragedy, followed by a satire, where each identity is tinged with irony, the false fit?* (294)

A sense of ironic disjunction from *both* the "Japanese" and the "American" in "Japanese American" (with or without the hyphen) informs much of Mura's work in poetry, a mood which significantly shifts, without disappearing, in *Turning Japanese.*

A student of Japanese language during his stay; an ardent amateur of modern Japanese painting, dance and performance art; a tireless conversant with contemporary Japanese writers, even including in a way the dead Yukio Mishima, an idol of the young American long before he ever went to Japan; an adopter of current Japanese fashion in clothes; an endless walker of the cities, rider of subways and interurban trains, and hanger-out in restaurants and bars—Mura acknowledges in the end despite all this his greater affinity for the surfaces of Japanese life than for the depths those surfaces so effectively conceal. Unlike Kyoto, more closely tied to traditional culture, Tokyo, where he spent more time, is a "wacky, Japanese *Doppelgänger* to New York" (294), a similarity at once disappointing and reassuring to him.

He comes across a poem by Derek Walcott, the Nobel Prize-winning West Indian poet whose technique, he says, rivals that of anyone now writing in English. "Walcott pictures himself in Westminster Abbey, among the graves and gravestones of the great English poets, wondering, What am I doing here? A black man from the islands?" (76). Without presumption—and he is not necessarily a modest man in this book—Mura asks the same question of himself with respect to the monuments of traditional Japanese culture, just as he says that in order to "understand who I was and who I would become, I would have to listen to voices that my father, or T. S. Eliot or Robert Lowell did not dream of. . . . In the world of the tradition [meaning the American as much as the Asian], I was unimagined. I would have to imagine myself" (77). The very notion of "turning Japanese" is just a precipitant—one of many—to that process.

The sense of racial invisibility in Japan sharpens his sense of racial difference on return to the States. Reclaiming Japanese-American identity

meant (as he said in an article in *Mother Jones*, reflecting on the book the following year) "coming to terms with how the dominant culture had formed me; it meant realizing my identity would always be partially occluded. Finally, it meant that issues of race were central to me, that I would see myself as a person of color" (19). Yet he also says in *Turning Japanese*, "I do not feel bound now by my national identity, do not feel that being an American somehow separates me from the rest of the world" (368), as he had, for example, in certain poems about the war in Vietnam. It seems to follow, as he pursues the thought, that being Japanese American need not separate him now—at least not as much or in the same ways—from the white American world with which as a child, he said at the start, he felt more or less at one, and by which now he feels less closely confined, despite his heightened conviction that (in Cornel West's phrase) "race matters."[4]

Two images are twinned at the close of *Turning Japanese*, one "from Japan," Mura says, and one, as he puts it (not insignificantly) "from my life."

> The first is a photo of an old man, in tears, on his knees, rising from a bow, getting set to bow again. . . . He looks vaguely like my grandfather, the same fine silver hair, the long, sad face, not quite stern, but more resigned. . . . The man is praying for and mourning Emperor Hirohito, who, as I write this, is slowly dying. Hirohito's death will bring the end of the Showa era and is for this man and for all of Japan a symbol of enormous complexity, enormous change. What we see on the man's face is an image of Japan we will not see again. (371-72)

One recalls from Kogawa's *Obasan*, at the end of the scene discussed above, Naomi's sense of her aunt as an archetypal ancestor with "hair . . . so fine" and a face both filled with and beyond grief, only "half alive" (27). Mura predicts that the mourning for Hirohito's son, when he dies, "will not be as desperate, as filled with regret, will not be tinged with the same sort of imperial worship . . . which helped fuel a war that ravaged a continent and killed millions" (372), will reflect the completion of the post-war era, will be different due to generational change, whatever else the future may hold.

The second image, "not of death but of birth," occurs in a private "space" both intimately small and cosmically large. Back in St. Paul,

Minnesota—like Mura's (and Kadohata's) hometown Chicago an "inland city beside [an] inland sea," in turn like Kogawa's a sea "of field and prairie" (370)—he feels the movements of his unborn daughter (to be named Samantha) kicking in his wife's belly:

> Only one pound, she kicks with a sound that has come from nothing, from everything in our past, from my Japanese genes to the genes of my wife, English and Hungarian Jew. . . . Our daughter has made me feel much older than I was in Japan, much more tied to my grandparents, my parents, and to the future. This split I have felt between America and Japan, this fusion of two histories, will reside in her, in a different, more visible way. I would like to think she is a part of a movement taking place everywhere throughout the globe, our small planet spinning along in blue-black space. I would like to think that the questions of identity she faces will be easier than mine, less fierce, less filled with self-neglect and rage. That she will love herself more and be more eager for the world, for moving beyond herself, (372)

as she seeks—like her father and others but in new time and space—"to be just myself." Mura admits his lack of control over the outcome of such wishes. Having himself said "no" and "no" again to arbitrary categorizations of consciousness he knows he will continue to encounter, he knows nonetheless that while neither ethnicity nor race is yet part of the future on which his daughter has yet to embark (again from the retrospective piece in *Mother Jones*), "they are already there, with our hopes, gathering shape" (22).

Yet in the poetics of his concluding prose in *Turning Japanese*, "in the darkness" of the universe and the Minnesota night, "a tiny thump" of an unborn child asserts its claim to a world large enough for Samantha Sencer-Mura (her mother's and father's surnames conjoined) and all from whom she springs. No less like a field of potential force somewhere in the galaxy than a wind-burst dandelion field or a small star-burst of scattered stones, this "thump" of imminent arrival—like the "thudding" return for Naomi in *Obasan* of the question from which all her others derive—perpetuates for those who feel it (now including the reader) faith in the power of self-creations in the future, supported more than subverted by the past.

* * *

"Inland"—like the camps—in America, then, as much as on the Pacific Rim, Japanese-American images of the wartime internment and its consequences have been dispersed, flowing through 50 years of subsequent war and peace, the 50 years (we might imagine) that Ichiro felt he faced in *No-No Boy* with no release from his inner conflicts in view. What Mura calls "a welter of images, the clear outlines of certain moments that possess an irreducible resonance" (370-71)—in context his recollected images of Japan—may also be seen as the images of America all-too-selectively gathered and considered here, in the confusions from which they come, and in the clarities of outline imparted to them.

Such images are still being produced and projected—in their passionate intensity and meditative reflection, in their impetus toward resolution and acceptance of irresolution—"deeper into the land," to call again on Sone's evocation of her thrust into the future upon her release from a concentration camp in Puyallup, a town in the state of Washington, a region of the United States of America. Indeed, what Wakatsuki Houston calls in her foreword to *Farewell to Manzanar* a "web" of interrelated stories, personal and communal, is widening still in recent writing and other cultural expression, branching and converging like the veinings in stone.

It "keeps gathering inside us," in words from Uyematsu's poem "Rock," having long been "hidden / in the silence of fathers" (27), or "underground" as in Kogawa's *Obasan*. Now, increasingly, it flows forth. It illuminates places of heart and mind from Manzanar to Minnesota, "where [again from 'Rock'] dark / collects light" (26), as boulders first store and then radiate the desert sun, as night erases but also outlines day, as the future both absorbs and annihilates the past, as art reflects yet refigures life.[5]

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NOTES

[1]The phrase is appropriated from *White Flash, Black Rain: Women of Japan Relive the Bomb.*

[2]Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore* 397.

[3]The phrase is appropriated from Fussell's *Thank God for the Atom Bomb.*

[4]The phrase is appropriated from West's *Race Matters.*

[5]I wish to thank King-Kok Cheung and Don T. Nakanishi for an opportunity to present portions of an earlier version at a conference organized by the Asian-American Studies Center at UCLA in 1992, marking the 50th anniversary of the internment. I wish also to express my gratitude to John Tateishi for interest, information and encouragement.

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Richard Eden and Peter Martyr: Author's Response*

ANDREW HADFIELD

It is extremely gratifying to have elicited three very different responses to my article concerning a major early modern text representing the discovery of the Americas; (1) concerned with questions of the generic categorization of the text and how it should be read (William Hamlin); (2) which deals with the contemporary politics of Marian England, Richard Eden's significance and his religious allegiance (Claire Jowitt); and (3), a consideration of the significance of the vast number of editions and texts of Peter Martyr's *Decades of the New World* (Michael Brennan). It was also rather a relief to receive an open letter from a scholar of the status of Anthony Pagden which contained the comment, "I certainly have nothing to criticize" (p. 65). Such rare moments are to be treasured. The varied nature of the three rsponses—two of them extremely scholarly in their own right—confirm my sense that Peter Martyr's text is certainly worthy of serious reconsideration and that it poses a multitude of questions concerning the nature of early modern European colonialism which are relevant not simply for specialists in the period, but impinge upon the wider problems of colonialism, national identity, and the relationship between the two, often discussed as if they were isolated phenomena.[1]

*Reference: Andrew Hadfield, "Peter Martyr, Richard Eden and the New World: Reading, Experience, and Translation," *Connotations* 5.1 (1995/96): 1-22; William Hamlin, "On Reading Early Accounts of the New World," *Connotations* 6.1 (1996/97): 46-50; Claire Jowitt, "'Monsters and Straunge Births': The Politics of Richard Eden. A Response to Andrew Hadfield," *Connotations* 6.1 (1996/97): 51-65; Anthony Pagden, "Peter Martyr and Richard Eden: A Letter," *Connotations* 6.1 (1996/97): 65-66; Michael Brennan, "The Texts of Peter Martyr's *De orbe novo decades* (1504-1628): A Response to Andrew Hadfield," *Connotations* 6.2 (1996/97): 227-45.

I have little to comment on (3), Michael Brennan's learned piece, which is a far more subtle and complex reading of the bibliographical history of Martyr's text in Europe than my essay could pretend to be. I would suggest that Brennan's observations tend to support and develop my case that the work was caught up in a web of competing discourses and functions which tended to pull in opposite directions. Brennan points out how the 1587 edition modified Richard Eden's claim that England needed to copy and become a subordinate partner in Spain's ongoing colonial expansion, Hakluyt's preface suggesting instead that England needed to rival Spain's achievements. Indeed one might push the importance of Hakluyt's comments further and read them as one aspect of his overall sense that unless England could compete with Spain in the Americas then the success of the Protestant Reformation would be in danger. If left unchallenged, the Spanish empire would become invincible through the acquisition of gold and control of shipping routes and English Protestants could suffer the fate of their counterparts in France and the Low Countries.[2] The problem of national identity and apparent need for colonial expansion cannot be separated.[3]

This brings me round to William Hamlin's interesting piece (1) which makes the criticism that, despite my appeal for a sceptical reinvestigation of early accounts of the New World, I "inadvertently fall back into an undue reliance upon models and categories which, according to my essay's own logic, we ought to regard with suspicion" [tenses and pronouns altered] (47). I think Hamlin scores a palpable hit when he points out that I do not move much beyond "the 'dirty dog' and 'noble savage' schools of thought" (47) and that I should allow for more complex combinations and variations on these two poles. However, I am troubled by his claim that we should dispense with the very notion of colonialism in an attempt to recreate the sense of "unclassifiable newness" European travellers experienced when they encountered the Americas. Hamlin's critical enterprise would appear to echo that of Stephen Greenblatt when he explored the resonances of the term "Wonder" applied to the experiences of late Medieval and Renaissance travellers.[4] Yet in that work Greenblatt argued that a sense of wonder was split into two over the very question of colonialism; for some travellers, notably Columbus himself, the sense of wonder was one of

appropriating a whole series of new phenomena in order to expand one's possessions; for others, such as John Mandeville or Michel de Montaigne, there was a sense of awe in the presence of a different world.

My point is not that Greenblatt is necessarily right in the way he classifies the texts he analyses.[5] Rather, the problem seems to me to be a generic and empirical one. Hamlin appears to be arguing that we ought to recognise a completely separate category for texts which confronted the novelty of the Americas and had to classify the New World. However, as Anthony Pagden has pointed out, in order to classify texts one has to appeal to a system already in use. Nothing can ever hope to escape completely from what has gone before. Early modern observers of the Americas (and commentators using their eye-witness accounts) relied upon what they already knew.[6] Put another way, no kind of writing is ever entirely free from the generic marks of another genre, even if the author signals to the reader that one particular type of text has been produced. The ghosts of other readings will always be there as traces.[7] Hence an infinite open-mindedness, which is what Hamlin advocates, might be a fine Utopian ideal of reading, but it does not recognise the contingencies of textual composition or critical reading. Texts are never free-floating beyond systems of interpretation.[8]

Moreover, I think it would be historically rather dangerous to get rid of the notion of the colonial text. One might legitimately object to the current ubiquity of the term and the semantic burden it appears to carry which on occasions results in vast numbers of works being read as if they only existed in terms of colonial exploitation.[9] As I have emphasised in this response, one of the purposes of my original essay was to open out the problem of colonialism and demonstrate how the history of colonial expansion and national unification went hand-in-hand. An annoying argument one sometimes encounters, not always consciously articulated, is that colonial exploitation is the worst form of exploitation possible so that unless one describes a particular form of domination as "colonial" it is assumed that one is either excusing it or being naive in not recognising the full horror of the situation.[10] Nevertheless, such problems and distractions do not negate the usefulness or truth-value of the concept.

I would argue strongly for the need to preserve our understanding of "colonialism" and the "colonial" as terms which describe the movement of people from one land to another with the goal being to dominate them culturally and economically, or, in a more limited and "pure" sense, the settlement of groups of people from one land in other lands.[11] A rough and ready definition lacking in precision and eloquence, to be sure, but it does enable us to preserve the phenomenon of colonialism without classifying every text which mentions another culture as "colonial" or suggesting (falsely) that colonialism was a law unto itself. I would argue that Peter Martyr's *De orbe novo decades* and Eden's translation can legitimately be defined as colonial texts in the same way that one can refer to Richard Hakluyt the younger's writings as invariably "colonial" in intent and overall design, even if not every piece he wrote or collected necessarily belongs in that category. Both were designed to promote colonial expansion into the Americas, by encouraging entrepreneurs to support such initiatives, exhort settlers to make the journey across the Atlantic, and enable those in Europe to understand the achievements of the *conquistadores*. They contain numerous ethnological observations, analyses of local flora and fauna, comments on comparative government and warfare, but, overall, their purpose can be clearly defined. Hamlin is right that not all literature representing the New World should be classified as "colonial" from the outset; however, I would argue, much of it was colonial in design, most often written by those like Martyr, Eden and Hakluyt, who never set foot in the Americas.

I have far less to write about Claire Jowitt's intriguing piece of historical scholarship. She is undoubtedly right to link the image of the monstrous birth to Mary Tudor and provides ample evidence to support this contextual link. I am not wholly convinced that Eden can be read as a subtle critic of the Marian regime (although one should not rule out the possibility, of course); the text explicitly links the "monstrous byrthes" to the Wyatt rebellion of 1554 (see Hadfield 17); the evidence Jowitt assembles to suggest other criticisms of Spanish imperialism in Eden's writings is not overwhelming; and other evidence does suggest that Eden was a loyal servant of the crown (Brennan 235). Jowitt concludes that "The similarity between Eden's and Marian exiles'

descriptions of Mary's progeny would seem to indicate that there was, at the very least, a sympathy of ideas" (61). I would be inclined to turn this on its head and suggest that Eden was countering such suggestions which, as Jowitt makes clear, were well-known and widely disseminated in the mid-1550s, attempting to nullify their effect by demonstrating that the true monstrous birth was that of rebellion rather than the failed pregnancies of the queen, or, analogously, an Anglo-Spanish empire. However, I'm quite prepared to be corrected.

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NOTES

[1]Exceptions to this tendency are Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson and Edward W. Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993).

[2]See Richard Hakluyt, "Discourse of Western Planting, 1584," *The Original Writings & Correspondence of the two Richard Hakluyts*, ed. E. G. R. Taylor, 2 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1935) 2: 211-326, for a development of this argument. See also William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The Development of Anti-Spanish Sentiment, 1558-1660* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1971).

[3]See Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1992), ch. 4.

[4]Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1991).

[5]For criticism of Greenblatt's analysis (as well as praise), see my review in *Textual Practice* 7.1 (Spring 1993): 103-09.

[6]Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982) 2.

[7]Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992) 221-52; Deborah L. Madsen, *Rereading Allegory: A Narrative Approach to Genre* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995).

[8]For further reflection on this problem see Paul De Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1983).

[9]For a fascinating attempt to correct this problem, see James Axtell, *After Columbus: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America* (New York: OUP, 1988).

[10]This assumption seems to vitiate Robert Young's otherwise excellent *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London: Routledge, 1990). Young implies at times that French deconstructionist philosophers were superior to members of the Frankfurt school because their ideas were formed in opposition to the colonial Algerian War rather than the European struggle against fascism.

[11]For a much more sophisticated discussion of this problem of terminology, see M. I. Finley, "Colonies: An Attempt at a Typology," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 26 (1976): 167-88.

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Poets, Pastors, and Antipoetics: A Response to Frances M. Malpezzi, "E. K., A Spenserian Lesson in Reading"*

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Frances M. Malpezzi has written a fascinating article on how Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* contains within it a critique of bad readership and instructions on how to become the necessary analogue to Sidney's Right Poet, the Right Reader. We are particularly indebted to her parsing of the inner and outer fictions of the *Calender* and to her demonstration of how E. K.'s responses parallel "the numerous listeners and interpreters in the eclogues. In doing so, E. K. functions as an exemplum—sometimes positive and sometimes negative" (187). We are also indebted to her demonstration of how the various failures of poetic rhetoric throughout the *Calender* are as much the audience's fault as the poet's, for as Malpezzi rightly claims, the *Calender* attempts to instruct its audience in how to read. Although Malpezzi's comments are insightful and enabling, I nonetheless have a number of suggestions that might have made her argument even stronger. First, at times her conception of the *Calender*'s audience and intended purpose would be enhanced by additional broadening and historicizing, that is to say by more fully taking into account Spenser's ambitions and generic contexts that may have faded for contemporary readers but would have been perfectly obvious to those of the sixteenth century. Second, Malpezzi's contention that the success or failure of particular speakers is always determinable by their motivation (*caritas* leading to success; "base" desires, i.e. erotic love, leading to failure) may not always be sustainable. Finally, I think that Malpezzi's case could have been further strengthened by recognizing

*Reference: Frances M. Malpezzi, "E. K., A Spenserian Lesson in Reading," *Connotations* 4.3 (1994/95): 181-91.

the fissures and unresolved tensions marking Spenser's treatment of poetry.

To begin, Malpezzi asserts that "As Spenser shepherds his readers into a pastoral world that teaches about art, religion, and love, he constructs a framework that belies *the simplicity of its rustic setting*" (182; my emphasis); yet in all likelihood Spenser's audience would not have interpreted the "rustic setting" as marked by its "simplicity." According to the Virgilian *cursus*, the eclogue is the precursor to the epic. Consequently, writing about shepherds and their loves does not invoke simplicity but signals Spenser's ambition to become England's Protestant epic poet, a fact that E. K. makes explicit in his introductory "Epistle":[1]

> following the example of the best and most auncient Poetes, which devised this kind of wryting . . . at the first to trye theyr habilities: and as young birdes, that be newly crept out of the nest, by little first to prove theyr tender wyngs, before they make a greater flyght. So flew Theocritus . . . . So flew Virgile, as not yet well feeling his winges. So flew Mantuane, as being not full somd. So Petrarque. So Boccace; So Marot, Sanazarus, and also divers other excellent both Italian and French Poetes, whose foting this Author every where followeth. (18)

In addition to the writer's implicit ambition (made explicit by E.K.), a fact which necessarily blurs the easy distinction Malpezzi makes between licit and illicit, earthly and spiritual, motivations, there is also the inherent politics of the genre.

Malpezzi also could have strengthened her argument by recalling that eclogues were conventionally interpreted as political allegories. As George Puttenham will later write, pastoral verse was "not of purpose to counterfait or represent the rusticall manner of loues and communication: *but vnder the vaile of homely persons, and in rude speeches to insinuate and glaunce at greater matters, and such as perchance had not bene safe to haue beene disclosed in any other sort*" (38; my emphasis). And once more, E. K. himself alerts us in the "Epistle" to precisely this fact: "And also appeareth by the basenesse of the name, wherein, it semeth, *he chose rather to unfold great matter of argument covertly*" (18; my emphasis). Hence the not very subtle hints to interpret several of the eclogues topically (more on this below). Additionally, Malpezzi ought to have broadened

her secondary sources to include important scholarship by Louis Montrose and Annabel Patterson on the politics of the pastoral in general and this eclogue in particular. To her statement that "Spenser shepherds his readers into a pastoral world that teaches about art, religion, and love," Puttenham might well have added "politics" because that is how a contemporary reader would have regarded Spenser's pastoral world.

Malpezzi also implies repeatedly that Spenser addresses a unified, homogenous audience. She writes that "Colin's blazon of Eliza as sung by Hobbinol in 'Aprill' suggests the power of poetry to set forth *the virtuous ideal* and the power of the poet to instruct and lead *the community* in praise of that ideal" (185; my emphasis), and she concludes by remarking on "the social and religio-political obligations of *every Christian* who loves and serves the Word" (189; my emphasis). The religious-political situation prevailing during the later Elizabethan period, however, does not allow for an inclusive vision. When Spenser wrote the *Calender*, neither "the virtuous ideal" nor "the community" were single, monolithic entities. The operative question during this era would have been: what *kind* of Christian are you? and the wrong answer could result in imprisonment, mutilation, even execution.

In addition to the obvious attacks on Catholics peppered throughout the *Calender* (would Spenser have considered them part of "the community"?) Spenser's "left-of-center" Protestantism colors the entire poem, as exemplified by his making Algrind-Grindal the hero of the July eclogue. Paul E. McLane and John N. King, among many others, have shown that Spenser not only intervenes in contemporary religious disputes, but by siding with a figure stripped of his office and put under house arrest by Elizabeth herself, Spenser committed an act that could have led to either death or dismemberment. John Stubbes lost his hand for criticizing the queen, a fact that Spenser could not have been unaware of. In addition to Algrind-Grindal, there are other topical references. Thomalin and Diggon Davie can be identified with Thomas Cooper, Bishop of Lincoln, and Richard Davies, Bishop of St. David's, both of whom openly supported Grindal (King 35). Passages which on their surface might appear today to support such homogenizing terms as "the greater good" and "the community" might have struck Spenser's audience more like a versified op-ed piece.

"Aprill" certainly fits this description. Far from an exclusively apolitical setting forth of a "virtuous ideal," the poem implicitly criticizes Eliza/Elizabeth as much as it celebrates her. The sudden intrusion of Chaucerian diction into this national epithalamium—"Shee is my goddesse plaine, / And I her shepherds swayne, / Albee forswonck and forswatt I am" (97-99)—situates the poem in the tradition of Protestant, neo-Chaucerian satire (i.e., the *Ploughman's Tale*). But as Cain points out in his introduction, England's love for Cynthia implicitly criticizes Cynthia herself: "the lay speaks, though indirectly, against the queen's possible marriage to the French prince Alençon which in the late 1570s seemed all too probable. The marriage scheme was intensely unpopular in England, hence the assertions of rustic Englishness in the lay" (69). Colin may very well, therefore, be "an inspired poet serving the community," succeeding "through the grace of God . . . in reaching his listeners," but he is also a critic of the queen's marital affairs, delivering blame wrapped in praise.

In sum, the work's complicated religious politics are crucial. There were, then as now, many virtuous ideals, many communities. English Protestantism was neither a house united nor particularly tolerant of dissenting voices. Spenser's text certainly attempts to instruct and edify, but it is also a polemic that takes sides in contemporary religious controversies. Spenser's point in "Aprill" and other eclogues is not simply instruction in transcending "the narrow bounds of self" and serving "the larger community" (Malpezzi 189), but also an intervention in the dust and heat of controversy. In addition to exhortations to virtue, the poems also bundle together criticism of the queen, promotion of self, and promotion of England.

Concerning the relationship between the poet's success and his motivations, Malpezzi judiciously points out how Colin's self-involvement in "January" argues for a link between earthly desires and failed rhetoric. Yet it would be incorrect to assume that the poem condemns *all* earthly desires. In "Aprill," for instance, Hobbinol's answer to Thenot's regretful "Ah foolish boy, that is with love yblent: / Great pittie is, he be in such taking, / For naught caren, that bene so lewdly bent" (155-57) suggests that for him the problem does not lie with Colin's prostituting "his muse by using his poetry for the satisfaction of his base

desires" (186) but in Colin's not realizing that he is simply barking up the wrong tree: "Sicker I hold him, for a greater fon [fool], / *That loves the thing, he cannot purchase*" (158-59; my emphasis). Hobbinol, in other words, might have no objections if Rosalind had reciprocated Colin's attentions.

Also, the extent of Spenser's ambitions is crucial to understanding the *Calender*. Certainly, one aspect of this work is to encourage the edification of others and to be moved to, as Sidney might put it, virtuous action. Yet Spenser's own ambitions were material and worldly. He advertised his intention to become England's Virgil, and that meant becoming as much a figure at court and as politically involved as his Roman original. As "Aprill's" "Argument" tells us, "This Aeglogue is purposely intended to the honor and prayse of our most gracious sovereigne, Queene Elizabeth" (70). Teaching virtue, in other words, is part of a plea for patronage and for recognition that the New Poet is England's future Virgil, since "Aprill" also evokes Virgil's fourth ("messianic") eclogue. As Thomas H. Cain nicely puts it, Spenser's "purpose here is clearly self-promotion" (67). "Aprill," in other words, shows the New Poet using poetry "to serve his own desire," as, in Malpezzi's description of "January," the poem demonstrates his "capable manipulation of language in the service of a greater good." Indeed, in "Aprill," the greater good is almost inseparable from the poet's material gain. Spenser's aims, in other words, are not as divorced from the profit motive as Malpezzi seems to imply.

Richard Rambuss has recently reminded us that Spenser always wrote with an eye towards his own material advancement. He created the *Calender* while employed as secretary to John Young, Bishop of Rochester, and the poem "shows him looking to continue and advance that career by attaching himself in a similar capacity to some more highly-placed employer and patron. [The *Calender*] not only marks Spenser's auspicious poetic debut; it also serves through its display of his (secret) study as an advertisement of Spenser's qualifications for secretaryship" (29-30). Far from "transcending the realms of the narrowly personal and temporal desire for fame" (Malpezzi 185), the *Calender* is itself a plea for advancement and for fame.

The "October" eclogue, for instance, puts into question the blanket assertion that bad motives, i.e. worldly material gain, necessarily lead to rhetorical failure: "Rightly directed love of God and neighbor furthers the power of their [poet and preacher] words while a love of self, of earthly pleasures or ambition hinders them" (183). Cuddie, as E. K. writes in the headnote, "is set out the perfecte paterne of a Poete" (170).[2] But notwithstanding his perfection, he is also a failure, not because of his own failings, but because of the widespread "contempte of Poetrie" (170). Granted that poetry's success assumes an appreciative audience, yet this also means an audience that will *pay* for its pleasurable instruction. Poets may deal in the divine, but they are human and humans need to eat. Praise alone will just not pay the bills: "So praysen babes the Peacoks spotted traine, / And wondren at bright *Argus* blazing eye: / But who rewards him ere the more for thy? / Or feedes him once the fuller by a graine?" (31-34). Cuddie's interlocutor, Piers, ultimately agrees with Cuddie's assessment, suggesting that his insistence on lack of remuneration needs to be taken seriously rather than as an indictment of Cuddie's worldliness:

> O pierlesse Poesye, where is then thy place?
> If nor in Princes pallace thou doe sitt:
> (And yet is Princes pallace the most fitt)
> Ne brest of baser birth doth thee embrace. (79-82)

The poem, in other words, asks for patronage by illustrating the "contempte" that poetry has fallen into. And unlike Colin, Cuddie is not an unreliable narrator.

I would like now to consider Malpezzi's treatment of Renaissance antipoetic sentiment. In both the article Malpezzi quotes and in the subsequent book,[3] I argue for the importance of antipoetic sentiment in understanding the *Calender* in particular and English Renaissance poetics in general. Malpezzi quotes my assertion that the repeated failures of poetry within the *Calender* result in part from Spenser's difficulty "in reconciling his poetic ambitions with the antipoetic strain within Protestantism" (30), and she cites my characterization of the *Calender* as constantly oscillating between "vaunting ambition and the subversion of that ambition" (30). Malpezzi then challenges my position

by asserting "Yet throughout the *Calender* we are reminded that poetry is about more than earthly ambition" (185).

Two responses. First, I have suggested, poetry is at least as much about worldly ambition as anything else. Spenser wanted to rise, he wanted the Queen's notice and her material appreciation of his talents, and although ultimately his Irish estates were destroyed, Spenser's earthly ambitions were for the most part realized. But regarding antipoetic sentiment, Malpezzi still needs to take into consideration that Spenser wrote in the face of significant Protestant opposition to poetry, both secular *and* religious. A wealth of primary evidence demonstrates that for a committed Protestant such as Spenser, poetry and spirituality made for very uneasy companions because antipoetic sentiment was deeply ingrained within mainstream religion. To give three examples, each from the article, William Tyndale contemptuously dismissed all the accoutrements of Catholicism with the phrase "[they] gave themselves only unto poetry, and shut up the scripture" (268; Herman, "*Shepheardes Calender*" 16).[4] Furthermore, Tyndale and the other early reformers were so identified with antipoetic sentiment that John Skelton included it among the "odyous, orgulyous, and flyblowen opynions" refuted in "A Replycacion Agaynst Certayne Yong Scolers Abjured of Late" (c. 1528; Herman, "*Shepheardes Calender*" 16):

> Why have ye then disdayne
> At poetes, and complayne
> Howe poetes do but fayne?
> Ye do moche great outrage,
> For to disparage
> And to discorage
> The fame matryculate
> Of poetes laureate. (351-58)

And Theodore Beza, Calvin's right-hand man, among other attacks on poetry, wrote an epigram entitled (in translation) "A Sportfull comparison between Poets and Papists" (Herman, "*Shepheardes Calender*" 17). If Spenser takes his religion seriously, as indeed Malpezzi argues, then he must also take seriously the antipoetic strand within his religious group.

Now, given the fact of antipoetic sentiment in the sixteenth century, given its distinctly English Protestant genealogy, and given the equally important fact that many Muse-haters considered fiction and religion mutually exclusive categories (hence the banning of the mystery plays and the ordinance forbidding all mention of Christianity upon the stage in the early part of Elizabeth's reign),[5] to suggest an automatically *untroubled* connection between poetry and religion, as Malpezzi does, requires compelling evidentiary support.

Spenser's own uneasiness is first suggested by the fact that, pace Malpezzi's assertion that Colin succeeds in creating the eclogue recorded in "Aprill" "through the grace of God," Spenser (or E. K.) *never* ascribes Colin's talent to divine intervention. Rather, both Hobbinol and the headnote grant Colin entire responsibility for his creations: "Whereby he taketh occasion, for proofe of *his* more excellencie and skill in poetrie, to recorde a songe, which the sayd Colin *sometime made* in honor of her Majestie" (70; my emphasis), and "Aprill" makes clear why such a declaration would have been antithetical to Spenser. Although Malpezzi finds "Aprill" a serene depiction of the poet's Orphic power "to instruct and lead the community," yet at the same time, Spenser clearly senses that he is at risk here:

> I sawe *Phoebus* thrust out his golden hedde,
> upon her to gaze:
> But when he sawe, how broade her beames did spredde,
> it did him amaze.
> He blusht to see another Sunne belowe,
> Ne durst againe his fyrye face out showe:
> Let him, if he dare,
> His brightnesse compare
> With hers, to have the overthrowe.
>
> Shewe thy self *Cynthia* with thy silver rayes,
> and be not abasht:
> When shee the beames of her beauty displayes,
> O how art thou dasht?
> But I will not match her with *Latonaes* seede,
> Such follie great sorow to *Niobe* did breede.
> Now she is a stone,
> And makes dayly mone,
> Warning all other to take heede. (72-90)

In these stanzas, Colin suddenly realizes that there are limits to what he can or should do. Suggesting that Cynthia, who symbolizes both Elizabeth and Spenser's art, outshines Apollo (i.e., God) invites retribution for hubris. Spenser, in other words, registers his awareness of the limitations and dangers of poetic aspiration even as he engages in aspiration.[6]

In conclusion, Malpezzi's work would gain even more persuasiveness by taking into account Spenser's own awareness of the tensions between "pastors and poets" as well as of edification including pointed criticisms of the queen's religious policies and marital affairs. While Malpezzi rightly points out one of the many thematic elements of the *Calender*, that element needs to be modified by taking into account both the contentious, fractured nature of Elizabethan religious politics and the equally contentious, fractured nature of the poem itself.

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NOTES

[1]All references to E. K.'s commentary will be to the page number, and all references to the *Calender* will be to the line number.

[2]E. K. also takes this opportunity to advertise a possibly forthcoming book by the "Newe Poete," "called *the English Poete*, which booke being lately come to my hands. I mynde also by Gods grace upon further advisement to publish" (170), proving once more that private ambition is as much at the forefront of this text as spiritual edification.

[3]"*The Shepheardes Calender* and Renaissance Antipoetic Sentiment" and *Squitter-wits and Muse-haters: Sidney, Spenser, Milton and Renaissance Antipoetic Sentiment*.

[4]For a fuller explanation as well as for many more examples of sixteenth and seventeenth century attacks on poetry, I refer the interested reader to my *Squitter-wits and Muse-haters*.

[5]E.g., the letter from the Privy Council forbidding the Corpus Christi plays does so on the following grounds: "wherein they are done t'understand that there by many thinges used which tende to the derogation of the Majestie and glorie of God, the prophanation of the sacraments and the maunteynaunce of superstition and idolatrie, the said Commissioners decreed a lettre to be written and sent to the baylyffe, burgesses and other the inhabitantes of the said towne of Wakefeld that in the said playe no pageant be used or set furthe wherein the Ma'ye of God the Father, God the Sonne, or God the Holie Ghoste or the administration of either the

Sacramenttes of baptisme or of the Lordes Supper be counterfeyted or represented, or anythinge plaied which tende to the maintenaunce of superstition and idolatrie or which be contrarie to the lawes of God or the realme" (quoted in Gardiner 78). Also, in 1586, one muse-hater recounted an example from Eusebius in which "A Poet, who for having lewdly applyed a peece of Scriptures to a fable, suddently lost his naturall sight" (quoted in Herman, *Squitter-wits* 52).

[6]See, for example, my analyses of "June" and "July" (*Squitter-wits* 136-43).

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The Need for Editions of Shakespeare: A Response to Marvin Spevack*

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Editing Shakespeare has not come to an end, as Marvin Spevack claims in "The End of Editing Shakespeare," nor is it likely to do so. It may be true that for many plays the text is pretty well settled, but debate rages about the texts of plays that exist in different versions, Quarto and Folio, plays like *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Henry V*. So, for instance, the Cambridge edition of *King Lear* (1992) is based on the Folio text, the Arden edition (1997) offers a composite text, incorporating passages found only in Quarto or Folio, and the Oxford edition, now in preparation, will, I understand, be based on the Quarto. In the case of plays that are known only from the First Folio, it may be true that for many of them the text is "for all intents and purposes fixed" (Spevack 80), but this is not a serious reason for calling an end to editing. We can only understand Shakespeare in relation to our own time; his works are constantly being reinterpreted in relation to the concerns of our society, so that new insights demand new editions with new critical introductions. Many of the old Arden or New Cambridge editions now for this reason seem obsolete.

Spevack asserts that "The commentary situation is, surprisingly or not, much the same . . . commentary on it [i.e., Shakespeare's vocabulary] is for all intents and purposes fixed" (80). This astonishing remark shows a gross misunderstanding of the nature of a commentary. In the first place, glosses explaining words form only a modest part of the commentary in the major editions of individual plays. In the second place, critical theorising in recent years has persuasively shown that

*Reference: Marvin Spevack, "The End of Editing Shakespeare," *Connotations* 6.1 (1996/97): 78-85.

meaning in Shakespeare is contingent and unfixed. Our understanding of Shakespeare's vocabulary is constantly being enriched by a greater awareness of the play of meanings, allusiveness, and cross-connections exploited by the dramatist. As new reference tools become available, in relation, for example, to biblical echoes, to sexual innuendos, and to proverbial links, so hitherto unperceived implications may be noticed. What is simply and inadequately glossed in one-volume editions of Shakespeare may demand a much fuller note in the commentary of a single-play edition.

Thirdly, new aspects of the plays come into focus with each new generation of readers and editors. Many of the old second series of Arden editions, for instance, paid little or no attention to stage directions or staging either in their introductions or in their commentaries. Their main emphasis was lexical, in the wake of the completion of the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1933. Consciousness of the plays as staged has recently been raised by the availability of films or videos; everyone can now watch Shakespeare at home. Not surprisingly we have seen the rise of what is known as "performance criticism," and editors now routinely attend to details of staging, and the way these can affect our interpretation of plays. Feminist criticism has opened up new perspectives on Shakespeare's treatment of female characters. New historicist critics have generated new ideas about Shakespeare's relation to events of his time. I could go on; suffice it to say that editors continually need to come to terms with new modes of critical inquiry, so that there will always be a demand for new editions.

Furthermore, editors inevitably vary considerably in what they see as important or as necessary to explicate in relation to their perception of the nature and theatrical significance of a play by Shakespeare. It is not true that commentary is "to all intents and purposes fixed"; rather the commentary in a good critical edition reveals the editor's vision of the play in the light of current ideas and preoccupations. Let me offer one example to illustrate the point. Here are the initial commentary notes in six recent editions of *King Lear*:

> 1. The opening dialogue introduces the underplot and gives us a glimpse of Kent before his intervention at l. 119. (Kenneth Muir, "Arden 2," 1952)

2. K[ittredge] gives 'Edmund stands back'. Coleridge (1.56) says that Glo. speaks in Edmund's presence about his birth with 'a most degrading and licentious levity'. Some are doubtful whether the subject w[oul]d be thought too delicate for discussion in Sh[akespeare]'s day. But cf. 'blushed . . . brazed' (ll. 9-10). (John Dover Wilson and George Ian Duthie, The New Shakespeare, 1960)

3. The scene which follows generates all the subsequent action. A short prelude introducing the names and natures of Gloucester and Edmund leads into a headlong ritual of abdication and "auction" of the country. Loyalty and sense are exiled from Britain in the persons of Cordelia and Kent, but taken up by the King of France. Hypocrisy and opportunism are left in charge of self-ignorant greatness. (G. K. Hunter, Penguin, 1972)

4. Lear's canopied chair of state is already placed upstage, between the two entrance doors. In the quiet conversational exchange which introduces both the plot and subplot, Edmund stands upstage, perhaps gazing at the throne and its surroundings to which he has recently returned (line 27), until he is called into the conversation in line 20. (E. A. Horsman, Bobbs-Merrill, 1973)

5. SD GLOUCESTER F spells the name in this way in some SDs and *Gloster* in others. In SHs, *Glouc.* is most frequently used, though Compositor E tends to prefer *Glo.* or *Glost.* In dialogue, 'Glouster' is Compositor B's preferred spelling, 'Gloster' Compositor E's. Q consistently uses 'Gloster', which reflects the proper pronunciation. (Jay Halio, Cambridge edition, 1992)

6. Presumably a throne or chair of state was placed on the stage to signal a ceremonial scene, and to prepare for the entry of the King; there may have been banners or emblems to mark the court as English; see 4.4.0.1 and n. Although the play takes place nominally in the mythical reign of a king who ruled in antiquity, the characters may well have worn contemporary costumes; see 2 and n. Probably Kent carried a rolled-up map; see 36 and n. (R. A. Foakes, "Arden 3," 1997)

It is evident that these notes are all very different from one another. The first is briefly concerned with plot. The second focuses on Edmund and the propriety of the dialogue concerning his illegitimate birth. The third sums up the scene in terms of a moral and allegorising comment on the nature of the characters. The fourth is mainly concerned to propose a confident idea of staging, the location of a chair of state, and the placing of Edmund. The fifth focuses on the spelling and pronunciation of the name of Gloucester, perhaps partly in order to warn American students to avoid their natural inclination to read it as "Glou-

ces-ter." The last note comments on some aspects of staging, on costumes, and on the property that will be required later in the scene. The note in the Penguin edition, number 3, may stem to some extent from the emphasis on moral criticism in the 1960s. The different ways of dealing with staging in numbers 4 and 6 no doubt reflect the increasing attention given to performance in recent times. In relation to number 5 the editor's concentration on the way compositors spelled names and the differences between versions of the play is connected with the intense debate about the relation of Quarto to Folio *King Lear* that erupted in the 1980s.

My concern here is not to make a judgment or state a preference, but merely to point out how radically different these notes are from one another, in accordance not merely with the kind of help an editor thought his readers needed, or with the critical fashions of the day, but also with advances in our understanding of the texts and of the staging of the plays. Spevack thinks such editions contribute "little to our grasp of Shakespeare." In my experience, good editions provide the best possible help for understanding the plays. And if they seem at times to be "glossing the obvious" (Spevack 83), it is because what is obvious to the scholar may not be to the student or reader who has grown up on a diet of television rather than literature, and who may have a limited sense of the nuances of meaning so skilfully exploited by Shakespeare. I don't think we know the implications of hypertext yet, or how to use it, and discussion of it is therefore best left for the future.

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Connotations
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"*Lucius*, the Severely Flawed Redeemer of *Titus Andronicus*": A Reply*

JONATHAN BATE

Anthony Brian Taylor's essay brings forward some excellent arguments for a sceptical view of Lucius Andronicus, who takes charge of Rome at the end of Shakespeare's first tragedy. I would like to suggest, however, that he misreads my recent Arden edition of the play (Routledge, 1995), for my reading in fact supports his argument that Lucius is "severely flawed."

I wrote on page fifteen of my introduction that Lucius' "final action raises questions" as to whether or not he will "usher in a new golden age." I pointed out that the play has begun to degenerate as a result of the denial of proper burial rites for Alarbus, and that the denial of proper burial rites for the victims at the end of the play may therefore be questionable. In addition, there is the problem of, as I put it, "how the Goths are going to be paid off for their assistance." My note to 5.1.145 also pointed out that it is left open as to whether Lucius will "resort to strong-arm tactics himself." We have some of the same doubts about him as we will have about Fortinbras at the end of *Hamlet*.

Does the play end with an invasion, a coup d'état or a popular election? The answer seems to me to be a murky combination of all three. There is an editorial problem regarding the two lines in which Lucius is hailed as Rome's emperor (5.3.140, 145): in the text of the First Quarto, uncle Marcus Andronicus does the hailing, as if cajoling the other Romans on stage to accept Lucius.

And who are these other Romans? According to the First Quarto stage direction at 5.3.16, when Emperor Saturninus and Empress Tamora arrive

*Reference: Anthony Brian Taylor, "*Lucius*, the Severely Flawed Redeemer of *Titus Andronicus*," *Connotations* 6.2 (1996/97): 138-57.

at Titus' house for the banquet, they are accompanied by "Tribunes and Others," whereas we would have expected them to be accompanied by Senators. It may be assumed that the Tribunes are brought on so that there will be a "common voice" available (5.3.139) for the resolution. The "Others" must be the imperial guard, attendants like those who accompany Saturninus in 4.4 (where some of them are ordered to take the Clown off to be executed).

At the beginning of the final scene, Lucius sets an ambush of Goths. Some of these Goths are still on-stage when the table is set at line twenty-seven. We can only assume that as the banquet takes place there is an uneasy truce between the Goths (followers of Lucius) and the Romans (followers of Saturninus). When, at the climax of the grisly feast, Titus points to the pie and stabs Tamora, there is an uproar. Saturninus stabs Titus and Lucius stabs Saturninus. It is clear from lines 129-35 that the surviving Andronici go aloft during the uproar. *Pace* Taylor, I stand by the assumption that what has happened at this point is that the uneasy truce has been broken: the Romans have been on the point of arresting or even killing Lucius for his treasonable act of stabbing the Emperor, causing the Goths to intervene and protect the Andronici.

From aloft, Marcus and Lucius then set about explaining events to the survivors below, and making the case for Lucius being proclaimed emperor. Given that the Goths are still on stage, there is a sense in which the Romans have little choice but to accede to the proposal. Lucius holds all the cards.

All this seems to support Taylor's reading of Lucius as a brutal, military-minded pragmatist.

But Shakespeare was never a didactic or a monovocal dramatist. Even this early in his career, he sees both sides of a question. Claudius-like, Saturninus has been worrying that the popular will is slipping away from him. In the paralysis at the climax of the bloody banquet, Lucius is the obvious figure to turn to, not only because he holds the cards but also because the play has set up the Andronici as "popular" figures (Marcus is a Tribune) and has set up Lucius in particular as a restorer of Rome—he is explicitly compared to Junius Brutus. Lucius restores the state in the wake of Lavinia's rape, as Junius Brutus had done in the wake of the rape of Lucrece, in the other Roman work of Shake-

speare's which was published in close proximity to *Titus*. Shakespeare knew from Livy and Painter that Junius Brutus' initial was "L" and it does not take much imagination to suppose him seeing the aptness of "Lucius" as the name of his correspondent character. The name itself suggests the restoration of light, the ending of the dark days of Saturninus' tyranny.

Just as the play is intriguingly open-minded with regard to Lucius, so it is with regard to the Goths. At one level, the Goths at the end of the play are invading Rome because they wish to take revenge on their Queen Tamora for selling out and marrying Saturninus. But at the same time, they and Lucius share a language of faithful friendship, worthiness, honour and valour. They serve as a rebuke to the decadence into which Rome has fallen. This is of a piece with the play's persistent dissolution of the binary opposition which associates Rome and the city with virtue, the Goths and the woods with barbarism. I suggested in my edition that the Elizabethan equation of Goths with Germans opens up the possibility that a Tacitean discourse of the plain outdoor virtue of the Teutonic tribes runs through the play, countering the images of imperial Roman decadence. In *As You Like It*, Touchstone compares his exile in Arden to that of Ovid among the Goths. Touchstone and his fellow-exiles find, of course, that Arden is a much more civilised place than the court: the implication is that Gothic associations may be preferable to Roman ones.

The image of northern Europeans returning to a kind of purity of life that had been lost by the decadent Romans in the south had a very modern resonance when the play was written in the 1590s: it suggests the German Reformers of the decadent Roman religion. That, it seems to me, is why we find a Goth in the latter part of *Titus Andronicus* gazing upon a ruined—which is to say a specifically post-Reformation—monastery. The great twister of truth, Aaron, accuses Lucius of "popish tricks and ceremonies" (5.1.76): we should never take what Aaron says at face value, so this strongly suggests that Lucius should in fact be regarded as the very opposite of a Catholic. So it is that a positive reading of the character may draw on the fact that, according to the arch-Protestant John Foxe, Lucius was the name of the king who introduced an original "pure" Christian faith into Britain.

I remain convinced that both the positive and negative readings of Lucius and his faithful friends, the Goth army, are there in the play, and that the concomitant indetermination of value-judgement is one of the play's excellencies. I am glad that Anthony Taylor shares my sense of the element of critique in the representation, but I am not persuaded that the representation is all critique.

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Connotations
Vol. 6.3 (1996/97)

Re-navigating "Crossing the Bar"*

ROBERT F. FLEISSNER

Jerome Hamilton Buckley's response to me in *Connotations* 6.1 commences by pronouncing that I have not considered all the manuscript material of Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar." True enough, but my purpose was to cling rather to the final, fully accepted version; if I had wanted to deal also with early draft material, I would have subtitled my note "Evidence of the Manuscripts," not merely "The Manuscript Evidence . . . ." Thus, I saw no need to come to terms with (or even actually see) what Tennyson *originally* wrote, because what was of major concern, in terms of the poet's *final intent*, would obviously be only the last revision. Why Buckley then finds my typescript of this finished version to be "odd" is beyond me, because if a typed or printed version accurately reproduces a manuscript it would normally have to include such devices as scribal ampersands (or "plus signs," as he helpfully also calls them), not translate them into conjunctions. If Buckley feels that the earlier manuscript he reproduced is not "retrograde" (which his critic Baum believes), he should show why; as it is, he merely indicates that it has the identical symbol of the ampersand, again four times in the text.

Now, Buckley goes on to imply that the ampersand should not be confused with the cross insignia, though in point of fact by terming the ampersand a "plus sign" in its scribal form, he is himself allowing for this identification. Though he professes he has never found a scribal ampersand connoting a cross elsewhere in British literature, I would

*Reference: Robert F. Fleissner, "Grace Note: The Manuscript Evidence for a Christological 'Crossing the Bar,'" *Connotations* 5.1 (1995/96): 23-33; Jerome H. Buckley, "'Crossing the Bar,'" *Connotations* 6.1 (1996/97): 95-97.

like to see his statistical evidence for confirming this. True, in citing a Tennyson manuscript I located at Cornell University, I pointed to an ampersand which did not have this connotation, but because the context there is so different, I saw no need for re-examining Tennyson's other manuscripts (even in the Ricks edition) if only to have to witness further usage but also in irrelevant contexts. So my subtitle should be read as "*The* Manuscript."

At least Buckley is helpful in providing an explicit example of Tennyson's referring to making "the sign of the cross" in his poetry. (I am duly reminded that the Poet Laureate's favorite portrait of himself has traditionally been known as "The Monk.") This device is probably the most well-known form of the plus sign used to signify the Cross in world literature. And because the main secular signification of the plus sign has been largely an affirmative one (standing for a positive outcome), such an identification strongly aids in our coping with the poem better too, if only in that it shows how the Christian cross is not merely something to be borne, sometimes with pain, but points to the positive outcome of such endurance. This is what Tennyson's hopeful poem is all about.

With regard to my citing the "crost" spelling in the final manuscript, Buckley finds my stress on this antiquated spelling misguided because many editors have already allowed for it, because the poet used the spelling elsewhere too, and because one time when he alluded explicitly to making the sign of the cross (in "The Lady of Shalott") he used the ordinary "crossed" orthography. As to modern editors having allowed for "crost" as well, I have to reiterate that some well-known modern editions, like the celebrated Norton anthology, still modernize the spelling, thus not allowing for any Christian connotation to enter in. Their only justification has been to avoid an archaic (or also Christian denominational?) effect. In general, Tennyson's having used the "crost" spelling elsewhere is like his further use of the plus sign; it need not have a symbolic meaning.[1] What counts for us should be the immediate context in "Crossing the Bar."

When Buckley mentions Tennyson's reference to Divinity in general terms, "That Divine and Unseen Who is always guiding us" (*Memoir* II, 376), announcing that "Fleissner fails to consider" this, he fails to

notice that in my earlier research on the poem (as duly cited in the Bibliography) I specifically do make use of this Calvinistic allusion.[2] So, in general, Buckley does not appear to sympathize with Christianizing interpretations based on connotative wordplay. For the mere fact that Tennyson *elsewhere* did not mean plus signs as encoded signs of the Cross scarcely rules out their having that significance in the immediate context of "Crossing the Bar," as that title could already connote. Dismissing my Christological reading of the lyric as "dogmatically" offensive is technically off the track. For the plus sign indicating a cross, especially "the sign of the cross," is traditionally recognized as designating *not* a dogmatic sacrament, but rather an undogmatic (that is, unrequired) sacrament*al*. For that reason too, it is sometimes used by Anglicans (and even some other Protestants) as well as Catholics.

Regarding "unconscious" interpretations, Buckley asserts that "not all readers" would want to probe an author's "inner or archetypal" meaning as possibly more significant than his conscious, intended one. In response, let me state, first, that I myself cannot speak for "all readers," nor would I want to; and, second, my implication was not to overrule conscious intent, only to add to it.

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NOTES

[1]For my latest discussion of the significance of the "crost" spelling in the poem, with indirect allusion also to Sir Charles Tennyson again, see my *Frost's Road Taken* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1996) 146. There I consider connotative meanings related to Tennyson's in the title of Robert Frost's poem "Kitty Hawk," whereby the double "t" could, in context, exert also a Christian meaning. (Tennyson was a poet Frost much admired.)

[2]See again my "*Quo Vadis Pedes*: Notes on the Liveryman in *Prufrock*," *The American Benedictine Review* 36 (1985): 400. Eliot also admired the Victorian Poet Laureate.

Connotations
Vol. 6.3 (1996/97)

A Response to John Watters, "The Control Machine: Myth in *The Soft Machine* of W. S. Burroughs*

OLIVER HARRIS

It's no calligraphy for school children.
Franz Kafka, "In the Penal Colony"

Four decades of critical reaction to William Burroughs has generated so much more heat than light that his position has stayed paradoxical: a figure of widely recognised cultural influence—indeed in multiple fields, from Beat to Cyberpunk, his presence is iconic— Burroughs remains a canonically marginal writer, *sui generis* to the point of monstrosity, a man gone too far beyond too many personal and artistic pales for serious literary attention. Over recent years, the noisy voices of extreme reverence and repulsion have at last given way to more considered analysis and assessment. And yet this more measured academic response may, perversely, subtract as much as it adds to our understanding, especially of his most radical work. This is because, finally, the response of the critical world may be only as Manichean as Burroughs' writing has itself demanded. Polarities tell us something that middle ways cannot, after the fashion of Burroughs' own radical extravagances, which reached their zenith in the cut-up 1960s—the recklessness of those experimental methods, the scandalous recycling of his homoerotic fantasies, the provocative brinkmanship of his prophetic theses, above all the sinister, viral, force of words that infect the imagination. The partisan, fragmentary, *inadequate* state of Burroughs criticism may, in short, accurately measure the absolutely extreme ambivalence, both emotional and ideological, about the power of the word itself, that unites Burroughs' work.

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*Reference: John G. Watters, "The Control Machine: Myth in *The Soft Machine* of W. S. Burroughs," *Connotations* 5.2-3 (1995/96): 284-303.

I offer this broad, impressionistic sketch as a context for responding to John Watters' analysis of "The Control Machine" for two purposes. Firstly, because one of the key issues raised by Burroughs' work has always been its relation to other work. Hence the weary critical catch-22: if genuinely different, then his work is anomalous, even irrelevant; if firmly embedded in a tradition, then its originality, and claim to our attention, fades before the denaturing embrace. In the case of myth this reductive opposition is particularly relevant, as Watters' uncertainty in the face of Burroughs' new "mythology for the space age" hints. Indeed, we have been here before: twenty years ago one critic recouped a trilogy of Burroughs' 1950s texts (*Junkie*, "In Search of Yage," *The Naked Lunch*) inside the archetypal structure of the quest narrative, via Joseph Campbell's primordial monomyth, enabling him to argue for Burroughs' readability against claims for his works' ultra-novelty.[1] Watters, in fact, says nothing about Burroughs' space age mythology, entirely passes over the cosmic conflict between the Nova Mob and Nova Police that is played out across the wounded galaxies of his so-called cut-up trilogy of the 1960s (*The Soft Machine*, *The Ticket That Exploded*, *Nova Express*). This is a loud silence, given the focus of Watters' article, and yet one that is understandable for reasons that lead on to my contextualising sketch's second purpose.

The state of Burroughs criticism is such that *The Soft Machine* has been read, if at all, in one of two ways.[2] Jennie Skerl's introductory primer, *William S. Burroughs* (1985) offered the generalised, thematic reading. She did this by reconstructing five stages of Burroughs' mythological narrative in chronological order, even though, as she acknowledges, this is not how they appear in the text. Skerl's approach here is consistent with her other critical move, which is to isolate these five sustained narrative sections from the rest of *The Soft Machine*, and to claim that they, not the cut-up material, dominate the reader's interpretation: for Skerl, the most significant section—"The Mayan Caper," with which Watters also deals—is the most straightforward exposition. (As we shall see, there is a precise irony to her comments that "the fantasy that is earliest in time is actually placed at the end of the book," and that "The Mayan Caper" is crucial because of its "central placement in the text.")[3] Perversely, by making sense of the text and its mythic narrative in this

way, Skerl not so much reads against the grain as she utterly undoes the text, restoring—or, rather, creating—the very coherent linearity that Burroughs refused. Watters' silence is therefore wise, to the degree that such exposition may be unwise. For reasons we shall see are central, Burroughs' space age mythology is not in fact amenable to lucid, systematic summary. The alternative line of analysis, one that pays close attention to the actual reading experience, to our encounter with the text, has been modelled by Robin Lydenberg, in her deconstructive *Word Cultures* (1988). Although Watters does not cite Lydenberg, his analysis certainly follows in her pioneering wake, if only because her starting point was precisely the recognition that Burroughs' cut-up texts had been dismissed without "ever having been rigorously examined."[4] However, Lydenberg's merits as a ground-breaker have not been matched by her value as a ground-layer, and it is here that Watters' article is in need of serious review. To get a measure of Lydenberg's failure, consider this: that James Joyce's aesthetic progressed from *Finnegans Wake* to *Ulysses*, and from *Portrait of the Artist* to *Dubliners*. Once more, accurate chronology is the issue and, as we shall again see, the effects of getting this wrong are dramatic because Burroughs' development across time is essential. Finally, if adequate textual analysis requires attention to chronological development, this is equally the case for Burroughs' methodologies of textual production. Watters' foundational error, which he shares with other Burroughs critics, is to treat as static and singular what was dynamic and multiple and subject to change. When Watters, like Skerl and Lydenberg, refers to "the cut-up" and to "*The Soft Machine*," his language contradicts the force of his own analysis, grounded as it is in an understanding of Burroughs' central concern: precisely, language.

Having advanced so many critical claims, I had best begin at the beginning. Watters notes that *The Soft Machine* was first published in 1961, was Burroughs' first work to incorporate the cut-up method, and was followed by *The Ticket That Exploded* and *Nova Express*. Three basic observations, but each in need of revision and expansion. Firstly, Watters passes over *Minutes to Go* and *The Exterminator* (both 1960), which were the collaborative manuals and manifestos of the methodology. Effectively ignored by Burroughs' critics, these short texts, whose titles set the tone

of apocalyptic threat, marked a "first stage" of experiment and promotion. In brief, they offered to disseminate a technique for individual production, rather than a product for mass consumption, and so made clear that what was to be produced by cut-up methods should not be understood as artistic except in the sense of a liberating life praxis, in the tradition of the Surrealist maxims of Breton and Lautréamont: that poetry should be *practised*, and that poetry should be made *by all*. This crude, polemical stage is crucial to approaching Burroughs' full-length cut-up texts, because it enables us to understand his shift of emphasis: from the material activity of cutting-up to producing texts that are themselves productive. Secondly, Watters is disingenuous concerning the sequence and substance of the cut-up trilogy. For this has to be the most bizarre trilogy ever written: three titles, indeed, but *six* different texts! (*The Soft Machine* exists in three quite different versions, published in 1961, 1966, and 1968, while *The Ticket That Exploded* exists in two different versions, 1962 and 1967. *Nova Express*, 1964, alone went unrevised.) So garbled is the history of these texts that the first title—*The Soft Machine* (1961)—has become the last text (1968), and the last title—*Nova Express*—has ended up the earliest text (1964). As completed, the trilogy manages to reverse beginnings and ends, to lose its centre—and to confuse the critics. Now we can appreciate the irony of Skerl's manipulations of *The Soft Machine*—all the more so, since the narrative myth she identifies as "central" was not present in the original text—as failures to recognise how Burroughs revised both text and project over time.

Although they are well known, these revisions have important consequences that have not been addressed. Sequence becomes an issue for Burroughs' development, as it does for the identity of any specified text—and it only ceases to be an issue if these awkward niceties are remaindered among the footnotes. When Watters refers to *The Soft Machine* as if it were a physically single, historically stable, fixed entity, his analysis elides seven years of development, and forgets that the text he cites marks both the origin and terminal point of Burroughs' book-length experiments. The transgressions of textual stability performed by these repeated revisions matter doubly because they act out in the literary history of Burroughs' Sixties trilogy the same

procedures enacted within each text: in fact, I would argue that it was in the nature of cut-up methods, a direct result of their key features rather than of any theoretical position, that necessarily led Burroughs to make his revisions. This brings us to the third, and most elementary, of Watters' claims. Typically, Burroughs critics refer loosely to "the cut-up"; Watters refers to "the cut-up itself." Now, there are cut-up practices and there are cut-up texts, and there is the cut-up project, but there is no such thing as "the cut-up *itself*."

In other contexts, the above may well be pedantry. Here it is of the essence. "The cut-up," as an abstraction fixed by a definite article, must stand as the very antithesis of what is under discussion, and represents exactly the reductive, falsifying, essentialising kind of linguistic usage against which Burroughs deployed his cut-up methods in the first place. We need as much specificity and precision as possible: Burroughs employed a *range* of cut-up *procedures*, which resulted in *a range* of cut-up *texts*, which created a *range* of *effects* and served a *range* of *purposes*, while both procedures and results *varied* and were *revised* over time—as evidenced by the trilogy's on-going revisions. This recognition is essential if we are to get the measure of *The Soft Machines* (sic), because it faces us with the two central and distinguishing facts of Burroughs' cut-up project. One, that it was *experimental*, and two that it was based on *material practices*. Both facts critically informed Burroughs' understanding of language far more than any of the theoretical models (such as Korzybski's General Semantics) on which he drew, and both ensured that there was no cut-up "itself."[5]

Understanding Burroughs' experimentalism allows us to elaborate upon the key to Watters' analysis: Burroughs' articulation of language as a technology of control. When Watters writes that *The Soft Machine*'s "fantastic narratives" "take the hypothesis" constituting "the myth of control," he argues from the same position as other critics, who, for example, claim that "Burroughs narrativizes this theory in his cut-up 'trilogy.'"[6] The twin assumption is that theory and myth alike somehow exist in full prior to the texts, and that these can be extracted or abstracted from them. The problem here is specific, but also indicative. For Watters' silence concerning the Nova mythology—in favour of identifying local elements, such as his intriguing analysis of Kali—wit-

nesses a failure to comprehend it that is ironically appropriate. That is, at a basic level, Burroughs' mythological system fails—because as a system it must fail. Contra Skerl, the system does not, cannot, add up. It remains necessarily obscure, partial, contradictory. It can only work on the most elementary level—the fixed paradigmatic axis of Manichean conflict, pitting Nova Cops against Nova Robbers—precisely because the cut-up text is committed to as much freedom as possible on the syntagmatic axis, deploying the random to sabotage the rigid.[7] Elsewhere, Watters knows this: recognising that the cut-up text is exemplary of the "unknown, the unpredictable, the uncontrollable" which Burroughs valorizes against the forces of determinism. In Burroughs' mythology there exists only Heaven and Hell:[8]

> Hell consists of falling into enemy hands, into the hands of the virus power, and heaven consists of freeing oneself from this power, of achieving inner freedom, freedom from conditioning. I may add that none of the characters in my mythology are free. If they were free they would not still be in the mythological system, that is, in the cycle of conditioned action.

As Roland Barthes argued, in terms eerily consistent with those of Burroughs, "the very end of myths is to immobilize the world": "Thus every day and everywhere, man is stopped by myths, referred by them to this motionless prototype which lives in his place, stifles him in the manner of a huge internal parasite and assigns to his activity the narrow limits within which he is allowed to suffer without upsetting the world."[9] Taking a view more sociobiological than social, Burroughs' premise is that the "human race was fixed from the beginning,"[10] in the sense that our life scripts are written even before birth: that is, genetically encoded in the "soft machine" of the body. The war against linguistic determinism, for Burroughs, began at home—not merely in the structuralist sense of language constituting rather than expressing the subject, but also in the biological sense of the DNA code: presciently, some of the very first texts he cut up concerned virus, genetic, and cancer research, early and ominous steps in "deciphering the language of life" (*Minutes to Go* 60).[11] (Thirty years on, the Harvard sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson would define the brain as "an exposed negative waiting to be slipped into developer fluid.")[12] Accordingly, the strategic

response of Burroughs' characters, his agents of resistance, always emphasises the metamorphic dynamic of his own position: "His plan called for total exposure—Wise up the marks everywhere show them the rigged wheel—Storm the Reality Studio and retake the Universe—The plan shifted and reformed as reports came in" (*The Soft Machine* 144). The final phrases are crucial: the plan *must* shift and re-form.[13] Committed, like William Blake, to "Creating a System or be enslav'd by another Man's," Burroughs goes one step further, and refuses to be enslaved by his own,[14] or to pass off on his readers what Derrida termed a "white mythology."[15] And so the battle plan must shift because it needs to remain mobile, subject to feedback, and so as to maintain the guerrilla's strategic advantage. "Since our theater is under constant attack it must be constantly shifted and re-created."[16] As the plan and the theatre of operations must shift, so too must the myth and the theory.

Burroughs' military terms here are an important dramatisation of his avant-gardism, but, as so often with Burroughs, they apply literally rather than figuratively. That is, the inspiration of his science-fiction scenarios is emphatically *operational* rather than metaphorical,[17] his narratives designed to produce effects rather than to represent them. Burroughs' decade-long applications of cut-up methods—beyond the text, to tape, film, photomontage—took on the appearance of laboratory-to-field research: it is as plausible to say, with Ian MacFadyen, that Burroughs' scientificism led to extraordinary artistic results, as it is to say, with Jan Herman, that he produced scientific results from artistic intentions.[18] Burroughs always insisted on the experimental as a practice, as when he recommended them to Allen Ginsberg in 1960: "Don't theorize. Try it."[19] From the start, his cut-up methods were material activities intended to produce material results. The cut-up project thus began by being profoundly ante-, even anti-theoretical. Over time it then *produced* theory in the same way as it produced texts. This process has never been recognised by critics who talk of "the theory of the cut-up"; for while Burroughs, and his collaborator Brion Gysin, wrote numerous expository texts, these do not add up to a coherent, consistent, fully articulated theorized programme. Indeed, they were unable to progress beyond limited polemic and instruction. At a certain point they were always

forced back into practice, obliged to cut-up their attempts to theorize, visibly demonstrating that anything other than methodological exemplification risked missing the point. Hence the permutation of a key three paragraph statement to produce a four page text, under the title, "Cut-Ups *Self-Explained*."[20]

The experimental for Burroughs was speculative in a scientific sense—pushing beyond known limits, achieving provisional results, revising data, testing out alternative functions and forms. This exploratory, dynamic economy was grounded in the very nature of the physical activity of cutting-up—the whole point of which is that the results are potentially infinite and cannot be predicted in advance of the scissors' slicing. Therefore the results would inevitably be judged according to the experimental value of interest rather than by the normative criterion of quality, discovery taking precedence over creation. And since the outcomes were prized for being unforseeable, Burroughs would periodically suffer under his writing-machine's semi-autonomous momentum. At the time of their inception, Burroughs' key collaborator, Brion Gysin, predicted a "Project for Disastrous Success"—and the verdict may stand in retrospect too.

The historical context might be elaborated here, to situate Burroughs' work within both the "linguistic turn" of the structuralist Sixties, and within the resurgence of other collage-based practices during the same decade. In particular, Burroughs' project ought to be considered in relation to debates about the relationship between the historical and neo-avant-gardes. For Peter Burger, whose *Theory of the Avant-Garde* remains the central text on the subject, the historical avant-garde failed—but failed heroically—whereas the post-war neo-avant-garde could only play out a "farcical repetition" as the once transgressive became institutional, and the anti-aesthetic artistic.[21] As Watters astutely observes in a footnote, at the time Burroughs himself inscribed within his cut-up texts the burden of that original failure—for example, dismissing photomontage as like "charging a regiment of tanks with a defective slingshot" (*Nova Express* 42)[22]—but, when he looked back two decades later, his verdict on Dada ("They deserved to lose for such vapid nonsense") uneasily resembles that passed on his own project: "It all reads like sci-fi from here. Not very good sci-fi, but real enough

at the time. . . . Maybe we lost. And this is what happens when you lose" (*The Western Lands* 14, 252).[23] This is of course a large subject—beyond the horizon of the present article—but it does raise crucial questions begged by Watters' argument. His claims for the subversive political potency of Burroughs' texts, which follow in the tradition of Lydenberg, rest on assumptions that the visible recuperation of the avant-garde should call to account. Adorno's well-known culture-industry thesis, that the avant-garde is to capital what research is to development, has been more successfully updated than refuted. At times Burroughs himself certainly presumed too much on the efficacy of his textual strategies, as if his "Machine-Age Knife Magic" could scientifically perfect the Surrealist plan to transform the world by transforming the word. And so in "The Mayan Caper" the way to dismantle "the control machine" rests on a premise too easy, too final: "I had only to mix the order of recordings and the order of images and the changed order would be picked up and fed back into the machine" (*The Soft Machine* 76). This simplified equation of sequence with command structure bears, politically, down upon Watters' major claim for *The Soft Machine*: that it "seeks to attack the use of language by institutions" (285). If language is truly determinant, then the social and political fields can be only symptomatic and secondary extensions—parasitic upon an original viral parasite given to invasion, occupation and irreversible damage, the virus being "an organism with no internal function other than to replicate itself."[24] Politicised readings, in short, are necessary but not sufficient for Burroughs' work, since the site of causality and so of change is for him always beyond history: "What we call history is the history of the word. In the beginning of *that* history was the word."[25] On the assumption that Watters might have added the institution of literature to those he does specify—religious, political, economic—I want now to shift from broad arguments to precise textual analysis, by reviewing Watters' own close-reading of a passage from *The Soft Machine*, ending this article by focusing on the beginning of that text, appositely entitled "Dead on Arrival."

To begin by summarising Watters' procedure. He subjects his selected passage to three kinds of response: one identified as "the prose-poem approach"; the second as a way "to integrate the surroundings into the

text"; and a third, incorporating the others, which "analyses the effect of that reading" (288-89). Watters prefaces his commentary by observing that he needs to quote at length "in order to illustrate, at least to some extent, the problem of actually reading a cut-up" (288). Problem is certainly the *mot juste*. Firstly, because the illustrative value is open to question: apparently chosen quite arbitrarily, the passage under scrutiny can in no sense be taken as representative, given the overdetermined nature of both cut-up techniques and textual results. (This was also Lydenberg's mistake: to generalise from specific analysis, an error doubled by her confusion of textual chronology.)[26] Secondly, Watters does not quote at sufficient length to render the problematic of reading—nor could he, in this particular instance, without reproducing the entire section, which runs to five pages. To clarify: Watters rightly warns against reconstructing the text in order to fix on it a specific meaning. Focusing on a single line—"Freight boat smell of rectal mucous went down off England with all dawn smell of distant fingers"—he concludes: "Each reading opens up new possibilities, and the rules of grammar do not apply as they are not used" (289). The error in the second half of this claim—Burroughs' mode of juxtaposition patently does observe at least minimal grammatical rules—is less pressing than that in the first half. Critics have routinely talked of "new possibilities"—Burroughs himself claimed as much—but I would argue that this overstates the case in general and here misses the particular point. Due to his—understandable—selective quotation, Watters keeps back the essential context for both this line and the passage as a whole, and thereby withholds the text's own implied instructions for use.

The text entitled "Dead on Arrival" is very deliberately structured in three parts. Firstly, we are presented with a realist, if elliptically composed, first-person narrative depicting the familiar world of drug addiction. At a certain point it becomes undecidable whether this narration constitutes a single scene, punctuated by memories, or whether it is formed from a succession of such scenes, economically juxtaposed. This sense of witnessing discrete elements in combination coincides with a series of precise verbal returns, repeated phrases that suggest structurally the closed circularity of the addict's world. It is at this point in the text that we encounter the first cut-up passage: "There is a boy

sitting like your body. I see he is a hook" (8). Far from opening up new potentials, these lines insist on being read in relation to their preceding originals: "There is a boy sitting at the counter thin-faced kid his eyes all pupil . . . I see he is hooked" (7). The element of shock—at the semantic incongruities—coincides with recognition, so that surprise and familiarity affect the reader simultaneously. The effect of this recycling has to be registered in thematic context: the stale, dead-end, repetitious experience of addiction, with its meaninglessly familiar rituals of waiting, scoring, pushing. This passage is then followed by another alternation of narrative and cut-up prose, culminating with a free-floating line of dialogue admitting defeat in the fight against addiction: "I can't make it" (9). The next line provides a structural hinge for the text's second part: *"Imposible quitar eso."* As the translation indicates, the scene now shifts from North American locales (Long Island, St Louis) to Spanish-speaking locations (Morocco, Madrid, Mexico). With this linguistic and geographic shift, the world of endless addiction now meets its end, and gives way to multiple scenes of death that trace a tragic orbit around the narrator—death by overdose, drowning, hanging, stabbing. These scenes, again narrated elliptically, are likewise cut up, but with a difference. Now we encounter the recombined or fragmentary elements in advance of their coherent narrative contexts, as well as after them. This was a structure Burroughs would exploit on a massive scale to produce temporal as well as semantic dislocations in the reading experience. Here the effect of anticipation has once again to be measured in context, demonstrating less the predetermination of an imposed identity than the persistence of memory through language. Finally, the text concludes with the passage selected by Watters, a third, terminal post-script in effect, which consists of a cut-up reworking of the previous two parts.

When Watters acknowledges that "some of the material used in this cut-up undoubtedly" came from the preceding pages (288), he therefore severely understates the case. In fact practically *all* the material in his chosen passage derives from the previous pages, while the structural relation between these parts is clearly calculated.[27] In the case of the cited line, we have read every word before: more to the point, we are clearly expected to recognise the repetition and recombination as such.

Necessarily, we are invited to analyse the procedures by which the text is created and recreated, and, having experienced the way words manipulate and can be manipulated, to reflect on Burroughs' position that the status quo is an infernal machine, fatal in any language—hence his use of the choric refrain, itself repeated from the last lines of *The Naked Lunch*, to frame the cut-up final part of "Dead on Arrival": "No good. No bueno." (10, 11) In short, it is the reading experience—so carefully and visibly manipulated by Burroughs, so *dominant*—that should determine our approach to this text.

However full the above contextualisation may appear, I have in fact but scratched one textual surface. For here we have to consider both the location and character of this material within *The Soft Machine* as a whole. Fortuitously, Watters' choice turns out to be especially interesting and revealing. Imagine a reader who has encountered each of Burroughs' three versions of *The Soft Machine*, and read them in sequence. Such a reader would not only have already read this material twice before, but would now encounter it in a third distinctly different form (Watters cites the final edition). Bizarrely, this text itself now constitutes a trilogy, and achieves through its revised states the recombinatory logic of any one of its conditions.[28] Two significances are paramount. Firstly, in the 1961 original this material was located near the very end; secondly, it stands out clearly from the rest of that text. Far from being representative, it is absolutely atypical. What makes it so is that this was the only episode of sustained autobiographical narrative. To give a detailed example: the freight boat that sank off England was the *Gerda Toft*, which went down on 23 December 1954, carrying with it a friend identified in *The Soft Machine* as "Leif repatriated by the Danish" (10).[29] There are two rejoinders to those who would cry, "Autobiographical fallacy!" Firstly, that "Dead on Arrival" is recognisable as a reprise of Burroughs' life-story: "William" is directly addressed in its dialogue, while the events, names, and itinerary are all familiar from other texts. Secondly, external reference only confirms the procedures played out within the text: the cut-up operations evidently work on the return of personal memory, on memories textualised, trapped like ghosts in the circuits of language. Indeed, "Dead on Arrival" makes repeated intertextual relations back to *Junkie* (1953) and *The Naked*

Lunch (1959), so that its recycling of addiction images takes place across and through as well as within Burroughs' texts. It is exactly this experience of haunting, of the traces of moments lived and lost, of the persistence of the past and of identity through language repetition, that the cut-up text reproduces explicitly for the reader as conjuration and exorcism. Watters' focus on *institutional* targets is, therefore, too limited and limiting. More to the point, as he ably documents, Burroughs' methods developed in parallel to his involvement with Scientology, whose system of Dianetics promised individual psychic hygiene and emotional deconditioning through techniques of repetition.

Burroughs' decision to shift his material reveals much about his reworkings of *The Soft Machine*. Whereas the original edition began with a fragmentary science-fiction scenario, within which were embedded didactic appeals—"Come out of the Time-word 'The' forever. Come out of the Body Word 'Thee' forever" (11)—this was displaced in favour of a text that was methodologically more exemplary, textually more familiar, and that grounds *The Soft Machine* in the dislocations of a single subjectivity.[30] I see this as one of a number of moves Burroughs made in order to recuperate his cut-up texts: alongside a wholesale deletion of the most dense cut-up material—material balanced on a knife-edge of boredom and nausea; and the insertion of coherent narrative sections, such as "The Mayan Caper." This was only evidence of the experimental logic of his project, whose results had to be either discarded or revised in the light of subsequent practices, theoretical understandings, and re-readings. And so, while his interviews and statements published as *The Job* (1970) are often cited in relation to his Sixties experiments, most telling is the distance he puts between his positions during and at the end of the decade: "when I said that I was perhaps going a bit far"; "I think I was being over-optimistic," and so on.[31] My point is that it was inevitable that the cut-up project would go too far, be too optimistic, and inevitable that Burroughs should return to, rewrite, and try to recover his texts. To avoid the polarities of valorisation and dismissal, it is necessary to recognise that the cut-up project had a complex, at times traumatic history—given Burroughs' investment in his techniques as therapeutic tools, each dead-end was not just aesthetic but emotional. Although this is not the place to develop the psychology of the cut-up

project, we ought to ask what kind of trauma is played out in the obsessive self-woundings of the cut-up text, what individual and collective neurosis is manifested through the melancholic activity of such obsessive collecting and cutting—and why the results are so disturbing.

It seems fitting to reach a terminal point suggested by Watters' invocation of Plato's cave. In Book VII of *The Republic*: "If they could lay hands on the man who was trying to set them free and lead them up, they would kill him."[32] These are salutary words. It is easy enough to agree with Lydenberg's argument that the logic of *The Soft Machine* is that, if the self is sufficiently fragmented, "one will no longer fear its loss."[33] But, to the extent that Burroughs' programme for liberation from language, from the power of the word to determine the subject, its relations, its reality, was serious—and to the degree that his work might produce genuinely transformative effects—to that extent it is we, ourselves, who are endangered by the cut-up text. One way or another—whether by academic interpretation, by neglect, by resistance—"we" have to kill such texts to preserve "our" selves, our known world of shadows. Unlike Joyce, Burroughs does not invite his readership to live and work inside his complex linguistic and mythological systems: on the contrary, his texts would force us to see those viral codes and mechanical circuits already typed on our insides. Maybe it is those who would gladly burn Burroughs who have best understood the force of his warnings against The Control Machine.

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NOTES

[1]William L. Stull, "The Quest and the Question: Cosmology and Myth in the Work of William S. Burroughs, 1953-1960," *The Beats: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Lee Bartlett (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1981). Stull argues that Burroughs' early texts "follow the outline of departure, initiation, and return that Campbell describes," so that his mythology and cosmology cannot lay claim to being new, only variant forms.

[2]The only exception to this critical division has to be Gregory Stephenson's astute, if overstated, reading (he claims *The Soft Machine* as "the central work of Burroughs' oeuvre"), which sees the text in terms of the rituals and mythologies of Gnostic tradition. See "The Gnostic Vision of William S. Burroughs," The *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 4.1 (1984): 40-49.

Note that all references, except where indicated, are to the third and final edition of *The Soft Machine* (London: Calder, 1968).

[3]Jennie Skerl, *William S. Burroughs* (Boston: Twayne, 1985) 54.

[4]Robin Lydenberg, *Word Cultures: Radical Theory and Practice in William S. Burroughs' Fiction* (Chicago: Illinois UP, 1988) 55.

[5]Most recently, for example, David Ingram, in "William Burroughs and Language" (*The Beat Generation Writers*, ed. A. Robert Lee [London: Pluto, 1996]) claims that Korzybski's critique of Aristotelian language (whereby phenomena are "simplistically represented as singular, finite and static, rather than as multiple, complex and in processual movement") "forms the basis of Burroughs' explorations of language" (95, 96). For all the merits of Ingram's account, he too fails to bring either textual specificity or chronological development to his readings, so that his own language usage tends to reproduce precisely those errors of generalization and abstraction under analysis.

[6]Rob Latham, "Collage as Critique and Invention in the Fiction of William S. Burroughs and Kathy Acker," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 5.3 (1993): 48. Latham's article is actually one of the most incisive published accounts of the cut-up project as a collage-based enterprise.

[7]See Christine Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, Especially of the Fantastic* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981) 362.

[8]Burroughs, interviewed by Eric Mottram, as quoted by Tony Tanner in *City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971) 110.

[9]Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris, 1957; London: Granada, 1973) 155.

[10]William S. Burroughs, *The Soft Machine* (Paris: Olympia, 1961) 158. This line was not retained for later editions.

[11]Sinclair Beiles, William S. Burroughs, Gregory Corso, Brion Gysin, *Minutes to Go* (Paris: Two Cities, 1960; San Francisco: Beach Books, 1968).

[12]Edward O. Wilson, cited by Tom Wolfe, in "Sorry, But Your Soul Just Died," *Independent on Sunday* (2 February 1997): 6.

[13]The fate of Burroughs' Nova mythology thus restages that of his political allegory in *Naked Lunch*: looking back on his system of factualists, liquefactionists, divisionists, and senders, he recognised it as "crude and tentative," abandoned because "it doesn't stand up too well at the present time" (*The Job* 68).

[14]See Tanner 16, 109.

[15]David Ingram (111) glosses Derrida's "white mythology" (form his *Margins of Philosophy*) as a system "which would efface its own fictiveness in an assertion of transcendental, immutable truth."

[16]William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *The Third Mind* (New York: Viking, 1978) 91.

[17]See Brent Wood, "William S. Burroughs and the Language of Cyberpunk," *Science Fiction Studies* 23 (1996): 12.

[18]Ian MacFadyen, "Machine Dreams, Optical Toys and Mechanical Boys," *Flickers of the Dreammachine*, ed. Paul Cecil (Hove: Codex, 1996) 33; Jan Herman, "Editor's Note," William Burroughs, Brion Gysin, Ian Sommerville, *Brion Gysin Let the Mice In* (West Glover, VT: Something Else Press, 1973).

[19]William S. Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg, *The Yage Letters* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1963) 64.

[20]Brion Gysin, "Cut-Ups Self-Explained," reprinted in *The Third Mind* 34-37. Burroughs and Gysin were, in short, acutely aware of the impossibility of articulating as theory, in normative language, what were supposed to be radically new methods of language use. They were also aware of the equal impossibility of the corollary: of avoiding normative language in their extra-textual accounts. Burroughs, as much as any of his critics, lapsed into speaking of "the cut-up."

[21]For a recent critique of Burger, see Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1996).

[22]William S. Burroughs, *Nova Express* (New York: Grove, 1964).

[23]William S. Burroughs, *The Western Lands* (New York: Viking, 1987).

[24]William S. Burroughs, *The Adding Machine* (London: Calder, 1985) 48.

[25]William S. Burroughs, *The Ticket That Exploded* (Paris: Olympia Press, 1962; New York: Grove Press, 1967) 50.

[26]Lydenberg's analysis of *The Soft Machine*, as the earliest experiment, is determined by her focus on material not present in the original edition. Far from being "tentative and restrained" (56), Burroughs' earliest text was exceedingly reckless in its application of cut-up techniques: and far from being "aberrant digressions" (72), the cut-up passages were the norm. The narrative Lydenberg analyses actually demonstrates the kind of material Burroughs *added* in order to recover readability.

[27]By my reckoning, of the 235 words in this passage, only 17 do not appear in the previous pages; even fewer, if we take account of the text as originally published in 1961, and later cut.

[28]The version I have analysed as "Dead on Arrival" forms the opening section of the 1968 edition; it forms only most of the opening section of the 1966 text (which ends with a page of new narrative material); and formed only most of the section entitled "white score" in the 1961 text (two initial paragraphs were cut for both later editions).

[29]See *The Letters of William S. Burroughs, 1945-59*, ed. Oliver Harris (New York: Viking, 1993) 257.

[30]The relocation of this material to the start of the text clearly now grounded *The Soft Machine* in the narrative world of *The Naked Lunch* and, at root, *Junkie*. With a certain symmetry, Burroughs thereby contrived a bridge back to earlier published texts that parallels his use of passages from *Junkie* to construct an opening section for *The Naked Lunch*. Although the entire Burroughs oeuvre is an omnibus of recycled elements, there were, as these cases show, very specific functions to his re-use of given material.

From publishers' galley-proofs, it is clear that the decision to shift "white score" to the beginning of *The Soft Machine*, was made at least as early as June 1963, while it had acquired its new title by October 1965 at the latest.

[31]William S. Burroughs, *The Job* (New York: Grove, 1970) 48, 51.

[32]Although I believe Burroughs has never referred to the Platonic simile, he did cite an implicit adaptation of it, in *The Yage Letters* (44): "Did you ever read H. G. Wells' *The Country of the Blind*? About a man stuck in a country where all the other inhabitants had been blind so many generations that they had lost the concept of sight. He flips. 'But don't you understand I can *see*?'" Dramatising Burroughs' intense isolation at the time of writing, this strong identification clearly recurs in other contexts, such as his appended 'Introduction' to *The Naked Lunch* (Paris: Olympia Press, 1959; London: Paladin, 1986): "If man can *see*" (14).

[33]Lydenberg 63.

Connotations
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New Mythologies: Mamet, Shepard and the American Stage*

GERRY MCCARTHY

It is one of those entertaining paradoxes of contemporary Western culture that the myths of America, and by this we mean largely those of the United States of America, are both less substantial and infinitely better known than the myths of Europe. The Lone Ranger is a more evocative figure in our world of screen images than the figure of that other lone ranger, Odysseus. Where, notably, the myth of Oedipus has a wide currency, it is in some respects coincident with the figure of Dr. Freud, almost *honoris causa*, American and, like the profile of Einstein, already absorbed into the imagination of Hollywood. The mythic resonance of Oedipus has been transformed and absorbed into a mythic figure of the contemporary diviner of riddles: the therapist.

The student of contemporary cinema can, however, point to an uneasy relationship between that medium and the mythic world of Classical drama and legend, while noting the operation of the mythopoeic imagination in a veritable cinémathèque of post-Arthurian inter-galactic knights, and robotic law-makers of the science-fiction world. It is natural that the reflective spaces of the European mind should be paralleled in the prophetic visions of the Hollywood fantasy. The mental function in either removes the location of thought and identity from present time to the *illud tempus* of myth.[1] Past and future[2] are common in addressing the memory in removal from the present.[3]

American writing is nonetheless heir to its own European heritage as in the classical sources which inspire, say, Updike in *The Centaur* or O'Neill in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. We notice, however, that here, as

*Reference: John Russell Brown, "The Woods, the West, and Icarus's Mother: Myth in the Contemporary American Theatre," *Connotations* 5.2-3 (1995/96): 339-54.

in Shepard's *Icarus' Mother*, the myth lies buried, or supplies an armature on which the structures of the work can be developed: important to the imagination of the maker but less articulate in the response of reader or spectator.

Exploring myth in contemporary American drama, John Russell Brown draws our attention on the dramatists' location of experience in cultural space. Starting from the standpoint of composition he moves to the contextualisation of dramatic thought, concentrating on the spaces of imagination and the poetic need to invest these with significance. In so doing he alerts us to a question of space and theatrical response which I hope to develop briefly here, perhaps with closer attention to the adaptation of myth and mythology to the actor's effort of engagement with dramatic material. John Brown's consideration of the mythopoeic impulse in particularly Mamet and Shepard invites further thought on the way in which these two dramatists understand the epistemology of performance, and the remarkable way in which they use actors in the negotiation of knowledge in the time and space of performance. In either case the power of the symbolic memory as entertained by the actor is acutely felt, but never assumed as a natural expectation of the dramatist. The scenes, tales and the speculation of the memory are laid bare for the constructs they are, and the writing ruthlessly obliges the actor to entertain a series of symbolic images which are vital to the location of the performance in imaginative space, but which are never dependable as putative "facts."[4]

In this it will be necessary to recognise the widespread and varied understanding of "myth" as a term and, in considering its effect in performance, bear in mind what kind of mental function it addresses in narrative, dramatic or graphic representation. We will need, I suspect, to reflect the distinctions which the French school has debated between myth as structured thought and mythology as a process which operates in the interstices of that structuring. This is particularly important if we are to make clear which experiences are culturally secured by the shared structures of myth, and which are evidence of the desperation of minds in search of symbols to place in the increasingly desert terrain of Western imaginative space.

John Russell Brown develops his initial argument on the relationship of mythic and present experience by references to the juxtaposition in Renaissance painting of daily life and a mythic world of idealised expression and sensual freedom. At the same time we should note that painting is a medium in which the essentially narrative character of myth is diminished. The power and the freedom that Brown sees in these images is drawn from their location in a mythic past, which as he points out, lies outside the framework of ideas which governs the operations of Church or State. The freedom that is enjoyed is one of escape from specificity into the generalisations of passion and sensuality. Less expansive is the way in which these compound images mythologise the political realities of the present.

The effect may be seen in Seventeenth-century France, systematically applied over half a century to the creation of the mythologised Louis XIV in the picture-house of Versailles.[5] Here the motive for a flight from the everyday is one which any modern movie mogul would recognise. In the images of Mignard, Rigaud and Le Brun, Louis is placed in the mythic spaces of the idealised world of classical mythology: as Neptune, Hercules or famously, Apollo; or in the mythologised Christian imagination as his saintly forebear St. Louis, or even dangerously portrayed as Christ the Good Shepherd.[6] He is seen languorous among the wood-nymphs bearing the faces of his family, while the royal mistresses are to be found elsewhere in the Arcadian groves.

None of this representation goes further than an invocation of myth to dignify the given historical narrative of the king's achievements, or the appropriation of a mythologising symbol where narrative cannot be comfortably adduced. Thus the emblem of the mythologised Louis becomes not only the specific image of the sun, or the chariot of Apollo, but also the generalised costume and armour of Ancient Rome which idealises the monarch, conferring the aura of significance indwelling in the image, freezing omnipotence unquestioningly in a moment of distant time and in the fields of mythic battles and triumphs.[7]

In the modern age the function of painting and sculpture in the creation of the shared experience of images is largely assumed by photography and cinematography. In considering the place of myth in American drama, we can hardly advance without reference to the vitality of the

screen image and the problems of its "mythic" status. Notably the cinema is unhappy with the realisation of ancient myth (works such as Pasolini's *Edipo Re* (1967) or *Medea* (1969) are very rare), for it is technically ill at ease with the *illud tempus* of myth and accommodates best the natural landscape in which the camera is free to roam, unconstrained by the narrative structures and the significant focuses of myth.[8] The camera is artful in the choice of images and the ordering of the visual imagination. It is not, as is the drama, mindful, affording direct experience of the specific enactment, but is powerful in the generalising function of myth-making, returning again and again to its own leit-motifs. The lens is in a technological relationship with space, either designed or naturally occurring, and if it is capable of supplying objects in the world of fantasy, these are mythic in the sense that the ikon is mythic, or any construct that lives in the imagination. The consequences of an art of industrialised screen images is considerable in the modern world, and particularly so for the pioneering civilisation which has played the principal role in the dissemination of those images.

As Lévi-Strauss argues, the myth structures and embeds experience allowing its transmission and the negotiation of the mindful narrative of a collective life.[9] The screen has created a global tribe without there being a global experience: we are left with a process without a purpose. This is keenly felt in much contemporary American theatre.[10]

The "realism" of much contemporary United States drama is an amalgam of a stylistic tradition in naturalism, reinforced by the parallel evolution of drama in the cinema, and linked with philosophical and cultural preoccupations in a society coming to terms with both its own material success and the simplicity of the moral and metaphysical propositions on which that success is grounded. John Brown's examples from Mamet demonstrate this most effectively, and make clear the role played by myth, or what I will conclude is a nostalgia for myth, in destabilising the materialist environment. The search in *American Buffalo* for meanings which lie beyond explicit monetary values expresses both dramatically and culturally the need to create and locate experience outside the real time and place of social and economic living. The coin, the American Buffalo, is both fabulous, with a worth vastly exceeding its face value, and in itself, like the English penny-black postage stamp,

a symbol of the values which are tradable, and only tradable in cash. The emblem is of an animal, as Brown puts it, "a magnificent indigenous creature once common in the West" (345), and we can concur with his observation that this symbol allows the mind to move into areas of "mythic" experience outside the references of the material junk of contemporary mercantile life which litters the stage and occludes the minds of the characters.

If one may take Brown's insights further, I believe that we see the functionality of myth being exploited in Mamet to degrade the symbol rather than exploit it as a true cultural referent. As *myth* the American Buffalo has a dubious resonance. There is a clear ambivalence in the quasi-historical emblem of a beast which was slaughtered in the name of industrialisation of space, and the building of the rail-road, as there is again in the use of the prairie image of the cowboy campfire. Rather than liberate thought, the mythic process is truncated and the signification of the prairie hunter is left undeveloped, or necessarily unquestioned. Freedom is not embedded here in a mythic form, but is encapsulated in the slogan of the politician, the empty phrases and definitions of the enterprise society. There is no American Prometheus here.

The lesson of *American Buffalo* is that there are images but no narratives. The emblem can denote an aspiration or a nostalgia but it cannot structure the negotiated experience in time. It cannot examine action and consequence, and it cannot in any sense account for man's experience of himself in space and time, and fulfil the need for expression that the Homerically-named Teach inchoatly seeks. As John Brown notes

> the old myth does not hold out any longer; for him it is a hopeless confrontation, as Teach knows to his own loss. (346)

We recognise in Mamet's use of the emblem a controlled engagement with a metaphysical world which lies agonisingly beyond the capacity of the characters to embrace within the structures of living which dominate the play. The mythic enlargement of the image shows the tension between the mythologising desire and the poverty of the idea as Teach tries to develop it.

Mamet's myth is like those of Miller's Willy Loman where the conjured image of Uncle Ben, an amalgam of frontiersman and salesman, gives form to the American Dream which guides and torments the hero. The myth is at the same time delusional. This is crucial. *Death of A Salesmen* has a profundity which comes from the recognition that myth emanates from the "raw" experience of the world to which it gives an effective form: a transformation of experience into a modified experiential structure which is not discursive in character. The use of myth to camouflage the invasive material face of reality abuses the mythopoeic impulse and creates the violent tensions of both *Death of a Salesman* and *American Buffalo*. Both contain a desperate search for substantial myths and are subverted by a mythology recycling the clichés of American materialism.

This struggle is patent in *The Woods*, where Professor Brown analyses the discovery in the natural environment of the fragments and images which constitute the mythic imagination. We might note further how Mamet is fully aware of the mythologising impulse as a structuring of mind around which he can weave his suggestive performance acts, while the myths that will eventually bind together and explain the collective experience are illusive, and possibly deranged. Where John Brown sees the impulse to create myths which then break down, we may also see the imaginative space occupied by delusion and images of fear which stalk the mythic recesses of the mind. Mamet draws on a patchwork of images and narrative ideas which lie close to a surface iconography of urban America. The stories of the war and the psychotic imagination of messages transmitted to false teeth, join with images of the bear in the woods (a favourite cliché of Republican electioneering). The writer supplies his actor with the outline of an image which he can fashion only with extraordinary difficulty, and the reason is twofold. Firstly the image will not respond to the investment of passion that the actor is called on to make, and secondly the narrative is interrupted by a stream of assertions which block the smooth construction of any mythic scheme with the desperate affirmation, "I know."

> He speaks a human language Ruth. I know. He has these thoughts and they are trapped inside his mouth. His jaws cannot move. He has thoughts and

feelings. BUT HE CANNOT SPEAK. If only he could speak. If only he could say the thing he wants.
RUTH: What does he want?
NICK: I DO NOT KNOW.
RUTH: No! (She hits him. Pause.)
NICK: It smells like fish up here. (She hits him again.)
[. . .]
RUTH: You stop this.
NICK: I do not want to die. Oh, God. I do not want to die. I am insane. Am I insane?[11]

The question translates the deep fear which haunts this remarkable short play: the profound anxiety as to the life of the mind and the security of the landscapes within which it constructs its reality. Mamet engages his actors not so much in a mythic world, but in the dangerous and destabilising discovery of the need for that world. Thus the roles require the anatomising of the mental functions which invest the personality at the moment of performance. Thus one might go further than John Brown's synoptic view of myth operating in American drama at a level of the poetic imagination looking elsewhere for the equivalent of the classical myth:

> When another new world began to establish itself in North America, artists found it was less easy to use memories of the ancient, "classical" world; the necessary books and learning were not generally available, and the physical remains of that civilisation were outside the bounds of most people's mental journeys. Artists had to find some other place in which their imaginations could be at ease and live with heroes and exemplars that would suit their own dissatisfaction and aspirations. (342)

The play addresses the functions of mind when the myth-making imagination is at work, but where we would agree with John Brown that Mamet shows the filling of the void with stories, we would have to add that the play explores the problem of a private mythology being scarcely myth. Are delusional states mythic? The images of Martians or Vikings are common, but only insofar as they are clichés, and what is their role in anchoring a collective vision or experience? John Brown notes this function of stories in the co-ordination of the two lovers in their embryonic society, but it is also a broken function, I suggest, not

because the stories that Nick recounts and to which he is prey cannot be shared, but because his drive is towards knowledge and the examination and subversion of his own mental world. His anguish at the picture of the bear he creates is connected to a recognition of the blocked expression of the sexually aroused but isolated beast which calls on him. The beast has human language, Nick *knows*, has

> thoughts and they are trapped inside his mouth. His jaws cannot move. He has thoughts and feelings, BUT HE CANNOT SPEAK. If only he could speak. If only he could say the thing he wants. (58)

The mythic world of the play emerges in indistinct and primeval forms from the poetic imagination of the author, but intimately related to the physical medium for which he writes, for this epiphany is a part of the projected struggle of performance. The beast that Nick has dreamt, and which he tries to express now in speech, is the image of the struggle of the actor to identify "the thing he wants" and to release "the thoughts . . . trapped in his mouth."

The images are unresolved in the act of performance, being fleetingly sketched, and then questioned by the actors at the very moment of creation. The matrix is rich and suggestive: the surface of the lake bounding an inverse world of life, remembered in the fish which scented Ruth's hands with a smell redolent of her own body; the bracelet in her story which was lost falling beneath the waters of the lake, and recollected in the present which she makes to Nick; his story of the soldier trapped in a hole, then his own dream of a hole in which he is held, smelling of fish. The stories told by Nick and Ruth are to a degree connected but they are distressingly remote from the American spaces of the play. European in origin, they are inherited from parents or grandparents, and describe European characters, both possibly delusional. European, too, is the curious rectification of the image of the bear, first a bear in the forest, then in dream, then "European brown bears."

Any critical construction of these fragments can do no more than note the references, which are once or twice removed from the characters, and which fail notably to explain their experience. On the other hand these are the dreams and fantasies which disturb them. We may further

note that the resolution of *The Woods* is achieved with one completed image present on the stage and narrated in the old European fairy story of the Babes in the Wood. Nick and Ruth are both on the floor, she holding him

> NICK: Are you all right?
> RUTH: Yes.
> NICK: Are you cold?
> RUTH: No. They lay down. *(Pause.)* He put his arms around her. *(Pause.)* They lay down in the forest and they put their arms around each other. In the dark. And fell asleep.
> NICK: Go on. *(Pause.)*
> RUTH: What?
> NICK: Go on.
> RUTH: *(To self.)* Go on . . .
> NICK: Yes. *(Pause.)*
> RUTH: The next day . . . .
> *The lights fade.* (60-61)

A past is empty which cannot be sustained and structured by any present investment in shared experience. Mamet brilliantly dramatises the civilisation which lives beneath the empty skies of its own devastation. Deprived of the narratives and the mythic past in which the people may collectively locate itself, it engages nevertheless in the struggle to mythologise its experience. The achievement of coherence, as John Brown points out is tenuous:

> . . . myth-making starts playfully, and even comically, as Ruth does her best to fill the sky with heroes [. . .]
> Nick and Ruth cannot share each other's stories for long: practicalities and differences intrude. However, Nick has been to these woods many times before and has developed for himself more frightening, less ordinary myths, inaccessible to other persons. (343)

The coherence of the microcosmic society represented by the two actors on the stage is figured in Ruth's simple tale of the isolated seagull who would drive others off, but then finally coupled.

> He let this one guy stay up there a minute.
> NICK: Tell me.
> RUTH: They flew off. (7)

However, the sharing of the image is abortive, lost in incomprehension. The tale itself is without sequence or conclusion. A distant phenomenon is fleetingly viewed, an outcome is suggested but the narrative tails off into an open sky of speculation.

In Mamet's treatment of this and other scraps of narrative, the significance which underlies all mythic systems is absent, or at best disabled. The prospect of achievement is bound to the ephemeral nature of the dramatic process itself in which the significance of actions is always prospective and temporary, rather than determinate and conclusive. Mamet's remarkably "empty" texts supply the forms for the search, rather than the discourse of the discovery. Together the actors attempt to invest their circumstances with a meaning which can be negotiated in the real time of performance. There is an inbuilt struggle to find patterns in the mythic past which will explain and anchor a present without form. In a manner strongly reminiscent of the yet more abstract dramatic world of Beckett, the performers are set on stage to achieve the impossible: to invest the patterns of life with meaning.

This may explain the uneasy closure of the play in which its initial image of union is revisited and temporarily secured in the gesture of comfort in which Ruth enfolds her fellow at the conclusion of the play. Her cradling of Nick and the union of the couple is quasi-ritualised in the telling of an old bed-time story: the Babes in the Wood. This is achieved in the face of a tormented examination of what it is that animates the imagination. Here in the woods something is possible; back there in the city all is laid waste.

> NICK: I need time. Do you hear me? I need time. Down in the city everything is vicious. I need time to be up here. (Pause.) Everything is filthy down there. You know that. I come up here, I see things. (57)

The fragmentary images translate the anxieties of Western society, and its inability to complete the narratives which might confirm its uncertain self-confidence. One is tempted to enquire if Mamet is not engaging in a perennially dramatic practice here, whereby the dramatic restlessly interrogates the narrative.

* * *

In the work of Sam Shepard an early preoccupation with cinema and rock-and-roll colours the dramatist's imagination, and the plays are peopled with mythic or quasi-mythic figures. Professor Brown's analysis of the impact of Shepard's myth-making stirs further thoughts of how, as with Mamet, the dramatist conceives a possible mythic world and stages the struggle to reach it, rather than retail pedantically the desiccated receipts of classical learning, as might have been the case with the Icarus figure in *Icarus' Mother*:

> Shepard has not used the myth in a pedantic way, setting it down as he might have found it in books or paintings. In his play, a new Icarus is present with the excitement and flush of discovery, not incidental to the dramatist's purpose, but seemingly rather to direct it. (350)

The purpose of the dramatist is indeed closely wedded to this use of the mythic landscape of the play, and it is comparable to what we have observed in the work of Mamet. The creative strength of Shepard is tied to his awareness of mythology as a function rather than a particular and convenient metaphorical context. One may see in the first collection, *Five Plays*, how Shepard charts the spaces of the actors' imagination with a freedom and daring which was near baffling to his first directors. The plays are rather like *études* in which the young dramatist plays the materiality of the stage against the visionary capacity of the performance: the bathtub in *Chicago* or the bed in *Red Cross* act less as settings than apparatus for the support of the performer while the mental spaces of the performance are created and inhabited.

The painful example of *Fourteen Hundred Thousand* showed the problem of a drama which in no way attempted a literal representation of on and offstage spatial relationships. The predominant naturalism of acting technique was quite inadequate to deal with a mythologising impulse, as were equally inappropriate the rational inner truths of expressionistic staging. The difficulty which attended the first performance was the result of a director's attempt to deal with a "diffuse dialogue" and "strange fragments." The record of the disagreement between the director Sydney Schubert Walter and the dramatist shows the former's difficulty

in accepting the capacity of the script to locate the play in the theatrical space.

> Before rehearsals began I made the following decisions independent of the author:
> 1. I would use a less severe set, one offering possibilities for more dynamic staging.
> 2. I would ignore the author's stage directions to work for a more casual, naturalistic quality in the opening scenes.
> 3. As the script became more concentrated on language, as the characters approached a stasis, I would use the actors in an expressionistic way, so that they conveyed, vocally and physically, the tensions that I felt lay beneath the words.
>
> When Mr. Shepard arrived and rehearsals began, I discovered that all these ideas were unacceptable to him. I had chosen to counter the qualities of the script with the qualities of the production; he wished the production to underline the qualities of the script.[12]

Fourteen Hundred Thousand was a problem for a theatre where the answer to the location of the action lay in the measurable landscapes of naturalistic staging, or the equally probable dream worlds of expressionism in the playing. Avant-garde as it was, the play nonetheless required a simpler acceptance of the function of the dramatic text in notating action, even and perhaps especially where the text locates the operations of mind in spaces remote from the materiality of stage and set. Mr. Walter's desire to compensate for a certain slippage of the action was unfortunate.

Tom is finishing the construction of a large bookcase which Ed has begun but will not complete. It stands on an otherwise featureless white box-set furnished with a single door of entrance. The bookcase is to house the fourteen hundred thousand books which Tom's wife Donna has collected. Ed proposes they go to a cabin away from the city, and gradually the focus of the action turns from the activity which dominates the set, to this imagined location in the woods:

> DONNA: Comfortable and homey, I imagine. Somehow I see it lost in the woods and nobody living even there.
> ED: Really?

DONNA: Yes. And somehow it maintains itself all year round. Somehow it adapts itself to every change in the weather and turns on its own lights at night. It even flushes its own toilet and makes its own little bed. There's no footprints around it at all. Just buried one quarter of the way in snow, and smoke coming out of the chimney. Just sitting there in a small clearing about half a mile from a frozen lake. A Christmas house.
ED: There's no lake at all and I haven't built the chimney yet. (57)

Meanwhile Mom and Pop toil up offstage flights of steps to the room, bringing in armfuls of books, but progressively becoming diverted from the task, first to the picture of the trip that might be made to the cabin, and then to the contents of the books, which include an account of the city of the future. The tensions between the characters are explored through the slippage of the focus from the set and the task in hand to remote spaces affording mental scenes which are strange and disturbing: Donna sees her husband too frightened to leave his bed, in the dark, craving a bed-time story, paralysed and welded to his sheets by accumulated faeces and urine; Ed sees them all, in perhaps a glimpse of the scene of Shepard's later *Action*, in the cabin after the first snow, sitting down to a special dinner. Ed explains that he cannot stay to complete the bookcase, and must go away to the cabin, while Mom and Pop read obsessively from one of the books a compulsive and detailed account of the "linear city" of the future which will criss-cross the continent enclosing "the country" within a grid of progressively smaller squares:

MOM: Each city no more than ten miles from the next city.
POP: Forming ten-mile squares.
MOM: Desert cities and jungle cities where cities have never been.
POP: Ocean cities and sky cities and cities underground.
MOM: Joining country to country and hemisphere to hemisphere.
POP: Forming five-mile squares in between. *(The stage is bare by this time, the other actors are off-stage but still humming the tune [White Christmas], MOM and POP still face front.)*
MOM: Elevated cities suspended under vacuum air.
POP: Forming two-mile squares in between . . . . (67)

Shepard manipulates the mythologising need within the tensions of contemporary American culture. The myths of the outdoors can, like

those of Mamet, link cliché and emblem in the act of myth-making: the myth itself is insecure and in *Fourteen Hundred Thousand* it is countered by the nightmare landscape of the coming urban obliteration of the natural world.

These experiments would lead later to a drama centred in more evidently integrated roles, but where the search for the location of mental life is always at issue. From the strange quartet of *Action* isolated in their cabin in the woods, to the uneasy household which is marooned in the snowy landscape of *A Lie of the Mind*, the performances require a search for the spaces of myth and imagination.

* * *

Neither Shepard nor Mamet creates a completed world of myth. On the other hand the very absence of the sustained narrative of classic myth is a source of the vigour of these two playwrights, who employ the fundamental elements of the dramatic medium to engender a struggle for the reference points which explain both the dramatic experience and thereafter the cultural space which is shared between actor and audience. Both express powerfully the American need to mythologise an experience which remains, in reality or in nostalgia, close to the land and to the natural landscape. Their plays are concerned with mythologies, structures which are capable of articulating experience, given shared cultural references, but which are as like to break down under the burden of significance they are required to bear. The hypertrophy of a society whose material success engenders the capacity to destroy the land is felt in the dramatic action which characteristically creates and anatomises its own meanings, but is driven paradoxically to confront and dissolve its nascent mythologies.

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NOTES

[1]I refer to the formulation adopted by Mircea Eliade in his pioneering work. See *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries* (London: Collins, 1968).

[2]Nonetheless there is a key distinction to be noted between the reflective narratives of past time in which the structure of lived experience may be elaborated, and narratives in future time which are aspirational or minatory in character.

[3]The organisers of the *Connotations* symposium in 1995 wisely set no restriction on the interpretation of the term "myth" nor did they adopt any special terminology for debate.

[4]One might recall an earlier dramatist, Shakespeare, whose actor-hero Hamlet reflects on the fallen skies of a culture and directs the audience's attention to the dramatic process.

[5]For a lively account see Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992).

[6]A notable *historical* identification is found in painting and in drama with Alexander the Great. The latter medium proved too uncomfortable for the royal propagandists. Racine's *Alexandre* was seen as a reference to the brilliant young king, whereas his *Britannicus* aroused suspicions of an unintended comparison between Louis and the Emperor Nero. Racine later gave up drama in favour of a post as historiographer royal.

[7]The shorthand references to the Classical world recall the amusing example given by Roland Barthes in his *Mythologies* (1978) of the Roman haircut in Hollywood's treatment of *Julius Caesar*.

[8]A parallel discomfort is evident in the treatment of Christian "myth" even where this has to believers a literal and historical status. The accuracy of the cinema image has an unwelcome ability to tie the events to a familiar and even banal context and topography. Pasolini is again unusual in his *Gospel According to St. Matthew*.

[9]See G. Charbonnier, tr. John and Doreen Weightman, *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970) 43-56.

[10]The power of the ikon is felt in a good deal of contemporary drama both from the United States and elsewhere. Kopit's *Indians* is an example. The universal penetration of the ikon is important to the use made by Terry Johnson in his *Insignificance* or *Waving/Drowning* where key American images are employed. The conjunction of Einstein, Marilyn Monroe, Joe di Maggio, and Senator Joseph McCarthy in *Insignificance* is telling.

One may reflect on the mythological power of the image when the figure of Senator McCarthy is used in the contemporary (1997) television advertisement of a Danish (and therefore, presumably, un-American) lager beer.

[11]David Mamet, *The Woods* (New York: Samuel French, 1979) 58.

[12]Sam Shepard, *Five Plays* (London: Faber, 1969) 48.

Connotations

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