Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate

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Editor's Note

Professor Harold Jenkins informs me that he now wishes to retire from the Editorial Board of *Connotations*, as from many of his other former commitments. My co-editors and I cannot but accept this, though with great regret. Our foremost feeling, however, is gratitude to Professor Jenkins for letting us have his name when *Connotations* was nothing but a project and for his unfailing support and friendliness during the seven years which have elapsed since then.

Inge Leimberg

Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate

EDITORIAL ADDRESSES

Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Institute for Bibliography and the History of the Book, Breite Gasse 39-41, D-48143 Münster, Germany

Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Department of English
Johannisstr. 12-20, D-48143 Münster, Germany

Fax: +49 (251) 8324827; e-mail: connotations@uni-muenster.de
WWW homepage: http://anglisti.uni-muenster.de/conn/con_home.htm

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

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Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*: Revisiting and Reformation

LOTHAR ČERNY

The prefix in "revisiting" points to the essential semantic aspect of the topic of this symposium. Whenever a place is revisited, whether in life or in literature, the past is involved and the relationship between the visitor and the past becomes the focus of interest. Perhaps I should say this relationship can become the focus of interest rather than becomes, because even the relationship to one's past and to the past generally is part of the cultural framework and subject to historical change. For example, Robinson Crusoe's revisiting his native England or the return to his island after a long absence have a different quality from the emotionally charged revisits in Dickens, the foremost novelist of memory in the nineteenth century, in whose novels revisiting always awakes "remembrance of things past." These novels lend themselves to an inquiry into what revisiting of places means for the characters undertaking such journeys.

The many examples of revisiting in Dickens are part of a larger pattern of dealing with the past which Dickens evolved throughout his career as a novelist. To some extent they represent a revisit on his own part to the traumatic places of his childhood, but as the papers of this symposium show, the relevance of the topic would not be adequately grasped by a biographical approach. A variety of patterns emerges when you look at the examples of revisiting places in Dickens' novels. There are, for example, the melancholy revisits undertaken by David Copperfield to the scenes of his schooldays, the tragic return of Charles Darnay in *A Tale of Two Cities* to face his family's past, the returns of John Harmon in *Our Mutual Friend* and Arthur Clennam in *Little Dorrit*, who revisit the unhappy homes of their childhood, and there is Pip in *Great Expectations*, who revisits Estella because he still loves her.

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debcerny00703.htm>

Revisiting as an act of remembrance is also a central aspect of *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens' comic as well as homiletic fairy-tale. Here, the prefix "re-" links the word field of memory and remembrance (for example, *recollect, remember, recognise*) to the ethical aim of "re-visiting" indicated by words like *remorse, reclamation, repentance, regret.*[1] Both spheres are characterised by a movement of return—be it in the mind or in the physical world—a common denominator that allows Dickens to explore the ethics as well as the imaginative potential of revisiting.

The title *A Christmas Carol* expresses both aspects. Apart from the obvious fact that Christmas is a feast that celebrates the memory of Christ's birth, the title also points to an aesthetic side of the feast. The etymology of *carol* relates the word to choric music (*OED*), to a round dance, a ring-type movement, all of which imply harmonious activities. In more recent times, the term *carol* signifies a piece of music, written in and between five lines, also called *staffs* or *staves*, like any musical notation. The chapter headings contain a further clue to the synaesthetic nature of the title, however. "Stave" is a synonym for *stanza*, but *stave* or *staff* also means *letter.* The *Christmas Carol*, therefore, can be said to consist not only of five staves, but also of five letters, namely c a r o l.

On yet another level of meaning, the story contains five staffs in the sense of sticks to walk with, as the *OED* defines the staff: "a stick carried in the hand as an aid in walking . . . . (e.g. in reference to 'pilgrims')."[2] *Staff* in this sense points to the motif of the pilgrimage of life, a reference that is particularly relevant to *A Christmas Carol.* Scrooge's nephew reminds him of Christmas as a time when we think of others, especially the poor "as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys" (10). The journey of life is the larger topic and context of the five journey-visits in the story: Marley's in the first stave, the visits of the three spirits and Scrooge's final visit to his nephew. The title, then, prepares for a story in which visits, and revisits, and returns, take place in a form that expresses harmony. As it is going to end harmoniously it is particularly suitable for a feast whose meaning is remembering an event.

The central topic of the story is the reformation and transformation of Scrooge into a man who knows how to keep Christmas. The most effective means of his change from a utilitarian ogre into a kind-hearted

human being appears to be his revisiting places of his earlier life. This is the lesson taught by the spirit of Christmas Past.

Marley's Message

The topic of revisiting arises in two ways, firstly by introducing us to Scrooge, a character who is not for visiting, let alone re-visiting, and secondly by making us witnesses of a visitation, Marley's visitation on Scrooge. Semantically all this is included in the verb *to visit*, from the sense of 'going to see someone' to the sense of 'warning' or even 'punishing,' but also including the dialectical opposite 'to care for,' senses well established by the translations from the Vulgate.[3]

Dickens describes Scrooge's antisocial habits and attitudes with obvious relish and delight in negative detail in a characteristically comic inversion of ethical values and aesthetic representation. Scrooge's unattractive qualities allow Dickens to indulge in anaphoric repetitions and amplified enumerations, not only to drive home the message but also to enjoy such an outpour of rhetorical *copia*.

> Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! . . . The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. (8)

The rhetorical accomplishment of such balanced prose points as much to the eventual harmony of the story as do its contents to Scrooge's imperturbability in view of anything in this world apart from business. His indifference to the weather parallels the indifference and even aversion to him on the part of other people and even their dogs in his neighbourhood. This shying away of all living creatures from Scrooge finds its most cogent expression in the question he is never asked, "when will you come to see me?" (8), with its periphrasis of *to visit*. It is then *e negativo* that Dickens introduces the topic of visiting and revisiting. Scrooge is established as an aggressively tight old oyster,[4] a character who is not for visiting and being visited. The image of the oyster points

to the essential two-sidedness of visiting as an experience, which has an active as well as a passive component. The movement involved, however, is always one of reciprocity. As a form of exchange visiting by its very nature implies re-visiting.

In the world of Scrooge, where the reciprocity of communication is negated, the phenomenon of visiting changes its nature. When Marley returns to his former place and business partner he comes as a visitation upon Scrooge to convince him of the necessity of practising basic human solidarity. Marley obviously has a message to preach, but Dickens does not leave it at that. Marley like an experienced orator seems to know that teaching by itself is insufficient to effect lasting persuasion (and Scrooge's ironic comments during their conversation underline the fact that preaching, rhetorically speaking pure *docere*, is not very impressive). Marley sends the three spirits who confront Scrooge with lively, energetic scenes which add amusement (*delectare*) and especially forcefulness (*movere*) to his words to make Scrooge's conversion a lasting one. With Marley's visitation, then, we are on the traditional semantic ground of *to visit*. He visits in order to warn Scrooge (in the sense of Deut. 32:34) and to bring about Scrooge's reclamation (in the sense of Ps. 106:4). But the visitation also impresses on the reader's mind that the illness and the remedy are related. The visitation aims at visiting, the empathetic turning to one's fellow human beings as a symbol of charity. This kind of empathy begins with actually looking at people. Lifting one's eyes becomes a transcendental, a spiritual gift that makes visiting possible:

> Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode! Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted *me*! (21)

By referring to the Wise Men Dickens interprets the journey of the Magi as a biblical archetype of visiting. Significantly in view of Scrooge's visits, Marley is talking here of a poor "abode," a home. Such places are metonyms of people, indications that visiting places is the same as visiting people. Visiting means wanting to see someone in friendship, but in *A Christmas Carol* it has more sacramental overtones.[5] Visiting transcends the human sphere to include a religious dimension. It follows

that looking down, not wanting to see, divides a human being from the rest of humanity as well as from God. Marley and Scrooge did not want to see anyone, did not want to look up, and did not want to visit.[6]

Marley's message interprets visiting as a social activity, an act of going out, of leaving the metaphorical oyster shell: "It is required of every man . . . that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide" (19). Marley regards this movement as symbolic of human entelechy, as the condition for human development, opportunity and usefulness (20). His punishment consists in an inversion of this teleological pattern. It is a kind of Dantesque punishment, since after his death he has to suffer the pains of having to travel incessantly. His spirit has to wander aimlessly, "doomed to wander through the world . . . and witness what it . . . might have . . . turned to happiness" (19). Yet this is also a distinctly Dickensian punishment because this unhappy one is not able to visit though he would; wanting to do good and being unable to do so. Like Marley the other characters in Dickens' allegorical procession are forced to observe without being able to act and participate, for example "one old ghost" (whom Scrooge had known, of course), "in a white waistcoat with a monstrous iron safe attached to its ankle, who cried piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom it saw below, upon a door-step" (22). However, in view of the topic of visiting it is significant that Scrooge observes the train of "phantoms wandering hither and thither in restless haste" (22). The punishment of the phantoms shows the essential difference between aimless wandering and the directional activity of visiting. Scrooge has to infer from the negative image that charity is as much the cause as the final aim of visiting.

The purpose then of Marley's appearance as a ghost is, above all, to warn Scrooge and make him open his eyes to the rest of humanity, i.e. change his life. If this is so, then Marley's appearance serves to explain the necessity and the logic underlying the visiting and re-visiting of places in this story and perhaps in Dickens on the whole.

The logic at work here is that of the traditional art of memory, to be more exact it is an ethical and rhetorical interpretation of artificial memory. The association of memory with the virtues was originally made in Cicero's *De inventione* (II.160) and in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (III.3).[7]

Cicero first developed the idea that memory is a part of Prudence or Wisdom (Marley reminds Scrooge of the Three Wise Men) which again is the part of the idea of Virtue.[8] He defined memory as one of the three parts of Prudence which is composed of *memoria, intelligentia, providentia,* and it is easy to see that they correspond with Dickens' spirits of the past, the present, and the future.[9] The wisdom Scrooge achieves in the end combines the fruits of memory, understanding, and thinking of the future. I would argue that Dickens, in the Christmas books as a whole, created fictional renderings of Cicero's four parts of virtue, namely Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance, as the basis of his social vision.[10]

Given the background of the ethical aspect of artificial memory it is particularly appropriate that Marley revisits his former house in the form of a memory procession,[11] forcefully bringing to Scrooge's mind what he seems to have, more or less intentionally, forgotten. The train of phantoms Marley is chained to represents a series of memory signs, reminders not only of the misdeeds committed in life, but also signs which are ethically intentional for the observers, be they Scrooge or the readers. The paraphernalia which Marley carries with him—the chain of "cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel" (17)—as well as his grotesque appearance conform to the traditional requirements of effective memory pictures. They are striking and iconic as well as symbolic and thus suitable to impress the memory and work upon the mind looking at them.[12]

From a historical perspective the appearance of Marley and his phantoms also has a peculiar character about it which I would like to call neo-medieval for two reasons: first of all, because the explicit association of artificial memory with ethics took shape in the writings of medieval philosophers like Albert and Thomas, as Frances Yates pointed out.[13] Secondly, Dickens' allegorical method, very aptly followed in Leech's illustration of the "Ghosts of Departed Usurers," resembles medieval representations of the Day of Judgment in which the damned often carry the attributes of their sins with them. One should also remember that Dickens lived in the period of Gothic revival in England. In fact the narrator mentions the "gruff old bell . . . peeping . . . out of a gothic window" (13). Though Dickens had little sympathy

for Catholicism and the Middle Ages, his well-known antipathy towards the prevalent ideas of political economy and the numerous examples in his stories and novels of a paternalistic alleviation of the evils of society was shared by those who yearningly looked back to the Middle Ages (for example Carlyle's *Past and Present*).[14] It is safe to assume that Dickens' concern with memory had a historical dimension as well.[15]

Dickens revitalises the ethical interpretation of the art of memory as much as he turns remembering into a criterion of being human. While he uses the model of artificial memory in "A Christmas Tree" quite conventionally as a structural device, in *A Christmas Carol* he turns the mnemotechnical conventions and methods into ethical instruments. Being visited by a "ghostly" memory image, Scrooge is made to remember. He is made to visit the places of his past which in turn bring his past to life and effect his reformation. In fact, Scrooge is led to revisit the places of his youth in order to learn visiting again, to be a social being again. Revisiting reopens the way to human solidarity, based on the recognition that we are all "fellow travellers to the grave." The first thing Scrooge will undertake after his reclamation is to go out and visit his nephew.

Revisiting in the Memory

Considering the tradition of the art of memory, Scrooge could be called a memory figure, developing from a character wishing to shut out his past to one living in the past, the present, and the future. The first indication of his character can be derived from the remark that he takes "his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern" and then returns to his "gloomy suite of rooms" (14). The adjectives tell us that Scrooge should have a talent for remembrance or rather a good memory. His humoral constitution predisposes him for it. Frances Yates pointed out that in the medieval theory of humours, melancholy "was held to produce good memories, because the melancholic received the impressions of images more firmly and retained them longer than

persons of other temperaments."[16] Klibansky traced the association of melancholy with the faculty of memory back to Aristotle's humoral and "medical" explanation.[17] He also established that melancholy was always associated with avarice and miserliness, especially in the popular tradition.[18] The fact that Dickens (and his illustrator) have one of the usurers in Marley's procession chained to a chest surely points to the iconological continuity of the popular attributes of melancholy. Dürer himself explains the bunch of keys and the purse carried by the figure of Melancholy as symbols of power and riches.[19] This association of melancholy and avarice (at the expense of love) also explains why Scrooge's fiancée put an end to their engagement. She had been replaced by "another idol . . . a golden one" (34).[20]

However, it is not only cold melancholy that dominates Scrooge's character. His sharp temper, his sarcastic disposition and even black humour also show him to be quite choleric, which indicates that Dickens was acquainted with the double nature of melancholy as described by Aristotle: on the one hand the medical-pathological notion and on the other the normal melancholy, a distinction based on the notion that black bile can be cold as well as hot.[21] In the end Scrooge even becomes a decidedly sanguine character, an indication that his experience of the nightly excursions has also corrected the imbalance of his humours and established the prevalence of the sanguine, usually regarded as an indication of the ideal state of the human psyche.[22] With this background in mind it is easy to see why Scrooge has to be regarded as a man particularly gifted with a good memory. His role as a recluse, who does not want to be reminded of Christmas—a feast that Dickens particularly associates with a "green memory"[23]—has to be seen as a refusal to remember, much like Redlaw's in *The Haunted Man*. In contrast to the later story, however, Dickens turns Scrooge's oysterlike seclusion into a comic overture of his conversion to his own true self.

The three ghosts, whose visitation Marley announced, each take Scrooge to places, to towns and buildings, the most traditional type of image in artificial memory. It is typical of these visits that Scrooge, like Vergil in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, becomes an invisible visitor, who enters the world of his past evoked by the memorial places. This immediate contact appears as a precondition for the reformative influence of the

past on Scrooge.[24] The first visit takes him back to the time of his boyhood, to the town where he grew up. Scrooge finds everything firmly imprinted on his memory: "I could walk [the way] blindfold" (26). The fact that "incidents of our childhood we often remember best"[25] was regarded as common sense even in the handbook of classical rhetoric that used to be attributed to Cicero, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. The reason given by the rhetorician, that novelty makes images stay in the mind, is different, however, from that observable in Dickens. To him it is the emotional value of places and incidents which constitutes their memorial significance. In this instance Dickens uses landscape as a memorial structure which seems to indicate that he was aware of the existence of less well-known memorial images. Quintilian had also recommended buildings as memory places and extended the types of memorial structures to include "a long journey" or "going through a city" and even to self-made structures.[26] In line with these rules of artificial memory, Scrooge "remembers," "recollects," and "recognises" as he is retracing his steps (26). Revisiting takes the form of walking from place to place in the landscape of memory as the traditional *ars memoriae* had taught. The stations Scrooge passes have become storage places of his past: the market-town, the bridge, the church, the river. Finally he walks into a veritable house of memory where he sees "his poor forgotten self as he used to be" (27). Two things appear noteworthy in this observation.

Firstly, in visiting, Scrooge 'sees' again literally and metaphorically, which is not surprising since the literal meaning of *to visit* is *to see*. Latin *visitare* is *to go to see* and *vis* is the past participle stem of *videre, to see*.[27] Secondly and perhaps of greater importance in relation to the tradition of artificial memory is the transformation of the memory place from a striking picture into energetic scenes. These virtually spring up from the places visited with the immediacy of reality. What Scrooge recognises in these scenes and episodes is, above all, himself in the various stages of his past and these images exert the strongest emotional impact on him.

Revisiting a place nearly always means revisiting one's earlier self, and yet this formula does not completely describe what makes Scrooge's re-visiting of his childhood places and experiences so special. It is the experience of being two persons at one and the same time. Pointing

forward to the narrative technique of *David Copperfield*[28] Scrooge, like David the writer, observes his younger self and enters the remembered world, as a visitor indeed:

> The spirit touched him on the arm, and pointed to his younger self, intent upon his reading. Suddenly a man, in foreign garments: wonderfully real and distinct to look at: stood outside the window . . . . 'Why it's Ali Baba!' Scrooge exclaimed in ecstasy . . . Yes, yes, I know! One Christmas time, when yonder solitary child was left here all alone, he *did* come, for the first time, just like that. Poor boy! And Valentine . . . and his wild brother, Orson; there they go! . . . don't you see him! . . . (28)

Scrooge does not remain a visitor and observer only, he becomes the young boy again; both figures merge and exist side by side. Scrooge re-lives what he experienced as a boy, Ali Baba is suddenly there, and yet Scrooge observes the event as the visitor he is: memory and narrative presence form a symbiosis which is typical for this memorial narrative. The narrator sums it up after the scene of Mr Fezziweg's Christmas Party: "His heart and soul were in the scene, and with his former self. He corroborated everything, remembered everything, enjoyed everything, and underwent the strangest agitation" (33). Scrooge's revisits of the places of his youth conjure up past events, but he is present in them as the older person as well; he is actor and audience at the same time. It is this fusion of past and present which creates the emotional effect the story is aiming at.

From the very first Dickens makes his readers aware of the effect and purpose of Scrooge's revisits. Scrooge is moved because he takes pity with the poor lonely child he once was. Self-pity, however, does not describe Dickens' idea of what memory does. Going back to the places of the past also implies resuffering and—comparable to the psychoanalytic model—leads to a revaluation of the past. This is the beginning of the famous change of heart. Scrooge sits down not far from his former self and weeps

> to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be.
>
> Not a latent echo in the house, not a squeak and scuffle from the mice . . . but fell upon the heart of Scrooge with a softening influence . . . . (27-28)

It is then, that he regrets not having given something to the carol singer. The softening of his heart is the essential first step of his education which includes remembrance and visiting. Rushing off after his reclamation to visit his nephew is a proof that he has re-discovered human solidarity and the ultimate purpose of remembering. This movement back into the midst of humanity describes the psychological content of the "philosophy of Christmas," Cazamian's felicitous phrase for the ethical concept at work in Dickens' novels.

If we look back to an earlier Christmas story, which also preaches the change of heart, Dickens' new and specific frame of reference shows up even more clearly. Dickens obviously used "The Story of the Goblins who stole a Sexton" (ch. 29 in *The Pickwick Papers*) as a starting point for the composition of *A Christmas Carol*. The earlier story, however, brings about Gabriel Grub's reformation by showing him in a 'ghostly' way images which shake his heart out of its misanthropy but none of the scenes which he is shown is part of his own past life. Gabriel Grub sees scenes and images of a purely didactic nature, scenes that are supposed to make him thankful and cheerful and willing to share the joy of the Christmas season. They are "a few of the pictures from our own great storehouse," as the king of the goblins tells him, but he is not talking of the storehouse of memory. The ethical and aesthetic dimension of that thesaurus was Dickens' great discovery that marked the transition from a novel structure which still had its roots in the eighteenth century to a novel form that had taken note of the romantic fascination by an individual's past.

Revisiting the World

With Scrooge's psychological conversion through revisiting the places of his childhood achieved, the Ghost of Christmas Present proceeds to make Scrooge revisit the world outside his "shell" and understand what Christmas means in the present.[29] This experience appeals to his understanding, to his *intelligentia*, the second part of Cicero's definition of prudence and re-enforces the pattern of Ciceronian ethics. The method which the spirit uses to make a case for Christmas can also be traced to Cicero, to his rhetoric and its model of swaying an audience by means

of persuasion. To win Scrooge over to the cause of Christmas, the spirit makes him a witness, first of the masque-like personification of Christmas Present, then the ubiquity of Christmas and finally the effects of Christmas.

Before Scrooge is taken out of his shell to become a witness of how Christmas is celebrated and what its effects are, he looks at the masque-like representation of the Ghost of Christmas Present who appears in the shape of a giant surrounded by all the traditional appurtenances of Christmas, his benevolent nature symbolised in the classical image of the horn of plenty. The ghost introduces himself as one of a family of more than 1800 pointing to the principle of repetition inherent in a feast. However, in this "Stave" Christmas appears as more of a seasonal feast than a feast of Christian remembrance. In contrast to *The Haunted Man*, the other Christmas story that mainly deals with the topic of memory, *A Christmas Carol* celebrates a particularly English version of Christmas. The ghost shows Scrooge a time of cheerfulness, joy and generosity and abundant food (49)—in stark opposition to Scrooge's world of avarice and parsimony. The spirit makes Scrooge understand the social nature of Christmas as a time when rancour gives way to humour and dissonance to harmony, as a feast of fellowship, and especially of visiting. Everybody seems to be out to visit: "But, if you had judged from the numbers of people on their way to friendly gatherings, you might have thought that no one was at home to give them welcome when they got there . . ." (49). Here, humorous absurdity takes the place of pathos reflecting the change of heart and mind that has taken place since Scrooge's first excursion with the ghost.

At this stage of Scrooge's reformation, the spirit need not show him places he knew in the past, but rather lets him see how ubiquitously Christmas is celebrated, outside of London too, among such exotics (for Dickens) like miners—probably in Wales, because they are all singing—and even in a lighthouse, far away from the shore. Seeing the evidence for the cause of Christmas, Scrooge is delighted by the joy of others (including the laughter at his expense in his nephew's house) and he is willing to be taught by the spirit's "precepts" (56). The purpose of the first visitation by the Ghost of Christmas Past was to move Scrooge, literally and metaphorically. After being shown the delights

of Christmas he is prepared to be taught: "if you have ought to teach me, let me profit by it" (40). Going far beyond the Horatian dichotomy of "aut prodesse volunt . . . aut delectare," the rhetorical categories Scrooge employs indicate the closeness of ethics and rhetoric in Dickens.

The spirit has some lessons in store for Scrooge, not far from Dickens' own heart. He tells Scrooge that those who want to prohibit all "innocent enjoyment" on Sundays (in fact the Church itself) pervert the true meaning of Christianity with whose essential teaching the spirit identifies himself (43). The spirit has a sacramental understanding of a meal shared in company. As Scrooge observes the preparations for Christmas at the Cratchits, he becomes a witness to the joy arising from the visits taking place on Christmas and from its social climax, the Christmas dinner. The spirit teaches Scrooge a lesson, but he does so like a good orator who states his case in a variety of ways. The picture of the Cratchits' home and especially of Tiny Tim is commented with ironic references to the stock phrases of Malthus' theory of dealing with the "surplus population" (47). Scrooge recognises its cynicism and is overcome with shame. The orator has achieved his aim.

Finally, the Christmas party at the home of Scrooge's nephew produces arguments that beat Scrooge on his own ground, the doctrine of utility. Scrooge's nephew and his friends discuss the logical absurdity of usury, the uselessness of amassing money for its own sake. The joke for them, of course, is that they are going to be the lucky heirs, and they pity Scrooge for depriving himself even of enjoying the idea of benefiting somebody. Their mockery includes his refusal to accept the invitation to join them for Christmas dinner. As an unreformed utilitarian he should not have refused a free dinner. Finally, the Yes and No game played by the nephew and his party turns Scrooge into a figure of fun. Having to guess that the nephew has Scrooge in mind, the guessers think of every kind of animal except the *animal rationale.* The suggestion that Scrooge is supposed to be an exemplar of this species strikes everyone as the best joke of the evening. The game playfully shows Scrooge his unregenerate self, devoid of what would make him human. Even Scrooge is amused by this caricature, because he now understands its truth.

These scenes, like those relived on the journey into the past, have their effect on Scrooge. They soften his heart (53), but more than that, they

appeal to his intentions, to his will: ". . . he softened more and more; and thought that if he could have . . . he might have . . ." (53). Scrooge's perspective has now changed from the concern with his own past to caring for what he can do for others. The end of the second journey leaves him with a contemporary problem that needs to be resolved: Ignorance and Want are shown—just like the ghost of Christmas—as a tableaux to make Scrooge aware of a task that requires not only a change of heart but intelligence and providence as well.

Reformation

In the "Stave" which features the third spirit, an interesting change of its name takes place. Scrooge first wonders whether this is the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, but understands quickly that this ghost is concerned with something completely different from the happy celebration of Christmas. As the previous ghosts this one is a masque-like figure that acts out his own meaning, being shrouded completely, the only thing visible of this "great heap of black" (58) being his outstretched hand, "pointing onward." Scrooge understands this representation to the extent that his own future is the issue, therefore addressing him as "Ghost of the Future."

The scenes which Scrooge witnesses reflect the reputation of a man recently deceased whose identity he seems to guess but is not allowed to look into. Scrooge recognises, however, that like emblems without explication, these scenes have "some latent moral" (60) for him. The moral derives from the fact that all scenes relate to his life. In that sense he visits a landscape of memory. In contrast to his previous journeys, however, the places and people in Scrooge's memory speak of events he does not recall. This is the unusual case of a thesaurus of memories that never were. Nothing is really part of his past. The dreadful message these places spell out for Scrooge is that they might become his past and could foil all his good resolutions. The rhetorician who hides in the garb of the third spirit, however, argues a case only; he is not predicting the future as Scrooge imagines. Just as the audience whom the classical orator addresses must be moved by the power of arguments

and forceful images to a different position, be it in behaviour or belief, Scrooge is shown scenes and events in the wake of the miserable death of a miser to effect his lasting reformation. The reader, needless to say, realises who that person is. Therefore, the pathos of the scenes Scrooge is led to increases with each episode till the climax is reached in the cemetery and Scrooge breaks down.

The method of the spirit of the future inverses the pattern of the previous spirits in yet another respect. Whereas up to this time Scrooge revisited the memory places of his childhood and youth and the world about him, the spirit now takes him to the memory places of other people, or rather he takes him to places that should be memory places of him, first of all "the City" (59). He shows Scrooge what an unimportant place the deceased man occupies in the memory of the merchants ("Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?" 60). Increasing the impact of the episodes the spirit takes Scrooge into a scrap dealer's place, a veritable, though perverted house of memory:

> Far in this den of infamous resort, there was a low-browed, beetling shop, below a pent-house roof, where iron, old rags, bottles, bones, and greasy offal were bought. Upon the floor within, were piled up heaps of rusty keys, nails, chains, hinges, files, scales, weights, and refuse iron of all kinds. Secrets that few would like to scrutinise were bred and hidden in mountains of unseemly rags, masses of corrupted fat, and sepulchres of bones. (61)

Here, to this store of unwanted memory objects, the remnants of Scrooge's existence are finally brought. Their memory value is nothing; only their material value, little as it is, counts for those who have stolen them. In a parody of the day of reckoning Scrooge has been literally stripped of all possessions down to his last shirt, and what remains is the cynical laughter of degraded menials. When the spirit finally takes Scrooge to his death bed, the narrator intervenes with his message of death's impotence in the face of good deeds:

> But of the loved, revered, and honoured head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, or make one feature odious. It is not that the hand is heavy and will fall down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand was open, generous, and true. . . . Strike, Shadow, strike! And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal! (64-65)

In this highly emotional rhetoric the narrator addresses death himself, unheard, as it were, by Scrooge and articulates his belief in the life-creating, procreative force of the good deed. Scrooge, on the level of the narrative, interprets the scene in emblematic ways, translating the didactic image into action: "Spirit . . . this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go!" (65). Scrooge not only enacts the emotional effect of the scene on himself, he is aware of the rhetorical assumption behind the use of emotional images when he asks the spirit: "If there is any person in the town, who feels emotion caused by this man's death . . . show that person to me" (65). But the has more disappointment in store for him when he takes him to the house of a poor family, Scrooge's debtors: "The only emotion that the Ghost could show him, caused by the event, was one of pleasure" (66).

In contrast to such reactions Scrooge observes the sadness mingled with tenderness that arises from the memory of Tiny Tim. The dead child in his room serves as a contrast to Scrooge's death chamber, but it serves even more as a foil to the following visit to Scrooge's former office. Paradoxically the room serves as a memory place of the future, and Scrooge is eager to find out what images of the future the room might have in store: "I see the house. Let me behold what I shall be, in days to come!" (69). The places of memory in the room turn out to be empty, however, completely void of memories. Scrooge has been virtually erased from the world. Finally there is only the last memory of his existence, the tombstone, and even that "neglected" (70). That is to say, his tomb itself is neither looked after nor—and that amounts to the same thing—is his name read (the pun is based on the etymology of neglect, Latin *neg-lectus*). The vision of such a disappearance finally changes Scrooge's being and re-affirms his promise of "an altered life." When he wakes up his very first thoughts that assure him of being alive are remembrances of his own life. Having ascertained his own self he is prepared to take account of the world outside him. Hearing the church bells he opens the window and prepares for his visit to his nephew. The last "Stave" shows a reclaimed character who finally goes out to visit and to do good. Scrooge will need no more visitations.

Fachhochschule Köln

NOTES

[1]All quotations from *Christmas Books* (Oxford: OUP, 1954) in the Oxford Illustrated Dickens. See 35.

[2]*OED* s.v. *staff.*

[3]*OED* s.v. *visit.*

[4]Craig Buchwald, "Stalking the Figurative Oyster: The Excursive Ideal in *A Christmas Carol*," *Studies in Short Fiction* 27 (1990): 1-14, claims "The oyster image . . . despite its unassuming character, is really a kind of master-trope for the story" (1). Unfortunately there are hardly any other related images to substantiate this point. The oyster metaphor does however convey Scrooge's initial state.

[5]The mode of reference is no more than a hinting, but no less either. That Dickens was aware of the idea of sacramental relationships appears from the parody of the Eucharist when Scrooge's former schoolmaster "produced a decanter of curiously light wine and a block of curiously heavy cake, and administered instalments of those dainties to the young people" (30).

[6]Business is a type of interaction Dickens does not regard on the same level.

[7]For a discussion of the background and theory of artificial memory see Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge, 1966).

[8]"[H]onestatis . . . habet igitur partes quattuor: prudentiam, iustitiam, fortitudinem, temperantiam" (*De Inventione* II.159).

[9]"Memoria est per quam animus repetit illa quae fuerunt; intellegentia, per quam ea perspicit quae sunt; providentia, per quam futurum aliquid videtur ante quam factum est" (*De Inventione* II.160).

[10]The extent to which Dickens was familiar with the Ciceronian texts is a matter difficult to establish. The list of books at his home in Devonshire Terrace contains the title that could have given Dickens an idea of Cicero's ethics: *Life and Letters of Cicero*, but it was published only in 1844. See the inventory in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. M. House, G. Storey, K. Tillotson, vol. 4 (Oxford: OUP, 1974) 711-25. Less direct ways of becoming acquainted with the art of memory and the ethical issues involved would have been open to Dickens as well.

[11]Dickens in the preface to the First Cheap Edition of *A Christmas Carol* characterises the story as "a whimsical kind of masque." This is discussed by R. D. Butterworth, "*A Christmas Carol* and the Masque," *Studies in Short Fiction* 30 (1993): 63-69.

[12]A similar method of representing spiritual qualities in concrete images can be observed in the stories of Hans Christian Andersen, for example *The Snow Queen* or *The Ugly Duckling*. Dickens greatly admired Andersen and valued the genre of fairy tales very highly.

[13]Yates ch. 3.

[14]See Joseph Gardner, "Pecksniff's Profession: Boz, Phiz, and Pugin," *The Dickensian* 72 (1976): 83.

[15]In this context it may not be accidental either that an influential work of medieval literature, Guillaume de Deguileville's *Le Pelerinage de L'Homme* (translated by John Lydgate into Middle English) points to its allegorical method when Grace Dieu makes the pilgrim place his eyes into his ears. This startling image describes not only the allegorical process as such but also the strategy of the homiletic poet who changes his method from mere teaching to moving by means of lively representations. This

is the method of the orator as well as the preacher and the didactic writer. See the account by Susan K. Hagen, *Allegorical Remembrance: A Study of* The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man *as a Medieval Treatise on Seeing and Remembering* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1990).

[16]Yates translates from Albertus who in *De Bono* provides the *locus classicus* for the positive view of melancholy: "the goodness of memory is in the dry and the cold, wherefore melancholics are called the best for memory" (381n57).

[17]R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky, F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy* (London: Nelson, 1964) 16, especially their interpretation of Aristotle's *Problemata* 30, 1. See also 69, 337.

[18]Even though Klibansky was mainly concerned with the background to Dürer's *Melencolia* the general drift of the popular view of the melancholic temper was not specific to any single European country, as we have to conclude from the French and German sources quoted (194). Cf. also the philosophical testimony of Nicholas of Cusa who speaks of "avaritiosa melancholia" (quoted in Klibansky 120).

[19]Klibansky 284-85.

[20]The two children Scrooge discovers under the cloak of the spirit could be regarded as the unattractive children of melancholy Saturn (see Klibansky 195).

[21]See *Problemata* 30: ". . . the melancholic are not equable in behaviour, because the power of the black bile is not even; for it is both very cold and very hot" (tr. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library). Cicero's distinction between "furor" as equivalent of Greek *melancholia* and "insania" is illuminating, because *furor* is compatible with wisdom: "furor in sapientem cadere possit, non possit insania" (*Tusculan Disputations* III.v.11). Cicero thus separates his idea of melancholy from illness: "Quasi vero atra bili solum mens ac non saepe vel iracundia graviore vel timore vel dolore moveatur." Yates traces the idea of "inspired melancholy" also in Albertus (80).

[22]This combination of the sanguine with melancholy humour is also found in ancient and medieval psychology. For the phenomenon of *melancholia fumosa et fervens*, Yates refers to Aristotle's *Problemata* and to Albertus' *De Bono* (80). From this point of view Scrooge turns from a character who cannot forget to a character who likes to remember, in other words one who lives in the past, the present, and the future.

[23]See *The Haunted Man* for the motif and the motto "Lord! keep my memory green!" The illustration by Clarkson Stanfield shows a Tudor hall in Gothic style and reflects the popularity of medieval architecture in Dickens' time.

[24]"'These are but shadows of the things that have been,' said the Ghost. 'They have no consciousness of us'" (27).

[25]*Rhetorica Ad Herennium* III.xxii.35 (tr. Caplan, Loeb Classical Library).

[26]*Institutio Oratoria* XI.ii.21 (tr. Butler, Loeb Classical Library).

[27]Etymologically *visit* also derives from the same root as *to wit*, to know. *OED*, s.v. *wit v.*

[28]See Matthias Bauer, *Das Leben als Geschichte: Poetische Reflexion in Dickens'* David Copperfield (Köln: Böhlau, 1991), especially ch. 5.

[29]"I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it" (40).

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The Sepulchral City Revisited
Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*

MANFRED BEYER

I

Places are meaningful, and second visits are particularly interesting because they invite comparison. Revisiting a place, we may experience a sense of either *déjà vu* or change. Or perhaps we find that *we* have changed so much that the place has a completely different feel. The latter happens to Marlow, the narrator of Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*. When Marlow first goes to a certain European capital—which can but need not be identified as Brussels—in order to sign his contract as captain of a river steamer operating in the heart of Africa, he is thought mad. Who would go into the wilderness of his own accord? Marlow's question to a secretary of the trading company as to why he did "not go out there" himself meets only with the brusque reply: "I am not such a fool as I look, quoth Plato to his disciples"(15).[1] The doctor who conducts his routine medical examination finds a welcome object for his phrenological studies and asks the revealing question: "Ever any madness in your family?" (15).

When Marlow revisits the European metropolis after his journey, he finds in his turn that the inhabitants are mad:

> I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams. They trespassed upon my thoughts. They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretence because I felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I knew. Their bearing, which was simply the bearing of commonplace individuals going about their business in the assurance of perfect safety, was offensive to me like the outrageous flauntings of folly in the face of a danger it is unable to comprehend. I had no particular desire to enlighten them, but I had some difficulty in restraining myself from laughing in their faces so full of stupid importance. (70)

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There is an irony of fate in the fact that what made people see him as mad, namely his voluntary journey into the heart of Africa, is now cause for Marlow to perceive them as mad. Clearly, Marlow has gained a fundamental insight which causes him to see life in the civilized world as an accumulation of despicable banalities. In fact, to him this life appears as an 'irritating illusion,' a childish naive feeling of security in the face of undreamt of danger.

The question as to who is mad or foolish here is settled by the frame-narrator, who likens Marlow's outward appearance to that of the Buddha. Paradoxically, Marlow is the 'Enlightened One' because he has experienced darkness: "It was the farthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow to throw a kind of *light* on everything about me—and into my thoughts" (11, my emphasis). What this mysterious darkness means and why its experience allows one to call others 'dead' or 'mad' is something the reader has to figure out from Marlow's relation of his journey into the heart of darkness. It is advisable here to follow the frame-narrator's instruction to the reader:

> The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted) and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that, sometimes, are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine. (9)

The metaphors seem to suggest that Marlow's story should be questioned for its symbolic implications. Indeed, the text offers a clear correspondence between the concrete level of the story and an abstract level of reference. This reading is also hinted at in the analogy between geographical specification ("the farthest point of navigation") and personal experience ("the culminating point of my experience"). In other words, the journey into the heart of Africa is, on the symbolic level, Marlow's journey into his innermost self.[2] It is a process of self-recognition which is further specified by a temporal dimension: "We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth [. . .] we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign—and no memories" (37). Therefore, the journey from the European metropolis into the interior of Africa stands

for the growing awareness of man's suppressed original atavistic nature. In this way, one could say there is a second inner place revisited which determines Marlow's reaction to the outer place he revisits.

The various stages of the journey represent various stages of Marlow's changing awareness. Two major phases can be distinguished here: on the one hand, the growing distance from the civilized world in Europe, which symbolizes a gradual fading of the norms of civilization and, on the other hand, the growing closeness to the wild ('the heart of darkness'), which refers to the gradual realization of the suppressed and forgotten atavistic dimension in man. The first phase is conveyed through the presentation of the whites, the civilized, the second phase through the blacks, the savages (with one significant exception: Kurtz).

II

Significantly, the European metropolis is not named but introduced as the "sepulchral city" (13, 70). It symbolizes the repressive social mechanisms the civilized world has developed in order to contain the atavistic forces in man and to ensure a smooth and peaceful coexistence. The most important norms of behaviour here are humanity and rationality, which finds expression in the causality and finality of our behaviour.

These norms of behaviour are illustrated by the characters that live in "the city of the dead" (14): The director of the (Belgian) commercial company, for instance, manifests the principal of finality. He uses a brief talk with Marlow to test his knowledge of French, which is obviously crucial for an efficient performance in the colony (cf. 14). The doctor represents the principle of causality in his scientific ambition to detect some connection between the shape of skulls and human nature (cf. 15). Finally, Marlow's aunt stands for the principle of humanity in her hope that the savages might be converted to 'human' behaviour: "She talked about 'weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways'" (16).

The ensuing voyage to Africa symbolizes in its growing distance from the civilized world a gradual dissolution of its norms. The landing of "custom-house clerks to levy toll in what looked like a God-forsaken wilderness" (16) suggests the loss of the principle of causality. For where

no borders exist, there is no occasion for customs duty. The end of finality is signalled by a warship that shells the bush without a concrete target: "In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent. Pop, would go one of the six-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish, a little white smoke would disappear, a tiny projectile would give a feeble screech—and nothing happened. Nothing could happen" (17). To Marlow this has "a touch of insanity" (17) which cannot be "dissipated by somebody on board assuring [him] earnestly there was a camp of natives—he called them, enemies—hidden out of sight somewhere" (17).

The increasing loss of humanity is evident in the lack of compassion for the drowning soldiers who have been 'put ashore' to protect the customs officers: "Some [soldiers] I heard got drowned in the surf, but whether they did or not nobody seemed particularly to care. They were just flung out there, and on we went" (16).

The loss of norms—which constitute the reality of human relationships in the civilized world—is experienced by Marlow consequently as a loss of reality that is conveyed by his theatrical metaphors: "sordid farce" (17), "lugubrious drollery" (17) as well as his references to "delusion" or "nightmares" (17).

This development intensifies in the trading company's Outer Station. "An undersized railway truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air" (19) appears as an emblem of a topsy-turvy world. Here—for example—explosions are carried out for the building of a railway line that can be neither explained in terms of causality: "the cliff was not in the way of anything, but this objectless blasting was all the work going on" (19), nor seen as effective in terms of finality: "A heavy and dull detonation shook the ground, a puff of smoke came out of the cliff, and that was all. No change appeared on the face of the rock" (19). Further indications of the decay of norms are "a vast, artificial hole" (20), whose purpose remains unfathomable, and "a lot of important drainage pipes" (20) which appar ently have been wilfully smashed, pointing to some uncontrolled aggression.

The complete loss of humanity is demonstrated in the so-called "grove of death" (22) where exhausted and sick black workers are pitilessly abandoned to waste away and die. Again, Marlow's reactions serve as

a yardstick or standard of civilization, according to which these experiences are judged. Not only is he deeply affected by the observed inhumanity—"I stood appalled" (20), "I stood horror-struck" (21)—but also refuses to accept senselessness, the irrational, as the new norm.[3] Thus, he perseveres in finding an explanation for the 'vast hole' that satisfies the principle of finality, and be it ever so secondary or remote: "It wasn't a quarry or a sandpit, anyhow. It was just a hole. It might have been connected with the philanthropic desire of giving the criminals [the savages] something to do. I don't know" (20).

The irrationality and inhumanity remain constant factors. On the way from the Outer to the Central Station Marlow meets a white man in the middle of the jungle who is responsible for the maintenance of the road. Marlow comments: "Can't say I saw any road or any upkeep [. . .]" (23). Roads and road maintenance are a metonymy for the institutions of civilization which claim to exist but have in actual fact become functionless and therefore absurd. Inhumanity also persists but with one significant difference: It is now Marlow's own reaction which starts to show an inhuman unconcern. He simply registers "now and then a carrier dead in harness" (23) or "the body of a middle-aged negro, with a bullet-hole in the forehead" (23), without becoming emotionally involved.

That the loss of rationality and humanity will not be the final stage of the development, but that the very standard for the perception of irrationality and inhumanity may be lost, is something that rings ominously in the Swedish captain's musings about the white man's further penetration of the jungle: "I wonder what becomes of that kind when it goes up country?" (18).

That final stage is actually reached in the Inner Station (the heart of darkness) and manifested in Kurtz. Due to a splitting of consciousness, the values of civilization and the 'principles' of the wilderness exist for him independently of one another. A striking example is his pamphlet for the "International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs" (50). Altruistic flights of fancy and the deepest contempt for mankind sit here irreconcilably side by side, without any awareness on the part of the author:

> It was very simple and at the end of that moving appeal to every altruistic sentiment it blazed at you luminous and terrifying like a flash of lightning in a serene sky: 'Exterminate all the brutes!' The curious part was that he had apparently forgotten all about that valuable postscriptum because later on when he in a sense came to himself, he repeatedly entreated me to take good care of 'my pamphlet' (he called it) as it was sure to have in the future a good influence upon his career. (51)

It is only in Kurtz' last epiphany that the link is re-established between the reality of the wild and the norms of civilization. The result is a deep shock (cf. 68).

As the yardstick for the detection of irrationality and inhumanity has lost its validity in the heart of darkness, the early atavistic, wild stage of human nature comes to the fore. The most striking symbol of this stage is the impaled heads in front of Kurtz' house. There is neither a recognizable reason or purpose for them, nor are they seen as an expression of inhumanity. They are simply described as manifestations of an urge:

> These round knobs were not ornamental but symbolic [. . .] there was nothing exactly profitable in these heads being there. They only showed that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts [. . .]. (57)

However, before the atavistic in man gets the upper hand, before the change from civilization to wilderness is complete, a neutral transitional stage has to be gone through.

III

The Central Station, which lies between the Outer and the Inner Station, symbolizes above all a neutral stage, in which the norms of civilization are no longer valid and the ways of the wilderness do not yet prevail. Marlow's state of consciousness develops accordingly: On the one hand, he registers how his memory of the civilized world recedes progressively[4], and on the other hand, he senses by intuition that the atavistic world is not yet open to him.[5]

In order to represent this paralysing neutrality, Conrad has peopled the Central Station with characters that recall the 'lukewarm' in *Revelations* 3: 15-16[6], Dante's 'hosts of ghosts' (those having lived without disgrace

and without honour)[7] and T.S. Eliot's 'Hollow Men,' in short, characters who are seen as the despicable species of man that has never had 'the guts' to make a clear decision in favour of the good or the bad. Therefore they have not lived and cannot die.[8] As regards the manager of the station, Marlow suspects: "Perhaps there was nothing within him" (25). The manager himself sees this hollowness as the reason for his immunity against fatal diseases and thus asserts: "Men who come out here should have no entrails" (25). The loss of innards is understood by him as a precondition for the inability to die, for guts make one susceptible to disease. The same applies to the manager's clerk: "[. . .] it seemed to me [Marlow] that if I tried I could poke my forefinger through him and would find nothing inside but a little loose dirt, maybe" (29). The typical personality structure of the manager is the 'neither . . . nor': "He inspired neither love nor fear" (24); "he was neither civil nor uncivil" (25). All characters at the station are victims of a paralysing contradiction "Between the idea and the reality / Between the motion and the act"[9]:

> The only real feeling was a desire to get appointed to a trading-post where ivory was to be had, so that they could earn percentages. They intrigued and slandered and hated each other only on that account—but as to effectually lifting a little finger—oh no. By Heavens! There is something after all in the world allowing one man to steal a horse while another must not look at a halter. Steal a horse straight out. Very well. He has done it. Perhaps he can ride. But there is a way of looking at a halter that would provoke the most charitable of saints into a kick. (27)[10]

Inactivity and inefficiency turn out to be the main features of the Central Station. Here we meet a brickmaker, who is faulted by Marlow: "There wasn't a fragment of a brick anywhere in the station, and he had been there more than a year—waiting" (27). Even more drastic is the encounter with a 'fireman' who tries to extinguish a burning shed: "a tin pail in his hand, [he] assured me that everybody was 'behaving splendidly, splendidly,' dipped about a quart of water, and tore back again. I noticed there was a hole in the bottom of his pail" (26).[11] It is significant that Marlow is also caught up in the loss of finality and efficiency in the Central Station, for the ship which he is supposed to take over has been run aground and holed: "Certainly the affair was too stupid [. . .] I asked myself what I was to do there—now my boat was lost" (24).

IV

After the stage of paralysing neutrality the wilderness begins to assert itself. Accordingly, the focus shifts from the loss of the norms of civilization, as shown in the whites, to Marlow's confrontation with the blacks, who represent the wild in man. The various steps in the development of consciousness are marked by changes in the perception of the savages, who appear first as 'shackled monsters,' then as free monsters, and in the end as fellow beings, before the wild is actually located within one's own self.

At the first station in the wilderness the savages still appear in shackles—"each had an iron collar on his neck and all were connected together with a chain" (19). Thus, they symbolize "the shackled form of a conquered monster" (37). In other words, the wild part in human nature is still checked by the norms of civilization; albeit these norms are only claimed to exist. The inhumanity of the whites is still glossed over with legal arguments: "They [the savages] were called criminals and the outraged law like the bursting shells had come to them [. . .]" (19), just like the pointless blasts that are legitimized by the pretext of building a railway.

As the checks of civilization lose effect, scope is given to the wild in man. As the manager of the Central Station puts it: "Anything—anything can be done in this country" (34). The freedom that arises in this wilderness reflects the inner freedom that is actually given to man, namely the potential for unlimited choice: "The mind of man is capable of anything—because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future" (38).

It is worth noting that beyond the Central Station the relationship between whites and savages gradually moves towards coexistence and cooperation and finally to a complete supremacy of the savages (cf. 59). The blacks no longer appear in chains, but are 'enlisted' for work on the ship by contract (cf. 42). On the symbolic level this marks the change from 'shackled monster' to "a thing monstrous and free" (37). The repressive checks of civilization no longer function, so that the wild in man becomes ever stronger and at the same time loses its 'monstrous', strange character:

> Well, you know that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their [the savages'] not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped and spun and made horrid faces, but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough, but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response [. . .]. (37f.)

At the next level of development the hideous and distant gives way to identification, when Marlow can relate to the savages' "tremulous and prolonged wail of mournful fear and utter despair": "I will never hear that chap [Kurtz] speak after all—and my sorrow had a startling extravagance of emotion, even such as I had noticed in the howling sorrow of these savages in the bush" (47f.). That the occasion for the sadness is the same, namely the apprehended loss of Kurtz, is something Marlow will learn later on (cf. 54).

The savages' attack on the steamer (cf. 46f.) shortly before it reaches the Inner Station (the heart of darkness) symbolizes the onslaught of the wild in man's nature, which allows three responses:

> Of course you may be too much of a fool to go wrong—too dull even to know you are being assaulted by the powers of darkness. I take it no fool ever made a bargain for his soul with the devil. The fool is too much of a fool or the devil too much of a devil—I don't know which. Or you may be such a thunderingly exalted creature as to be altogether deaf and blind to anything but heavenly sights and sounds. Then the earth for you is only a standing place—and whether to be like this is your loss or your gain I won't pretend to say. But most of us are neither one nor the other. The earth for us is a place to live in [. . .]. (50)

These three responses are again illustrated on the literal level in various characters. The 'fool' who does not perceive that he is assaulted by the forces of darkness is the young Russian. His 'part' is already evident in his clothes that are covered with many colourful patches, which remind Marlow immediately of a "harlequin" (53) "in motley" (54). Burgess is certainly right when he sees him as "the Fool, the royal jester, the court buffoon"[12] at Kurtz' court.

The young Russian's child-like naivety is already evident in Marlow's description: "A beardless boyish face, very fair, no features to speak of

[. . .] his little pug-nose [turned] up to me" (53). The outer appearance corresponds with the analysis of his personality, which grants him only a limited intellectual capacity. That he is "thoughtlessly alive" (55), with "unreflecting audacity" (55) and the imagination of "a baby" (54) prevents him from adopting a critical view of Kurtz: "He had not meditated over it [his devotion to Kurtz]" (55). Therefore the Russian is taken in by Kurtz' "splendid monologues on [. . .] love, justice, conduct of life" (58). He does not understand that Kurtz has completely abandoned himself to the wilderness; to put it another way, that Kurtz has been reclaimed by the wild.[13]

The second position towards the (inner) wild—a kind of holy detachment—is exemplified in the female characters of the civilized world: "It's queer how out of touch with truth women are! They live in a world of their own and there had never been anything like it and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether, and if they were to set it up it would go to pieces before the first sunset" (16). The imagery of 'heavenly sights and sounds' reminds one of Marlow's aunt, who idealizes her nephew in his 'mission' as "something like a lower sort of apostle" (15). So much so that he tries to call her back to ugly, sober reality: "I ventured to hint that the Company was run for profit" (16). In a similarly idealized world lives Kurtz' "Intended" (cf. 49). Despite his intense loathing of lying (cf. 29), Marlow does not tell her the truth about Kurtz and leaves her in "that great and saving illusion" (74). Coherent with this presentation is the fact that there are no white women in the wilderness. The barbaric component of man remains forever hidden to them. The ideal world of the (white) women, which never becomes reality, refers to another symbolic function of the 'Intended'. She is not only intended to be Kurtz' bride, without ever becoming so, but also stands for other frustrated intentions: the humanizing projects for the savages and Kurtz' "moral ideas" (33), which let him appear as "an emissary of pity, and science, and progress" (28) at the beginning of his career. While these noble intentions are betrayed by Kurtz in the face of overwhelming darkness, they remain, ironically filtered, present in the 'Intended'. Trusting her knowledge of human nature, she maintains: "no one knew him [Kurtz] so well as I" (73) and still at the end of the novel she declares: "[. . .] his goodness shone in every act [. . .] He died as he lived" (75).

Kurtz and Marlow belong to those people who do not shut their eyes to that wilderness. As we are informed about Kurtz' fate:

> The wilderness had patted him on the head, and behold, it was like a ball—an ivory ball; it had caressed him and—lo!—he had withered; it had taken him, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation. (49)

The metaphors of love and tenderness—"the wilderness had [. . .] caressed him [. . .] it had taken him, loved him, embraced him"—also throw some light on the symbolic function of another being, namely the "wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman" (60)[14] embodying the wilderness—"she stood looking at us without a stir and like the wilderness itself [. . .]" (60). She has cast a spell on Kurtz with her "bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch-men, that hung about her" (60) and is, in contrast to the 'Intended', Kurtz' 'true love'.

This 'wilderness' "had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude—and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating" (57). Kurtz' insight into himself reveals a part of human nature which has been suppressed to such a degree by the norms of the civilized world that it is deemed no longer to exist.

Like Kurtz before him Marlow is "assaulted by the powers of darkness" (50). Shortly after the attack by the savages, Marlow manifests for the first time reactions that are offensive even to the 'Pilgrims'. Thus, he focuses his whole attention on trifling things, although he has just experienced nothing less than the cruel death of his helmsman: "[. . .] I was morbidly anxious to change my shoes and socks. 'He is dead,' murmured the fellow [the agent] immensely impressed. 'No doubt about it,' said I tugging like mad at the shoe-laces" (47). Similarly cold and pragmatic he disposes of the body—"then without more ado I tipped him overboard" (51), which shocks all those present: "[. . .] there was a scandalised murmur at my heartless promptitude" (51f.).

After Kurtz, Marlow also falls under the spell of the wilderness in the symbolic figure of the "wild and gorgeous woman". Important in this

context is the symbol of the shadow, which is used synonymously with the symbol of darkness: although the shadow of the jungle has already cast its gloom over Kurtz' house, the impaled heads and the slope to the river, Marlow is still in bright sunlight on his steamer (cf. 58); this situation changes abruptly with the appearance of the wild African woman, whose movements show the steamer and Marlow (the relics of civilization) to be also caught up by the darkness, that is the wilderness:

> Suddenly she opened her bared arms and threw them up rigid above her head as though in an uncontrollable desire to touch the sky, and at the same time the swift shadows darted out on the earth, swept around on the river, gathering the steamer in a shadowy embrace. (60f.)

The metaphor 'shadowy embrace' suggests that the wilderness has now also become Marlow's 'mistress'. It is therefore only consistent, when Marlow directly afterwards corrects his destination: "I had turned to the wilderness really, not to Mr. Kurtz who, I was ready to admit, was as good as buried" (62). Nevertheless, Kurtz is still a means to an end here, for Marlow's real confrontation with the wilderness happens via Kurtz. First of all, Marlow is put into one category with Kurtz by the 'Pilgrims' for his partisanship—"my hour of favour was over; I found myself lumped along with Kurtz as a partisan of methods for which the time was not ripe" (62). Then Marlow gains insight into Kurtz' inner life by direct contact with him (cf. 65), and through an identification with him, he almost falls victim to the perception of his own inner wilderness: "It is his [Kurtz'] extremity that I seem to have lived through" (69). Marlow's own experience of the 'darkness' is therefore not a result of Kurtz-like deeds, but something that happens in his imagination, for he himself acknowledges in relation to his subsequent 'process of recovery': "My dear aunt's endeavours to 'nurse up my strength' seemed altogether beside the mark. It was not my strength that wanted nursing, it was my imagination that wanted soothing" (70). In this way, Kurtz could be understood as a symbolic correlate of Marlow's inner "culminating point of experience" (11). That Marlow's advance into the atavistic layers of his self is first illustrated by his growing familiarity with the savages but reaches its climax in the identification with Kurtz, stresses once more that 'darkness' is not a characteristic of the black but an existential possibility of man.

V

The unsuspected human dimension behind the term 'wilderness' is for the main part only suggested in allusions, such as "various lusts" (57), "monstrous passions" (65), "forgotten and brutal instincts" (65) and "primitive emotions" (67).[15] But these few hints already show that we are dealing with an atavistic way of being which is diametrically opposed to the rational and humanitarian demands of the civilized world.

Still, more features can be gathered from Kurtz' behaviour: There is first the egomania which strikes Marlow in Kurtz' speech: "You should have heard him say, 'My ivory.' Oh yes, I heard him. 'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my . . .' everything belonged to him" (49). Then, his obsession with power which demands nothing less than utter subjection: "[. . .] the chiefs came every day to see him. They would crawl . . ." (58) and, not least, his boundless cruelty which does not follow any specific ends, as the impaled heads around his hut show: "[. . .] there was nothing exactly profitable in these heads being there" (57). Thus, Kurtz has cut himself loose from all known norms and made himself at home in a world Marlow initially cannot relate to: "[. . .] the terror of the position was [. . .] in this, that I had to deal with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low [. . .] He had kicked himself loose of the earth" (65). We have a crossing of borders here into a strange world of values. Kurtz crosses over and has ultimately to pay for it, as Marlow is later able to understand with some empathy: "True, he [Kurtz] had made that last stride, he had stepped over the edge [. . .]" (69). This is obviously the phenomenon which has been called 'tragic crossover' in the context of drama. The tragic hero unwillingly enters a new world of values, which alienates him from his community and eventually leads to a kind of exclusion by his death.[16]

Kurtz corresponds to this type of tragic hero in so far as he leaves the world of light (civilization) and goes with fatal consequences "beyond the threshold of an eternal darkness" (74). But this experience does not remain unique and subjective. For the epiphany in which Kurtz realizes the monstrous possibility of both worlds, the range of human freedom, and reacts with dismay—"The horror! The horror!" (68)—, is described by Marlow as "that supreme moment of complete knowledge" (68); a

knowledge which shows man in a new light: "No eloquence could have been so withering to one's belief in mankind as his [Kurtz'] final burst of sincerity" (65-66).

In Marlow we have the extraordinary case that somebody survives this formidable experience and carries it into the world of unawareness: "[. . .] they very nearly buried me [. . .] I had peeped over the edge myself [. . .] he [Kurtz] had made that last stride, he had stepped over the edge, while I had been permitted to draw back my hesitating foot" (69).

It is this discrepancy between insight and ignorance which explains why Marlow on his second visit to the 'sepulchral city' feels that the inhabitants are fools or "too much of a fool to go wrong—too dull even to know [they] are being assaulted by the powers of darkness" (50). He perceives that they mistakenly believe that the norms of the civilized world governing their lives are their own nature. They forget that these norms have only been developed to keep their true nature at bay. Therefore they lack self-knowledge and one could also say freedom, because they cannot fully realize their choices or as Marlow puts it: "this choice of nightmares" (67). This means that they are not confronted with "the appalling face of a glimpsed truth" (69) and have not to face up to the terrible challenge of the atavistic alternative of existence, which breaks Kurtz, and almost kills Marlow. In actuality, one cannot talk of 'life' in an existentialist sense here, as people neither realize their true nature, nor live it. The term 'sepulchral city' highlights exactly this fundamental deficit. The darkness, the wild, the untamed is however always latently present: In the form of the "old knitter of black wool [. . .] guarding the door of Darkness" (14) and in the symbolic description of London: "The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth" (7); not least, in the symbolic description of the Thames, which recalls the river Congo "the infernal stream, the stream of darkness" (75), a warning résumé in which the novel ends: "[. . .] and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky—seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness" (76). At this point, the image of the 'heart of darkness' reveals its full meaning: Just as the heart feeds the blood vessels that run through the whole body, the 'dark' spreads from

the heart of Africa through countless channels into the world; the atavistic which 'pulses' freely in innermost Africa exists latently everywhere.

If we see it in this way, man's folly becomes obvious. There is no cause for this 'mad' feeling of security, because the monster in man is only hidden by repressive social mechanisms:

> You can't understand? How could you—with solid pavement under your feet, surrounded by kind neighbours ready to cheer you or to fall on you, stepping delicately between the butcher and the policeman, in the holy terror of scandal and gallows and lunatic asylums [. . .]. (49)

The neighbours, the fear of scandal, the police and the gallows safeguard above all the principle of humanity, while the lunatic asylum guarantees the etiquette of rationality. Where our atavistic nature threatens to break through—as in the case of slaughter—it is contained by means of 'specialisation'.

Ruhr-Universität
Bochum

NOTES

[1]Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. R. Kimbrough (New York: Norton, 1988).

[2]It is said about Kurtz, for instance: "Being alone in the wilderness, it [Kurtz' soul] had looked within itself and, by Heavens I tell you, it had gone mad" (65), and Marlow undergoes an analogous process of realization: "I had—for my sins, I suppose—to go through the ordeal of looking into myself" (65). The journey as a symbol for the exploration of the self in *Heart of Darkness* has been repeatedly affirmed in criticism; cf. H. J. Guerard, "The Journey Within," *Heart of Darkness*, ed. R. Kimbrough (New York: Norton, 1988) 243-50; Stewart C. Wilcox, "Conrad's Complicated Presentation of Symbolic Imagery in 'Heart of Darkness,'" *Philological Quarterly* 39 (1960): 1-17. However, many symbolic interpretations of *Heart of Darkness* focus on intertextual relations; cf. Lilian Feder, "Marlow's Descent into Hell," *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 9 (1955): 280-290; R. O. Evans, "Conrad's Underworld," *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Kimbrough (1971) 218-23; Kelly Anspaugh, "Dante on his Head: Heart of Darkness," *Conradiana* 27 (1995): 135-48. A systematic thorough investigation of the symbolism has as yet hardly begun.

[3]Cf. Barry Stampfl, "Marlow's Rhetoric of (Self-)Deception in 'Heart of Darkness,'" *Modern Fiction Studies* 37 (1991): 183-196.

[4]"You lost your way on that river as you would in a desert and butted all day long against shoals trying to find the channel till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off for ever from everything you had known once—somewhere—far away—in another existence perhaps" (35).

[5]"We could not understand [our surroundings] because we were too far and could not remember because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign—and no memories" (37).

[6]"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

[7]Dante, *Divine Comedy*, Canto III.

[8]Cf. Jerome Thale, "Marlow's Quest," *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Kimbrough (1971) 180: "They are not evil, for they are not even alive, not capable of the humanity involved in making a choice for good or evil."

[9]Eliot, "The Hollow Men," V.

[10]If one understands the critical image of 'hollowness' in the sense that words and thoughts (be they evil or good) have no substance in the form of deeds, Kurtz' hollowness—"he was hollow at the core" (58)—must not be seen as a logical inconsistency in Conrad's system, since Kurtz' altruistic rhetoric is not followed by deeds either.

There is of course a trenchant contrast between the manager of the Central Station and Kurtz, the manager of the Inner Station: While the Manager of the Central Station is categorized as a 'commonplace' and his lack of charisma conveyed in the phrase "he inspired neither love nor fear" (24), Kurtz is presented as follows: "Whatever he was he was not common. He had the power to charm or frighten [. . .]" (51). And in contrast to the inhabitants of the Central Station that intend evil, but do not have the courage to do it, Kurtz in the Inner Station is almost exclusively defined by his evil deeds.

[11]Cf. M. Krieger, *The Tragic Vision* (New York: Holt, 1960) 157: "The cause-and-effect pragmatics of civilization has been replaced by a nightmarish futility."

[12]C. F. Burgess, "Conrad's Pesky Russian," *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Kimbrough (1971) 249. In the same volume, other interpretations of the Russian can be found in Mario D'Avanzo, "Conrad's Motley as an Organizing Metaphor," 251-53, and John W. Canario, "The Harlequin," 253-61.

[13]It is therefore to be understood as dramatic irony when the young Russian confesses: "I tell you [. . .] this man has enlarged my mind [. . .] he made me see things—things" (54-55).

[14]A similar interpretation can be found in T. Boyle's essay "Marlow's Choice in 'Heart of Darkness,'" *The Modernists: Studies in a Literary Phenomenon*, eds. Lawrence B. Gamache and Ian S. MacNiven (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1987) 101. It is certainly not without foundation when Chinua Achebe interprets the black woman as "mistress to Mr. Kurtz" ("An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness,'" *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Kimbrough [1988] 255), but he overlooks the character's symbolic meaning and therefore comes to the conclusion that Joseph Conrad shared racist prejudices.

[15]The text in the manuscript as well as the *Blackwood's Magazine* edition of 1899 appears slightly more explicit in this point than the last authorial version: "More blood, more heads on stakes, more adoration, rapine, and murder," *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Kimbrough (1988) 72.

[16]Bruce Henricksen also sees in "the fall of Kurtz a traditional tragic pattern" (52), which he explores on the background of the gnostic myth ("'Heart of Darkness' and the Gnostic Myth," *Joseph Conrad's* Heart of Darkness, ed. Harold Bloom [New York: Chelsea House, 1987] 45-55).

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Revisitings and Repetitions in Beckett's Later Works[1]

JOHN RUSSELL BROWN

Dublin is a city set among gentle hills and the open sea. Arriving there when the sun shines in April or May, one's spirits rise. Its streets, marked by some noble but not overpowering buildings, can wind and turn unexpectedly and are varied with green and open spaces; and through them flows the river Liffey. The quadrangles of Trinity College Dublin, where Samuel Beckett was a student, are domestic spaces as well as halls of learning with an ancient library and central belltower; and within their squares are wide-spreading trees of great age. Dublin is a centre for government as well as culture, business, and trade; before the traffic jams of the present time, a town of easy, companionable access, well-suited for convivial meeting, eating, and drinking, for being seen and heard among a small yet varied society.

Dublin has also been a town of great divisions: Irish and English (of long, bloody, and often shameful history); Catholic and Protestant; and, under a surface similarity, the difference between people whose entire lives are centred in this engaging city and those (often to become exiles, such as Wilde, Shaw, and Joyce) who know a wider field of reference and are accustomed to move into a world elsewhere.

Samuel Barclay Beckett was born of Protestant parents at Foxrock, County Dublin, within easy distance of the city by rail or, today, by road. Although he lived in the country, his home was modern, comfortable, and suburban-looking and his father's business was based in the city. The records have raised some doubts of the actual day of birth but, now, we surely know that it was Friday, 13th April, 1906, in that year the day celebrated as Good Friday. After early schooling, he was sent north to Portora Royal School, an old institution modelled on English Public Schools and situated in

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beautiful, lakeland countryside near Enniskillen. University years followed at Trinity College in Dublin and so on to postgraduate unemployment, varied with writing which he considered serious above all else he did, whether poems or journalism; and varied too with school-teaching, long walks in the countryside, and visits abroad, notably two years in Paris, two more in London, and almost a year in Germany. During this time, in 1935, his father Bill Beckett died: "I can't write about him," he told a friend, "I can only walk the fields and climb the ditches after him."[2]

James Knowlson's careful and loyal biography, published in 1996, has made all this widely known, and more too that is relevant to Beckett's decision, in October 1937, to leave Ireland and live permanently in Paris. The same source also gives reasons for his brief return to the place of his birth in 1946, after World War II. These events were to affect Beckett's writing and an attempt to understand this influence must involve some retelling of Professor Knowlson's account of the main facts.

Until September 1937, Beckett became increasingly at odds with his mother, May Beckett. Although unable to understand her younger son, she continued to make a home for him, and watched and criticised. After crashing a car into a truck, Beckett was prosecuted for dangerous driving, a charge to which he determined to plead "not guilty." This impending court case and its publicity, together with his willingness to appear as a witness in a libel case, provided the occasion, Professor Knowlson believes, for Beckett's last unsupportable disagreement with his mother. Swiftly he made arrangements to leave for Paris and, as he wrote to his friend Tom MacGreevy, his arrival there was "Like coming out of gaol in April."[3]

On a small private income and what could be earned from occasional journalism and translation, Beckett set himself up in a restricted way of life in Paris, glad to be free of home. Then war came: Ireland was neutral, but Beckett took an active part in Gloria, an information-gathering cell of the French resistance in Paris. When colleagues were betrayed to the Germans, Beckett was advised to escape to the South, where he subsequently lived among the farms near Roussillon in Provence, uncertain of his safety. Alfred Péron, a close friend since Trinity College days and fellow member of Gloria, was arrested by the Gestapo and died shortly after his release by the Red Cross in 1945.

It was not until 1946, with the War over, that Beckett was able to revisit his homeland and birthplace for the first time in nine years, an event, on his own testimony, that had major effects on his life and his writing. He saw at once that his mother was far from well, being in the first grips of Parkinson's disease; she was now 74 years old and had moved into a much smaller house. While staying with her, he saw old friends in Dublin and walked, usually alone, on the hills around Foxrock and by the seashore. He also had "a vision"—that is his own word for it—which led him to see himself and his life's work in a new way. The importance of this revelation is shown by the five years of intense creativity that followed when all his newly published work, fiction and drama, was written in French, not English.

A passage in *Krapp's Last Tape* has long been taken as a description of the vision he received when revisiting his home. This solo play, written some twelve years later, in 1958, has an unusual number of direct personal references, among the most recognizable being his mother's Kerry Blue terrier, his walks in the hills with his father, a published work that did not sell, nights alone in a pub. Krapp has made autobiographical recordings during the course of his life and is now listening to them, interrupting whenever he no longer has patience with his own earlier thoughts:

> Spiritually a year of profound gloom and indigence until that memorable night in March, at the end of the jetty, in the howling wind, never to be forgotten, when suddenly I saw the whole thing. The vision at last. This I fancy is what I have chiefly to record this evening . . . . What I suddenly saw then was this, that the belief I had been going on all my life, namely [Krapp switches off impatiently, winds tape forward, switches on again]—great granite rocks the foam flying up in the light of the lighthouse and the wind-gauge spinning like a propeller, clear to me at last that the dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality my most [Krapp curses, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again]—unshatterable association until my dissolution of storm and night with the light of the understanding and the fire.[4]

Inevitably, this passage has been seized upon as an explanation of Beckett's own "vision." The occasion and the jetty have both been identified: the year was in 1946 during one of his lone walks and the place Dun Laoghaire Pier that shelters a harbour from the Irish Sea. However, Beckett himself has given two different versions. He is reported to have told Eoin O'Brien,

author of (1986), that the storm and wind gauge in *Krapp's Last Tape* were both inventions but there *had* been a revelation that had changed his attitude to his own writing. This "had taken place further down the coast . . . [at] the little jetty that juts into the sea at Killiney Harbour, which is overlooked by his brother's house."[5] To his authorized biographer, on the contrary, Beckett was quite definite in identifying another location: "Krapp's vision," he said, "was on the pier at Dun Laoghaire; mine was in my mother's room." And in *The Beckett Country*, he added, "Make that clear once and for all."[6] Whether the vision is associated with his country walks and long broodings, looking out to sea with the mountains behind him, or whether it came from within his mother's own domain, all accounts agree that it occurred when he was revisiting his earlier home.

The nature of the revelation is more securely documented. Beckett "saw" at this moment that he must accept and write about his own ignorance, what he did not and could not know, what remained stubbornly dark in his mind; rather than taking the opposite course of trying to use all that he knew or thought he knew. "I became aware," he said, "of my own folly. Only then did I begin to write the things I feel." On another occasion, comparing his work to that of James Joyce, he said: "I realised that my own way was in impoverishment, in lack of knowledge and in taking away, in subtracting rather than in adding."[7]

Written in French and dealing with his sense of what is unknown and unknowable, Beckett's work from 1946 to 1950, when his output seemed unquenchable, offers few specific remembrances of the places or events of his life. The plays take place in almost anonymous landscapes or in rooms that bear little resemblance to any in which he, or anyone else, could actually have lived. The action always takes place in unspecified time, after much has already happened about which the audience is not informed. The author seems purposefully to have obliterated all clear reference to any recognizable place or particular occurrence. A few echoes from Beckett's past can be discerned in the texts, but progressively, in a series of small revisions, he was to lessen some of these, making them more vague, and removing some of them altogether. If he was to write about his own ignorance, all that actually happened would only confuse matters.

Beckett, nevertheless, revisited his home ground to see his ailing mother once every year until her death in 1950 and the last time of seeing her was also to leave a clear mark, six years later, in the text of *Krapp's Last Tape*. Among the index to his tapes, Krapp finds "Mother at rest at last", together with "The black ball . . . The dark nurse. . . " and so on. A little later he starts singing a hymn:

> Now the day is over,
> Night is drawing nigh-igh,
> Shadows—

He then has a fit of coughing and switches on his tape machine to hear its account of "the year that is gone" during which the voice says:

> there is of course the house on the canal where mother lay a-dying, in the late autumn, after her long viduity and the . . . (57)

He switches off and industriously busies himself with an enormous dictionary, checking the meaning of *viduity*. The tape resumes with:

> [the] bench by the weir where I could see her window. There I sat, in the biting wind, wishing she were gone. I was there when [Krapp switches off, broods, switches on again.]—the blind went down, one of those dirty brown roller affairs. I happened to look up and there it was. All over and done with, at last . . . (59-60)

A small white dog, a black ball and a dark-haired nurse also feature in this remembered moment, or rather, as Krapp says on tape: "Moments. Her moments. Her moments, my moments. [Pause.] The dog's moments." It is immediately after this evocation of particularities, in their unremarkable and tatty detail, that the tape speaks of Krapp's vision. However Beckett, and not Krapp, did, in fact, respond to his mother's death, the time that he had spent revisiting Ireland, and much that had happened there previously were to stay in his mind unforgettably.

* * *

Earlier than *Krapp's Last Tape,* Ireland and events of life at home had been remembered in a work commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation, a first radio play called *All That Fall* (1956). Written in English, none other of Beckett's dramatic works is so grounded in a particular place or so redolent of the sights and sounds of the countryside around Foxrock and the railway line from Dublin. Personal memories mix with fiction repeatedly: his mother's church-going, his father's race-going; the Protestant hymns he would sing on Sundays, the sounds heard along the road connecting Foxrock to the station. He had often taken the train to Dublin and sometimes walked this road home early the next morning. Character-names in the play are those of people he knew as a boy, some slightly changed. Connolly's van in the play comes from Connolly's Stores in neighbouring Cornelscourt; the dung-cart was a familiar sight on the roads in his childhood days.

Memory brings laughter here rather than nostalgia, but this is, nonetheless, a very brutal play. Mrs Rooney, the central character is hugely and disablingly overweight. She struggles to the railway station, getting a lift towards the end in a car belonging to Mr Slocum who repeatedly grinds the gears and runs over a hen that gets in his way. Arriving at last, Mrs Rooney finds that the train from Dublin is late and it seems at first that Mr Rooney has not been on it. Eventually, however, she and Dan, her blind husband, struggle home in a high wind followed by a downpour of rain. They pass an open door from which the same music can be heard on a gramophone as she had heard on her outward journey: "Death and the Maiden." They hear yet stranger sounds, as well: ". . . the Lynch twins jeering at us"(*Shorter Plays*, 31), and then another cry which halts their talk: "Mrs Tully . . . ," Mrs Rooney explains, "Her poor husband is in constant pain and beats her unmercifully" (33).

The play ends before they reach home. Jerry, a small boy who usually guides the blind man back from the station, catches up with them to return something looking like a ball that Mr Rooney had left behind, probably in the Gents at the station. When Mrs Rooney asks what had delayed the train, her husband tries to stop the boy telling her, but without success. A little child, she is told, had fallen out of a carriage onto the line and was killed under the wheels. This does not square with what her husband has

just said and something said earlier may lead an audience to think that Mr Rooney himself had pushed the child from the compartment that he usually had to himself: when jeered at by the Lynch twins, he had asked his wife:

> Did you ever wish to kill a child? [Pause.] Nip some young doom in the bud. [Pause.] Many a time at night, in winter, on the black road home, I nearly attacked the boy. [Pause.] Poor Jerry! [Pause.] What restrained me then? [Pause.] Not fear of man. [Pause.] Shall we go on backwards now a little? (31)

Six years after his mother's death, Beckett set childhood memories into this painful comedy about a woman struggling homewards, with little hope beyond reaching home, and leading a blind husband who has a resentment against the bloom of youth. As usual with Beckett's plays, an audience looking for a story has to piece together fragments of exposition, not least the child who had been in the railway carriage when the train left town and dies on the way; the boy who guides the man and brings the lost unidentified object; and Minnie, the daughter mourned by Mrs Rooney who can see herself as:

> just a hysterical old hag . . . , destroyed with sorrow and pining and gentility and church-going and fat and rheumatism and childlessness. [Pause. Brokenly.] Minnie! Little Minnie! [Pause.] Love, that is all I asked, a little love, daily, twice daily, fifty years of twice daily love like a Paris horse-butcher's regular, what normal woman wants affection? (14)

The play is a nightmare that fills the hearer's mind, a comedy that is grotesque beyond any reflection of reality: as a radio play, it did not have to be stageable. Its story of the journeys of an undaunted wife and her husband is not that of the author's earlier life, but it contains and transforms more memories of that life than any earlier play. The whole work is haunted and afflicted by *Death and the Maiden*, the mockery of twin children, a child dying helplessly, a willing boy who says what he knows very simply despite its horror, and a dead, perhaps stillborn, infant.

* * *

After such memories and reworkings, why should Beckett return in fact or in his fictionalized work to this place? And yet he revisited Ireland numerous times on personal affairs and his homeland continued to be recollected in his writing. The last short works have numerous echoes of his early life in and around Foxrock but now the nightmarish comedy has almost vanished. Beckett imagines himself a boy again, sitting on his "tiny cycle" at the gate of his family home, playing with the dog, walking over the fields along with his father, being reproved by his mother for climbing a tree in the garden and throwing himself off a high branch, his fall broken by a lower branch. All these small incidents and visual memories are in *Company* (1977), a prose fiction in which Beckett imagines a man lying on his back in the dark with only two voices for company, one attempting to define his present existence and the other recollecting his past.

The change of style, purpose, and mood, when compared with earlier revisitings, could hardly be greater within Beckett's range, and there are changes, too, in the remembered world and its fictional recreation. Images of the past centre now on a single young boy with his mother and father. Close-up memories are rather fewer, but clearer: gone are the stationmaster and carter, the car, train, bicycle, and donkey; animal sounds, music, wind, and driving rain. Instead of a journey back and forth along one road, several long country walks are described, starting with that of the father while the mother was in labour on a Good Friday morning. Most noticeably, a new dimension is given when the boy, or the man he is to become, gazes into the distance, as he does in the very first account of what had once happened:

> A small boy you come out of Connolly's Stores holding your mother by the hand. You turn right and advance in silence southward along the highway. After some hundred paces you head inland and broach the long step homeward. You make ground in silence hand in hand through the warm still summer air. It is late afternoon and after some hundred paces the sun appears above the crest of the rise. Looking up at the blue sky and then at your mother's face you break the silence asking her if it is not in reality much more distant than it appears. The sky that is. The blue sky. Receiving no answer you mentally reframe your question and some hundred paces later look up at her face again and ask her if it does not appear much less distant than in reality it is. For some reason you could never fathom this question must have angered her exceedingly. For she shook off your little hand and made you a cutting retort you have never forgotten.[8]

In the distance, as well as the sky, are hills and fields, and the sea. In almost every remembered incident, distance is part of the setting. We are told that the room in which the boy was born, and as likely as not conceived, had a big window that

> . . . looked west to the mountains. Mainly west. For being bow it looked also a little south and a little north. Necessarily. A little south to more mountain and a little north to foothill and plain. (15-16)

The sea and a great height are remembered when he is taken by his father to swim and dive in a pool at the seaside:

> You stand at the tip of the high board. High above the sea. In it your father's upturned face . . . He calls to you to jump. He calls, Be a brave boy . . . The far call again, Be a brave boy. Many eyes upon you. From the water and from the bathing place. (23-24)

Distance holds mysteries, as when

> You slip away at break of day and climb to your hiding place on the hillside. A nook in the gorse. East beyond the sea the faint shape of high mountain. (32-33)

Because he has seen this mountain across the sea before and had been derided for thinking so—it must have been a cloud, he was told—on this occasion, he waits before returning home at nightfall and then goes supperless to bed. Once there:

> You lie in the dark and are back in that light. Straining out from your nest in the gorse with your eyes across the water till they ache . . . Till in the end it is there. Palest blue against the pale sky. You lie in the dark and are back in that light. Fall asleep in that sunless cloudless light. Sleep till morning light. (33-34)

In *All that Fall,* Mrs Rooney encounters numerous people and animals, but here the "cast" is only the boy, his mother and father, and a few people directly associated with them. Only three encounters may be said to be outside the family, each very different from the others. First is a beggar woman at the gate of his home; he opens it for her to enter and she blesses him. Next, a hedgehog is seen in the garden as it parts the edging and is

about to cross a path: the boy takes "pity on it" and picks it up, finds a box for it, puts it in a hutch, finds worms for it to eat. He gives a "last look to make sure all is as it should be before taking [himself] off to look for something else to pass the time." He feels a "glow" kindled by his "good deed" and includes the hedgehog in his bedtime prayer asking "God to bless all [he] loved." The following morning he feels uneasy about the hedgehog and some days pass before he goes back to the hutch. When he does, he finds only the "stench" and the "mush" of the dead creature (38-41).

The third encounter is with a young girl with dark hair and about his own age. They also meet in the garden, this time in a rustic summerhouse with stained glass windows:

> . . . open your eyes to find her sitting before you. All dead still. The ruby lips do not return your smile. Your gaze descends to the breasts. You do not remember them so big. . . .
> She too did you but know it has closed her eyes. So you sit face to face in the little summerhouse. With eyes closed and your hands on your pubes. In that rainbow light. That dead still. (58-59)

A little later:

> You are on your back at the foot of an aspen. In its trembling shade. She at right angles propped on her elbows head between her hands. Your eyes opened and closed have looked in hers looking in yours. In your dark you look in them again. Still. You feel on your face the fringe of her long black hair stirring in the still air. Within the tent of hair your faces are hidden from view. She murmurs, Listen to the leaves. Eyes in each other's eyes you listen to the leaves. In their trembling shade. (66-67)

In *Company* memories are often very precise and intimate, but they also have a stillness and an awareness of great distance. Instead of the weeping and outbursts of tortured lives, the cries here are almost unheard. Instead of struggle and storm and the multiple sounds of coming and going, the setting here is often full of light or darkness, dazzling and trembling light or an obliterating night. Its keenest moments, when the narration momentarily stops, are mysterious although occurring in unremarkable surroundings. Some sensations are never to be forgotten, but *Company* does not always say what they were.

Sometimes its prose has the lightest possible punctuation, so that the reader has to pick a circumspect and questioning way through long paragraphs. At other times, frequent fullstops arrest progress and alert the reader to take special care and hesitate, perhaps, before proceeding. Time moves backwards and forwards in narration of the past but, in the present, it can seem unable to move as the other voice that is heard by the man lying on his back in the dark is repetitive in much the same mood and tone, "with only minor variants" (20). Little laughter is here, which had been abundant among the violence and doom of *All That Fall* but, correspondingly, pain is mostly offset by a movement away from narration of an event into some other happening or some far-fetched reaction; alternatively the voice speaking of the past yields to the repetitive, insistent, calculating, taunting pronouncements of the other and quite different voice. Sometimes forward impetus seems to be altogether lost in silence and stillness, and in lone contemplation of the great distances.

In *Company*, Beckett has remembered the place of his childhood, looking back, now, with neither nostalgia nor anger. Pain has almost disappeared except for an aching wonder at the world's immensity and the short flushes of goodness and tender love, about which he writes with delicate care. By the end of the fiction, both its voices have stopped, in "labour lost and silence" (89). Memories of the place revisited have left the writer, now near the end of a long life, writing about being, as he always was conscious of being, "Alone." That word is from the reasoning, insistent voice that comes to the man lying on his back in the dark and here it is given a paragraph all to itself.

The irony of writing for other people to read when writing about being absolutely alone was not lost on Beckett: "I can not go on: I'll go on" is a refrain in much of his work. But the darkness from which he knew he must write, ever since that "vision" on his first return home after the war, was also now the darkness of preparing for his own death. "Labour in vain" (88) and "labour lost" (89) says the reasoning voice; but the work is not useless, for the fiction holds at its centre, for readers to enter in imagination for themselves: a person returning into the dark from which his inspiration and actual life have both come.

* * *

Beckett's imagination was so quickened by his early life in and around Foxrock in those works which contain explicit memories from that time, that a reader is tempted to look for less explicit memories elsewhere, among the amazing output of 1946 to 1950 when his plays and fiction seemed to insist on being written.

Waiting for Godet, written in French between October 1948 and January 1949, has been explicated in many ways. The play presents two turns, from the European circus and clown traditions. It reworks the author's experience when living in some fear of arrest in Provence during the last years of the war and alludes (in Lucky's maltreatment) to the tortures of concentration camps. The road and tree, the isolated figures in a bare landscape of farmlands, the rising moon at the close, the pair of boots placed side by side at the front of the stage, are all images that might have been taken from Van Gogh's paintings, which come to mind readily in that part of France.[9] The isolated persons in paintings by his friend, Jack Yeats, were figures in which Beckett said that he read his own sense of "2 entities that will never mingle" and James Knowlson has compared them to Estragon and Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*.[10] Less easily identified must be the influence of expressionist plays which are about Everyman or the human condition in a Western once-Christian culture, rather than about individuals taken directly from life as lived at a particular time. Music must also be considered an influence: *Godot* can be seen as a composition in which proportion, repetition, rhythm—the very shape of dialogue—can give meaning or, at least, force and clarity to fragments of speech and action that are in themselves unremarkable; so patterns of behaviour emerge out of a careful accumulation of moments almost discreet in themselves.

Criticism has found many instruments with which to estimate the astonishing depth and durability of *Waiting for Godot*, but *Company*, *All That Fall*, and other works with autobiographical memories can draw another net over its surface catching certain other elements that may have greater force than at first appears. The place revisited immediately before the productive years of 1946 to 1950, and again in several later years, re-awakened certain memories that were so powerful when he came to write about them that they might have arisen almost unconsciously in creative

work that was not directly concerned with Ireland and Beckett's early years. The fascination with distance found in *Company* can be seen also in the very basis of the play written almost thirty years earlier. *Godot*'s opening direction calls simply for "*A country road*" but, on stage, going from side to side, it could well be that road in *Company* that was "nowhere in particular" but going as far as any road might "on the way from A to Z" (30). Distance is also present when Vladimir and Estragon stand back to back, gazing into the distance, each able in the silence to see "nothing"; after a "Long silence" and still seeing nothing, Vladimir tells Estragon that he "must have had a vision"[11]. Also, in the play, the distant sky is stared at when night falls and the moon rises. The setting of *Godot* is not only a road but also a limitless space that is eventually almost darkness.

While absolute darkness is not on stage in *Godot* as it was in the fiction of one person alone in *Company*, it is certainly there in the imagination of the play's characters. For Vladimir, all activity and talk is an attempt to "prevent our reason from foundering" when it has "long been straying in the night without end of the abyssal depths" (p. 80). When Pozzo goes blind in Act II, he recognizes a darkness that surrounds all life:

> They give birth astride a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more. (89)

The light of a cloudless day as well as the darkness of night together provided the ultimate reaches for remembrance of the past in *Company* and they are both evoked by Lucky: the "heaven so blue still and calm" in close and fixed opposition to "the great cold the great dark" (43, 44). Whereas in *Company* these are recurring elements of the experience of the central character's recollections of the past, the double vision is most sustained in *Waiting for Godot* by Lucky, the "knock" and the one person who, as Pozzo says, might possibly speak of "Beauty, grace, truth of the first water" (33). Behind the events of this play lies the same dichotomous existence.

One element from the later pieces with autobiographical memories is found in two crucial events in *Godot*: the entrances of the boy who carries messages to Vladimir and Estragon and says he looks after the goats belonging to an unseen Mr Godot but is not beaten like his brother. He

may not simply be a tantalizing "child" (48), but a person firmly in Beckett's memory and bringing with him an amalgam of many past moments. He may have entered the play from earlier experiences as might the boy whom Mr Rooney wished to kill, who gives the news of the dead child that Mr Rooney does not want told and brings the forgotten object back to its owner. He may have come from the memories of the boy at the centre of *Company*, who had prayed for loved ones at bedtime, who could feel the "flush" of goodness intermittently, who was bidden by his father to be a brave boy as he stood high above the water, who could lie still in bed at night as if on a hill looking out to sea and discerning a pale blue mountain: a boy not unlike his author, perhaps, as he gazes into the distance of the sky or wonders at marvellous light. The boy in *Waiting for Godot* might, just possibly, be standing in for such a person.

Reading the later works may also bring greater awareness of the pain implicit in *Waiting for Godot*. Echoes of wartime experiences can be found in *Godot*'s waiting, weariness, uncertainties, off-stage beatings, and repeated disappointments but, beyond this, its suffering seems to have general rather than particular origins. These persons suffer because they are part of a disappointed world at least as much as the result of their own specific actions or reactions; their pain seems existential. No one explains why Estragon's feet ache or why he is beaten, why Vladimir can be so appalled, why Pozzo is in agony, or Lucky has to be a slave. In contrast, much of the suffering in *All That Fall* and *Company* is the responsibility of the persons involved. While the wind and rain, and much else besides, are not caused by mankind, the more particular pains in the radio play derive from individual actions and reactions: Mrs Tully's from her husband's reactions to his own pain, Mrs Rooney's from the loss of a child and from overeating, Mr Rooney's from a loveless marriage and unrewarding job. Uncertainty clouds the cause of suffering for the child who fell from the train, but clearly it too must have had its particular causation in individual human action. The pain experienced by the boy in *Company* derives almost exclusively from his own curiosity and complicity, whether asking about the distance of the sky, or asserting that a far distant mountain existed as it did in his mind, or jumping from a high tree or hesitating before jumping from high above the water, or feeling

remorse for taking pity on a hedgehog, or not thinking that a young woman's breasts were as large as they obviously were so that it might be she was "with child." The boy's pain in *Company* may not be as excruciating as Lucky's in *Godot*, but it comes directly out of his own will to be and to think, and is experienced in moments of happiness or goodness as well as coercion or fear. Encountering these other forms of pain in later, more autobiographical work, a reader may suspect the suffering in *Waiting for Godot* is more rooted into the actualities of lived experience, the pressures and responsibilities of every day, than the play itself makes clear. A second thought about the sufferings of its characters leads the mind back from existential issues to the consequences of actions by individual persons and the bent of their own minds: to their desire for friendship or "truth of the first water," a search for something more satisfying than what was on offer, some other world across the sea, or a recognition of fear and, possibly, guilt.

Middlesex University

NOTES

[1]This essay is a revised version of a paper read to the Connotations International Symposium on "A Place Revisited", at Halberstadt, Germany, in July 1997. I am pleased to acknowledge help from the subsequent discussion on that occasion and, later, from the comments of Ruby Cohn and Gerry McCarthy.

[2]See James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame; the Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996) 166. The biographical facts in this essay are almost all taken from this book, referred to later as "Knowlson"; but indebtedness extends much further than this, to Professor Knowlson's much wider account of the writing and reception of all Beckett's works.

[3]Knowlson 253.

[4]Samuel Beckett, *Collected Shorter Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1984) 60.

[5]Anthony Cronin, *Samuel Beckett: the Last Modernist* (London: Harper Collins, 1997) 358-59.

[6]Knowlson 318-19; and see note.

[7]Knowlson 319.

[8]Samuel Beckett, *Company* (1980; London: Pan Books, 1982) 12-13. As Cronin notes (17-18), the same episode leaves traces in *Malone Dies* and *The End*. These provide two

very different versions of the mother's answer: "It is precisely as far away as it appears to be," in the former; in the latter, "Fuck off."

[9]In *Endgame* (1958), Hamm says he "once knew a madman who thought the end of the world had come. He was a painter—and engraver. I had a great fondness for him. I used to go and see him, in the asylum. I'd take him by the hand and drag him to the window. Look! There! All that rising corn! . . ." (32).

[10]See Knowlson 248-49.

[11]Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1956) 74-75.

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Nightmare Visions of Eden: Recollections of Home in Joyce Carol Oates's "By the River"

BERND ENGLER

> Temptation, sin, fall, and expiation, all around in a circle, into the garden and out of it, many angels, great blazes of rhetoric and light. [. . .] As if it mattered that there was ever a paradise, or in what way it was lost to us—the only important thing is that we have no paradise; we have none.[1]

The emphatic disavowal of the existence of paradise which Max, a character in Joyce Carol Oates's first novel *With Shuddering Fall* (1964), voices in speaking of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* has set the tone for many of the novels and short stories which Oates has published in the course of her prolific career. Very much like Max and other fictional characters, Oates seems to be obsessed by man's expulsion from Eden. The defiant disavowal of the reality of paradise does, however, not at all eliminate the longing for an eventual return to an Edenic existence. Indeed, the trope of paradise regained is the predominant focus of Oates's entire oeuvre, and it certainly forms the ideological backdrop for her mournful portrayals of modern life. Moreover, the fact that Oates has transformed Erie County, the world of her childhood in rural upstate New York into the fictional Eden County as the setting of many of her novels and short stories,[2] further testifies to the author's preoccupation with the prelapsarian world of her childhood.

Again and again Oates recreates images of her personal past, as if by conjuring up the world of her childhood she could define a space in which an original self still exists.[3] Thus, in her seminal essay "My Father, My Fiction," Oates qualifies the autobiographical impulse which informs her writing as an "attempt to memorialize [her] parents' vanished world."[4] Yet Oates's endeavor to "*evoke that world* [of her father], that America,

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rapidly passing from memory" is not only an act of preserving an authentic vision of her parents' past. Rather, the argument of "My Father, My Fiction" shows that the world Oates tries to recapture in her novels and stories is very much the pastoral world of her own past (and only by implication also that of her parents); consequently, Oates vents her sense of loss primarily in terms of a personal tragedy:

> Now, decades later, nothing remains of the Bush farm. My childhood seems to have been plowed under, gone subterranean as a dream. The old house was razed years ago when the country highway was widened, the old barn was dismantled, all of the fruit orchard has vanished. *My* lilac tree near the back door, *my* apple tree at the side of the house, *my* cherry tree . . . long uprooted, gone. [. . .] The old farmhouse in Millersport was razed in 1960, yet there is a dream of mine in which I wake yet again to find myself there, in my old room—the first of the countless rooms of my life. ("My Father, My Fiction," 80ff.)

As Oates explicitly asserts the autobiographical underpinnings of her oeuvre, the reader may feel induced to perceive her fictional Eden County as a soul-searching imaginary "re-presentation" of the vanished world of her childhood. Indeed, the writer's retrospective glorification of the past and her compulsive artistic returning to her childhood world could very well be seen as the result of the "effort of the [artist's] Ego to communicate with a deeper self."[5] Yet even if one could prove that an autobiographical impulse is an essential factor in the genesis of Oates's oeuvre and that her art originates in an act of communication with a hidden self, one would be misled in proposing a reading which simplistically paralleled the life of her fictional characters with her own life, and treated the author's artistic constructs as factographic accounts of her own biography. Oates's works may well be obsessive reenactments of homecoming, attempts at coming to terms with the writer's personal past, but, first and foremost, they are objectified efforts to analyze the past and the present in the light of the highly problematic impact which America's fundamental belief in the possibility of establishing a second paradise in the New World has had upon the individual.

Like many American writers before her, Oates seeks to explore the psychological effects of America's self-stylization as a second Eden. Her characters' incessant attempts to conjure up an earthly paradise in the face

of its indisputable absence shows that American society is more than ever before influenced by a pastoral ideology which, for several centuries, has defined popular images of the New World. Yet, most of the characters who inhabit Oates's imaginary Eden (County) have realized that the dream they have been brought up to believe in is a mere illusion. They have come to understand that their rural Eden and its promise of individual self-realization[6] have not only been destroyed by the encroachments of modern civilization, but primarily by their own spiritual and moral disorientation. The germ of destruction has always been present and active in Oates's extremely ironic representations of paradise, and one may even assume that the characters forfeit their return to an earthly Eden by the very obsession with which they try to salvage it.

The short story "By the River," which was first published in 1968,[7] is one of Joyce Carol Oates's most intriguing explorations of the theme of man's expulsion from Eden and the ensuing effort to return to a prelapsarian state of being. In this story, Oates once more transforms the physical geography of her own childhood near Millersport, New York, into the symbolic space of her fictional Eden County. But here Eden is not only the concretization of a national myth, but also a place which represents the very essence of home. The protagonist's return to Eden (County) is a homecoming, both in the literal sense of coming home to the place where one spent one's childhood and where one's family still lives, and in the figurative sense of a return to a state in which one's metaphysical homelessness is overcome. But just as the physical space of childhood is transformed into the psychological space of one's "still-being-one-with-the-world," i.e. into a state of being before one's "fall" into self-consciousness and into the awareness of time, home becomes primarily a mental category, a projection of psychological needs and desires onto the once real "space" of childhood.

"By the River" explores a young woman's personal visions of home, and it does so by analyzing the ways in which these visions are determined by her parents' and the entire nation's compulsive belief in the possibility of establishing a New World Garden of Eden. When Helen, the protagonist of the story, returns home after a brief absence, she finds herself confronted with a world which stubbornly embraces this very belief in an edenic future. Yet while her father still clings to the dream of a second Eden and

blindly worships at its shrine, Helen has come to understand that her own belief in an earthly paradise has been false from the very beginning. Although she hopes that coming home will enable her to overcome the disorientation she has suffered from during her absence, this homecoming evokes rather ambivalent feelings.

As the story begins, we encounter Helen in the waiting room of the local bus station, where she expects to meet her father whom she informed the night before of her arrival. She has just returned to the small country town she grew up in and longs to be taken home to her parents' farm in Eden County. The narration offers the reader direct access to Helen's observations and thoughts. Since her mind nervously skips from one observation and recollection to another, the narrative is rather disorganized and confusing, but eventually the reader is, at least partially, able to solve the puzzle of Helen's past and to make sense of the disturbing jumble of often contradictory recollections. In spite of the seemingly incoherent mental leaps in the protagonist's recollections the reader thus learns that Helen abandoned her husband and baby for another man. The hidden impulses that determine Helen's actions remain, however, in the dark. In ruminating over the impulses that made her leave, the young woman is neither able to explain why she ran away in the first place, nor why she returned in the false belief that she could "go back to her old life without any more fuss" (112).

The young woman's thoughts keep going back to events in her childhood, especially that "muddy spring day when her family had first moved to this part of the country [i.e. Eden County]" (115). As Helen impatiently awaits her father's arrival and becomes more and more afraid of the consequences of her disloyalty to her own family and to her parents, she turns her mind to the "big old house" that in her memory always promised shelter and protection from the frightening world outside. Giving in to her impulses of wishful thinking, Helen is absolutely convinced that "[n]othing about it [will] have changed," and when she tries to "think of what had brought her back," she suddenly realizes that it had "something to do with her family's house and that misty, warm day seventeen years ago when they had first moved in" (115). It was this image of the past which, a day before, suddenly made her understand that "she did not

belong there in the city" (115) and that she should return home immediately.

When her father finally picks her up and drives her home along backcountry dirt roads, Helen is somewhat irritated by his unusual taciturnity and strange behavior. As she seeks to overcome her exasperation and to regain her self-confidence, she once more tries to envisage the day when her family moved to the countryside. However, this time her father's awkwardness tarnishes the vision of the past she is able to recapture:

> His shoulder wasn't as comfortable as it should have been. But she closed her eyes, trying to force sleep. She remembered that April day they had come here—their moving to the house that was new to them, a house of their own they would have to share with no one else, but a house it turned out had things wrong with it, secret things that had made Helen's father furious. She could not remember the city and the house they had lived in there, but she had been old enough to sense the simplicity of the country and the eagerness of her parents, and then the angry perplexity that had followed. The family was big—six children then, before Arthur died at ten—and half an hour after they had moved in, the house was crowded and shabby. And then she remembered being frightened at something and her father picking her up in the middle of moving, and not asking her why she cried [. . .] but rock[ing] her and comfort[ing] her with his rough hands. And she could remember how the house had looked so well: the ballooning curtains in the windows, the first things her mother had put up. The gusty spring air, already too warm, smelling of good earth and the Eden River not too far behind them, and leaves, sunlight, wind [. . .], and her father had brought them all out here to the country. A new world, a new life. (117-18)

The passage just quoted allows the reader to gather some information about Helen's vision of the past and the memories attached to her first "real" home, but it also becomes obvious that the few pieces of the jigsaw puzzle we obtain piecemeal, here and elsewhere in the story, will never allow for a satisfactory reconstruction of her past. The information we can gather from Helen's recollections is characterized by gaps and irritating contradictions. We learn only that "something" was wrong with the house, that "something" caused her parents' unspecified perplexity, and that "something" frightened Helen, but because we are given no more information than Helen's obscure associations can offer, we are not able to overcome our own state of perplexity. Too many aspects of Helen's

former life seem to be censured and repressed, too many attempts at gaining access to the past seem to be aborted at an early stage. Moreover, as Helen will never reach her parents' home alive, we will not even be confronted with a reality which might serve as a foil against which Helen's fragmentary recollections may be measured.

In addition, the few data we can gather from Helen's recollections display a number of contradictions, and thus they offer a rather unstable basis for any attempt at reconstructing the past. While the few initial references to the day when the family moved to the farm ("muddy spring day," "misty, warm day," 115) evoke the image of a rather miserable, muddy day with pouring rain and mist that blocks one's vision, Helen later envisions a day more congenial to a place which promises a "new world, a new life" (118): there is plenty of sunlight, and the spring air smells of "good earth" (118).

It is quite obvious that Helen's recollections are far from being a reliable source of information. Although in her visions she seems to revisit the place of her childhood, the imaginary construct of that place does not at all come close to the place which once existed. Helen's visions of her childhood home are so distorted by psychological conflicts and anxieties that one cannot tell to what extent they are based on factual evidence. But obviously Oates is not interested in having her protagonist revisit the place of her childhood in the more traditional terms of a character's dual confrontation with both present day reality and the recollections it evokes. In Oates's "By the River" such a confrontation with reality never occurs. Helen's attempts to return to her childhood home happen to be visions only, and they are only foregrounded against other visions of the past, usually contradictory ones.

To complicate things even more, the reader is not only confronted with recollections which contradict each other once they are compared, but with recollections which in themselves are totally amorphous. The passage quoted above offers a neat illustration of the shifting significations within one and the same moment of vision. As we can see, Helen's image of the past is tainted by her own emotional turmoil as well as by her recollection of her parents' disappointment. Thus, she initially visualizes the farmhouse the family moves into as a shabby run-down place. Yet Helen soon succeeds in eliminating all disturbing aspects of her vision, and the house

is then revisualized in Edenic terms: it is turned into a *locus amoenus*, the site of a "new world, a new life." Reality is charged with myth; the move to the countryside is transformed into an act of regaining paradise, in spite of the disturbing presence of "secret things" which threaten to destroy it. Yet Helen's initial evocation of the past also shows that the family's dreams would not stand the test of time. Her father would soon detect that his hopes would be betrayed because the farm did not yield the profit he had expected.

For Helen, the move to the new home marks an even more decisive event: as she has no recollection of her life before her arrival in Eden County, the move coincides with her becoming conscious of the ephemerality of human life. The text explicitly defines the moment of transition: "She could not remember the city and the house they had lived in there, but she had been old enough to sense the simplicity of the country and the eagerness of her parents, and then the angry perplexity that had followed" (118). With this suddenly gained awareness of time, Helen's arrival in Eden County symbolically represents her expulsion from the paradise of childhood and the subsequent fall into the knowledge of the temporality of one's existence. Helen has tried to repress this knowledge for a long time, but now—as she drives home with her father—it keeps invading her consciousness with increasing force. She is extremely irritated when she observes that her mind returns, again and again, to the past and to images of death: "Why," she asks herself, "did her mind push her into the past so often these days?—she only twenty-two [. . .] and going to begin a new life" (119). Early on in the narrative, while she meditates on the rumors that must have spread about her running off with a stranger, she sees the betrayal of her own family and her adultery as a mortal sin and a "disease that is going to be fatal" (113). Yet, Helen's initial associative toying with the notion of mortal sin and the subsequent idea of her own death soon allows more prominent subconscious death wishes to come to the fore:

> [. . .] there were so many diseases and only one way out of the world, only one death and so many ways to get to it. They were like doors, Helen thought dreamily. You walked down a hallway like those in movies, in huge wealthy homes, crystal chandeliers and marble floors and . . . great sweeping lawns . . . and doors all along those hallways; if you picked the wrong door you had to go through it. (113)

Helen successfully interrupts this grim train of thought, but moments later, when she recalls the conversation she had with her father on the phone the night before, her mind once more leads her back to visions of her own death:

> Listening to her father, she had felt *for the first time since she had run away* and left them all behind [. . .] that she had perhaps died and only imagined she was running away. Nobody here trusted the city; it was too big. Helen had wanted to go there all her life, not being afraid of anything, and so she had gone, and was coming back [to the country]; but it was an odd feeling, this dreamy ghostliness, as if she were really dead and coming back in a form that only looked like herself. (114; italics mine)

In a paradoxical inversion of the common significance of the biblical fall, Helen's decision to leave her rural paradise in Eden County for the big city is not at all visualized in terms of man's expulsion from paradise, but rather as an act of escape. As for Helen, Eden represents, first and foremost, the knowledge of man's mortality; it is only once she intends to return to Eden that her personal obsession with death is rekindled: "she had felt for the first time since she had run away [. . .] that she had perhaps died" (114). Given this private reconceptualization of Eden and the subsequent conflict with the signification Eden has acquired in the public domain, it is no wonder that Helen is unable to understand her actions, and especially the motivation that has brought her back home.

Like many other stories and novels by Joyce Carol Oates, "By the River" exemplifies the writer's keen interest in analyzing and criticizing people's constantly being shaped by their culture's dominant ideologies, in the context of American culture, for instance, by the ubiquitous belief in the possibility of man's return to Eden. When, in her 1973 essay "The Myth of the Isolated Artist" Oates claims that all her books have been "formalized, complex propositions about the nature of personality and its relationship to a specific culture,"[8] she voices the contention that character analysis must focus on the cultural factors which determine personality regardless of the individual's intentions. Thus, Helen's seemingly unmotivated return to Eden County is motivated to a large extent by cultural factors which are beyond her own cognition and control. Helen cannot free herself from the pervasive identification of home with

Eden, a concept which is deeply ingrained in the culture she has grown up in. This very concept also informed her parents' pastoral dream of a new life in Eden County, a life in which one's vision of self-realization could become a reality. Consequently, this concept also led to the complete frustration of their hopes once they found out that something was "wrong" with the farm. As a young child Helen was already aware of the pervasiveness of her parents' Edenic dream and also of the "eagerness" with which they pursued it and, finally, the "angry perplexity that had followed" (118) when her parents recognized that their dream would not come true.

In Helen's case the relationship between the fundamental beliefs of her culture and her own vision is charged with irreconcilable conflicts. As her culture defines the achievement of one's individual paradise in terms of economic success (e.g. the possession of a beautiful mansion in a pastoral setting), Helen cannot ascribe Edenic qualities to her childhood home. Although she temporarily succeeds, as we have seen, in transforming her rather "crowded and shabby" (118) new home into the *Gone With the Wind*-image of a beautiful mansion with curtains "ballooning" in a soft breeze, she cannot control the process of transformation for long. As the Eden of her own childhood was constantly threatened and belittled by the dictates of the far more glorious images of success and self-realization which her culture promotes, Helen is forced—in an act of psychological self-defense—to
transform the movie image of a woman's domestic paradise, i.e. the huge mansion of rich plantation owners, into a symbol of the omnipresence of death.

> [. . . there was] only one death and so many ways to get to it. They were like doors, Helen thought dreamily. You walked down a hallway like those in movies, in huge wealthy homes [. . .]; if you picked the wrong door you had to go through it. (113)

Because of her psychological disposition, Helen is not able to activate the positive connotations often associated with images of transition in Western culture; for her the doors of these mansions' marble hallways are no *portae coeli* through which she might step into the realm of an anticipated celestial

paradise,[9] but doors which represent the threatening transition into the uncertainty of a hereafter.[10]

Helen's imaginary reconstructions of her childhood home are burdened with additional, extremely ambiguous associations. As her father drives along and passes pastures and fields that once belonged to her parents' farm, Helen is suddenly confronted with a "vision [which] pleased and confused her" (123) at the same time, a recollection charged with stark and obtrusive symbolism:

> She remembered going out to the farthest field with water for [her father], before he had given up that part of the farm. And he would take the jug from her and lift it to his lips and it would seem to Helen, the sweet child Helen standing in the dusty corn, that the water flowed into her magnificent father and enlivened him as if it were secret blood of her own she had given him. (123)

Helen's vision of self-sacrifice marks a decisive turn in the course of the narrative. It occurs at the end of her desperate effort to find out what is wrong with her father and what motivates the unfamiliar taciturnity he has shown since they met. Moments later, her father would stop the car at a turn of the Eden River and begin his long confession-like attempt to make sense of his own life, and to explain what has sustained his life-long dream of an earthly paradise. The reader soon understands that Helen's vision of her imaginary self-sacrifice is but the expression of the obsessive expectations which her father and, by implication, her entire culture have projected onto her. Her father's (American) dream of an existence in God's second paradise has been, however, perverted from the very beginning. As this dream was transformed into a dream of mere economic success,[11] the obsessive pursuit of it could only wreak havoc on the family. Indeed, the psychodynamics of fear and guilt which the father's dream generates bring about cruel results: as heirs and executors of a dream which the father himself is unable to realize, the children, and especially Helen, become victims of expectations they also cannot possibly fulfill. As we have already seen, her father's hope that she would once live "in one of them big houses" (125) builds up such psychological pressure in Helen that she can visualize this 'dream' only in terms of a house with innumerable doors which may all lead her to destruction and death.

Helen's return home is indeed motivated by the pervasiveness of a dream which was deeply inscribed into her mind on the day the family moved to the new farm in Eden County. The mental images with which Helen responds to the gradual perversion and destruction of this dream portray her as a helpless victim. She has been paralyzed by this dream, and as she feels guilty of having betrayed her father's expectations, she now feels forced to revitalize the dream by sacrificing her own life. Helen is, however, not able to decipher the significance of the vision of her father's unholy communion. Nevertheless, her father's drinking from a chalice which is filled with her own blood is but a visionary anticipation of the sacrificial ritual with which her father finally tries to reaffirm the validity of a dream he cannot give up. Helen is never able to comprehend the real motives that have made her come back; even moments before she is literally executed on her father's altar of social respectability, she is still completely left in the dark: "I came back because . . . because . . .," she stammers, incapable of filling in the reason. On the banks of the Eden River, Helen's father turns into a modern day Abraham who is willing to affirm his belief by sacrificing his child. Yet Helen is not a modern world Isaac: she is not rescued, nor is her father saved from blindly pursuing a dream that has been wrong from the start. Helen's life is not saved by the workings of a divine justice. Instead, it is spilled by the strange mechanics of a predestined fate:

> And she shredded the weed in her cold fingers, but no words came to her. She watched the weed-fragments fall. No words came to her, her mind had turned hollow and cold, she had come too far down to this river bank but it was not a mistake any more than the way the river kept moving was a mistake; it just happened.
>
> Her father got slowly to his feet and she saw in his hand a knife she had been seeing all her life. Her eyes seized upon it and her mind tried to remember: where had she seen it last, whose was it, her father's or her brother's? He came to her and touched her shoulder as if waking her, and they looked at each other, Helen so terrified by now that she was no longer afraid but only curious with the mute marblelike curiosity of a child [. . .]. (127-28)

In spite of the fact that Helen is strangely preoccupied with the question of whose knife she is going to be killed with, the formulation "and she saw in his hand a knife she had been seeing all her life" is crucial to an

understanding of the ending of "By the River." Helen, one may argue, only comes back to fulfill her fate and to be sacrificed by her father. Although she does not consciously know what fate is in store for her, her visions of home have already defined the path she must finally take back into the heart of Eden. At its center she would find the tree of knowledge: Helen's paradise is defined by the knowledge of the temporality of human existence, and thus the only vision she can seek to realize is that of her passing through one of the doors of the big house which she never regarded as home.

Eberhard-Karls-Universität
Tübingen

NOTES

[1]Joyce Carol Oates, *With Shuddering Fall* (New York: Vanguard, 1964) 117.

[2]Cf., among others, Oates's novels *With Shuddering Fall* (1964), *Childwold* (1976), *Son of the Morning* (1978), *Bellefleur* (1980), *Marya: A Life* (1986) and *You Must Remember This* (1987), and her short story collections *By the North Gate* (1963), *Upon the Sweeping Flood* (1966) and *Marriages and Infidelities* (1972).

[3]Many of Joyce Carol Oates's novels and short stories are autobiographical, at least to the extent that their protagonists' "half-conscious and often despairing quest for [their] own elusive sel[ves]" reflects the "inner kernel of emotion" of the author's own quest for identity. Cf. the preface to *Marya: A Life* (1986), where Oates explicitly comments on the autobiographical basis of her novel: "*Marya: A Life* will very likely remain the most 'personal' of my novels (along with the later novel *You Must Remember This*), though it is not, in the strictest sense, autobiographical. [. . .] *Marya* was an extremely difficult novel to write, perhaps, because it is both 'personal' and 'fictional.' Many of Marya's thoughts and impressions parallel my own at her approximate age but the circumstances that provoke them have been altered, as have most of the characters. To the author, Marya's mixture of intimacy and strangeness suggests a dream in which the domestic features of one's life appear side by side with unrecognizable elements; yet, evidently, all constitute a pattern. What is most autobiographical about the novel is its inner kernel of emotion—Marya's half-conscious and often despairing quest for her own elusive self."

[4]*New York Times Magazine*, 19 March 1989, 108. In her meditations on the "genesis" of art, Oates points out many occasions in which a work of art originated in an autobiographical impulse. In her essay "Beginnings," for instance, she comments somewhat apologetically on the autobiographical impulse: "It remains a surprising

(and disturbing) fact to many literary observers that writers should, upon occasion, write so directly from life, that they should 'cannibalize' and even 'vampirize' their own experiences. But this species of creation is surely inevitable? entirely natural? The artist is driven by passion; and passion most powerfully derives from our own experiences and memories." Cf. Oates, *(Woman) Writer: Occasions and Opportunities* (New York: Dutton, 1988) 6.

[5]"Transformation of Self: An Interview with Joyce Carol Oates," *The Ohio Review* (Autumn 1973): 50-61; repr. in *Conversations with Joyce Carol Oates*, ed. Lee Milazzo (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1989) 48. See also Oates's programmatic statement in her introduction to *Scenes from American Life: Contemporary Short Fiction* (New York: Vanguard, 1973) vii: "All art is autobiographical. It is the record of an artist's psychic experience, his attempt to explain something to himself: and in the process of explaining it to himself, he explains it to others."

[6]Indeed, many characters in Oates's novels and short stories are deeply traumatized by their failure to live up to the quintessentially American notion of individual self-realization. Obviously Oates, like many of her fellow-Americans, regards self-realization as one of the chief moral obligations and patriotic duties the individual has to fulfill. In her preface to *Bellefleur* (New York: Dutton, 1980), Oates comments on the notion of self-realization as a dominant element in America's national ideology: "One by one the Bellefleur children free themselves of their family's curse (or blessing); one by one they disappear into America, to define themselves for themselves. [. . .] Theirs is the privilege of youth; and the 'America' of my imagination, despite the incursions of recent decades, is a nation still characterized by youth. Our past may weigh heavily upon us but it cannot contain us, let alone shape our future. America is a tale still being told—in many voices—and nowhere near its conclusion." To some extent, Oates's celebration of the optimistic "spirit of America" which encompasses the entire repertoire of patriotic encomia may be seen, however, as the result of a strategy the writer used in order to defend herself against critics who had claimed that her novels and stories distorted America into a sheer pandemonium of perversion and violence which had nothing to do with reality.

[7]The story was published in 1968 in the magazine *December*. It was, however, not widely circulated until it was included in Oates' third collection of short stories *Marriages and Infidelities* (New York: Vanguard, 1972) 112-28; all subsequent quotations (with page references added in brackets) follow the text of this collection.

[8]"The Myth of the Isolated Artist," *Psychology Today* (May 1973): 75.

[9]The traditional implications of the symbol of the door are wide-ranging. For symbols of transition to an edenic existence see, for instance, biblical references in Ez 14:1 ff. and Ps 87:2. Cf. esp. Ad de Vries, *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, 3rd. ed., (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1981) s.v. "door" and "gate."

[10]In Oates's own symbolic 'universe,' the image of the door tends to be closely related to imminent destruction and death. In her essay "Wonderlands" she discusses the symbolic significance of door images in texts by Robert Louis Stevenson, Franz Kafka, Frances Hodgson Burnett, and H.G. Wells. Yet Oates's "wonderland" cannot be found—as one might assume—in the "Edenic garden hidden behind a door in a wall" in Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, but in the irresistibly attractive and at the same time horrifying garden which is hidden behind a door in H. G. Wells's 1911 tale "The Door

in the Wall." Oates seems to be fascinated by Wells's "fin-de-siècle sentiments of an extremely pessimistic sort since, after all, the door in the wall is a doorway to death. The mysterious regenerating powers of the secret garden touch, it seems, only children, in the 'golden hours' of life; forever afterward they are inaccessible. Or they return in a terrifying guise, as impulses that lead to disintegration and death." Cf. "Wonderlands," *(Woman) Writer: Occasions and Opportunities* 103-04; originally published in *The Georgia Review* (Spring 1985).

[11]As the story explicitly states, Helen's father only wanted to overcome his complex of social inferiority by proving to himself and the world that they were respectable people, and that although they were poor they "weren't hillbillies": "I prayed to God to bring them [i.e. his snobbish neighbors] down to me so they could see me, my children as good as theirs [. . .]. I wanted to come into their world even if it had to be on the bottom of it, just so long as they gave me a name . . ." (125).

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Paradise Remembered in Some Poems and Paintings

JOHN P. HERMANN

Let us begin at the crossroads where place, language, memory, and mind intersect, as Keats imagines, or reimagines. Specifically, with finitude suddenly catapulted to the 2nd, 3rd, or nth power, that is, with what used to be known as the experience of the sublime:

1. Keats, "On First Looking into Chapman' s Homer"

> Much have I travell' d in the realms of gold,
> And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
> Round many western islands have I been
> Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
> Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
> That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
> Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
> Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
> Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken;
> Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
> He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
> Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
> Silent, upon a peak in Darien.[1]

If, as Goethe wrote in his *Italienische Reise*,[2] things will speak to us only when we take a close look at them, we might best begin an exploration of the temporal and linguistic paradoxes of an original remembering by paying attention to the modalities of place in this poem. I say exploration because we will be covering a vast terrain, a terra incognita of a peculiarly trans-spatial and trans-temporal sort. Keats writes that he had often heard of one particular trans-spatial and trans-temporal place ruled by Homer.

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As we already know, the paradoxes of place are multiple as is shown by the deictics "this," "that," "here," and "there," which refer to a uniquely linguistic reality in a world which knows nothing of time and space. So, I will remark only:

(1) that this (Keats's, Chapman's, Homer's) expansive place is linguistic, part of the cognitive landscape made possible by, or constructed by, language;

(2) that all places are linguistic realities, as much as cognitive or geographical ones—if not more so;

(3) that this particularly expansive place Keats writes of is the place of Homeric language—more specifically, the place of epic origin, ruled by the father of Western epic.

Keats's visit to this place was anticipated by the public relations machinery of canon-formation and the not quite distinct educational system, what Louis Althusser termed the Ideological State Apparatus,[3] as well as by that great abstraction, the *soi-disant* neoclassical age of poetry which preceded his own. Keats's reaction to this programmatic visit to the classics was like that of an astronomer who finds the new planet his mathematics indicate must exist, Platonism regnans, but which has hitherto escaped empirical detection; or like that of an intrepid colonial adventurer who discovered an ocean that his mental maps had not prepared him for—although that rearrangement of mapped space was subsequently figured into the now rather infra-sublime reality of the Pacific ocean.

That is, Keats had heard of the significance of Homer, as all literate Westerners must, but was unprepared for the impact this wide expanse would make upon him—despite the fact that he had been well-prepared in advance by literature's public relations department for an epic encounter with the origin of epic. The place of epic origin was already mapped out for him—and here I annotate my paradoxical theme, that all places we visit for the first time are revisitings—but when he finally arrived there he was rendered wildly silent, so wild at heart that no words could emerge at that punctual moment of origin sprung from other origin—the place revisited had already been anticipated, and found far less than lacking, by many an ephebe before Keats who was alert enough to feel the shock of recognition that, Melville says, travels the circle of genius round.[4]

2. Henry Vaughan: 1621-95

I announce these dates so that historicists of both the critical and non-critical variety will observe, with pleasure or annoyance, that I am moving in a nonlinear fashion.

As I have already indicated, sign and referent are impossible to disentangle, even for an Ariadne, two sides of the same sheet of paper as de Saussure said of the signifier and signified;[5] or, as Nietzsche acidly put it, we have no right to assert that anything external, such as a *Ding-an-sich*, anchors our phenomenalizations, although an ancient cultural prejudice keeps literature students of common sense immune to the challenges of this paradox.[6] Places are inevitably psychic, symphonies of hill, dale, street, steeple, dome, river, sky, and forest—collections of signs that speak to us deeply of those who have written upon the landscape before us, or of those gods we imagine to have written upon the landscape long before we arrived. As Isidore of Seville said, the entire world is a giant book written by the finger of God.[7]

All places are mental places, and, we eventually come to understand, linguistic topoi. Which is not to say that they are mere commonplaces, although Wordsworth, democratic as he once was, would attempt to re-enact their commonality for our species. We will deal with Wordsworth later, great master of the humanizing deictics "here," and "there," "then," and "now." For now we treat Henry Vaughan's unforgettable exclamation, delivered to his readers with an abruptness that seems a higher form of rudeness.

They are all gone into the world of light!
  And I alone sit lingring here;
Their very memory is fair and bright,
  And my sad thoughts doth clear.

It glows and glitters in my cloudy brest
  Like stars upon some gloomy grove,
Or those faint beams in which this hill is drest,
  After the Sun's remove.

I see them walking in an Air of glory,
  Whose light doth trample on my days:
My days, which are at best but dull and hoary,
  Meer glimering and decays.

O holy hope! and high humility,
  High as the Heavens above!
These are your walks, and you have shew'd them me
  To kindle my cold love,

Dear, beauteous death! the Jewel of the Just,
  Shining nowhere, but in the dark;
What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust;
  Could man outlook that mark!

He that hath found some fledg'd birds nest, may know
  At first sight, if the bird be flown;
But what fair Well, or Grove he sings in now,
  That is to him unknown.

And yet, as Angels in some brighter dreams
  Call to the soul, when man doth sleep:
So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted theams,
  And into glory peep.

If a star were confin'd into a Tomb,
  Her captive flames must needs burn there;
But when the hand that lockt her up, gives room,
  She'l shine through all the sphaere.

O Father of eternal life, and all
  Created glories under thee!
Resume thy spirit from this world of thrall
  Into true liberty.

Either disperse these mists, which blot and fill
  My perspective (still) as they pass,
Or else remove me hence unto that hill,
  Where I shall need no glass.[8]

Once again, we encounter a place of origin and destination, alpha and omega, seen through a glass, in this case the glass of poetic vision that is heartbreakingly dark. Although this is the original linguistic place, a spiritual place traditionally rendered in terms of flowing light, we can hardly fail to notice an equally strong tradition in which its prerequisite is darkness, sin, and death. The world of light glows and glitters, i.e. shines and sparkles, in an air of glory that is a rebuke to the speaker, and by extension, the reader, whose light glimmers and decays into mists of sadness and of visionlessness, the everyday least common denominator

of fallen perception. Although they have shifted referents more than once in the course of the English language (and no doubt the German), for Vaughan, if *glimmering* is intermittent and evanescent, always threatened by the approaching darkness, *glittering*, by contrast, is hardly, or barely, intermittent—barely interrupted by borders of nothingness, suggesting only bountiful light with a regular oscillation—at any rate, the opposite of a threatening darkness, a promise of redounding, refulgent light and energy, Being as perpetual Becoming. To know it is to love it, and to see it is to know it, even despite one's self.

Now this place is already revisited the first time we arrive there, although its impression upon us is only strong enough to allow us to recognize an inexpressible ineffability, a divine aphasia that occasionally bursts out in poetic language. Dust, mist, tombs, slavery, darkness, bondage are the human lot for Vaughan, even the poetic lot: were it not for moments of transcendent vision which seem to release us from slavery, one feels that for Vaughan this lot would be well nigh unendurable.

3. It seemed that way to Wordsworth, too. I draw attention to his *Immortality Ode*,[9] which I parse for our own curious purposes. Once, all was "apparelled in celestial light." No more. The curiously disturbing verb "apparelled," which suggests clothing as Adamic curse, as deception, secrecy, obfuscation, leads to the rhetorical question, "Whither is fled the visionary gleam?" Etymologically, this is Vaughan's "glimmering."[10] Apropos of "apparelled," I observe only that a visionary gleam might be merely self-induced, self-referential, that is, lacking in any real-world referent, or even reliable imaginative validity.

> Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
> The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar:
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home:
> Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
> Shades of the prison-house begin to close
> Upon the growing Boy

> But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
> He sees it in his joy;
> The Youth, who daily farther from the east
> Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
> And by the vision splendid
> Is on his way attended;
> At length the Man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day.

This vision is not visionary in the dangerous, i.e., deceptive sense. Despite all our fallen facticity, something in our embers is not entirely blighted by everyday mechanical ratios and least common denominators. We barely glimpse, as with Vaughan, "shadowy recollections" (in Vaughan's lexicon, glimmerings, in Wordsworth's gleams, not glitterings) of the original world of entirely loveable, superhuman, light.

> Which, be they what they may,
> Are yet the fountain light of all our day.

Notice that, as with Vaughan, the imagery of powerful vision occurs in the form of a fountainhead or spring, *Grund* or *Ursprung*. (And here I draw your attention to the ideal medieval location of the fountain at the very center of the monastic grid.)[11] As a result of this return to a source anticipated by our alienation, all our seeing begins to take on a connection to the original sight, taking the form of a memory of light remembered. If the young Keats is like Cortez, the middle-aged Wordsworth is more like Vaughan, able to seize the day only in terms of glimmerings found in a vanished fountain of light. And just as a fountain depends upon air, a fountain of light, a glimmering or a glittering, depends upon darkness, figured in Vaughan and Wordsworth as death.

In Wordsworth's maieutic method, all significant earthly perception is based on a recollection of a previous life in a world of light, a memory of a memory, a fountain of light by which phenomenal reality begins to take on a noumenal existence—only here the noumenon is not the *Ding-an-sich*, but is located in the supplementary vision which constitutes the full meaning of a world of defective signs, signs that require death and loss in order for us to work to reconstitute their original effulgence. Before the Fall into darkness, doubt, meaninglessness, we must locate Paradise remembered.

4. I have long preferred earthly light of the Southern variety. I have lived in Alabama for the last quarter century, interrupted by summers in Aix, in the chateau of the de Welles, beside the famed dolphin fountain. When I go to church, for heavenly light, it is to St. John of Malta, where a group of Dominicans have reimagined a Gregorian chant that has become world-renowned for its purity. While there I focus on the stained glass, some original, much a nineteenth-century recreation of a Middle Ages destroyed by fanaticism and war. The Middle Ages, of course, was an invention of the Romantic period, a deictic "this," "that," or "there" meant to indicate how very like the denizens of the classical period of light, and how unlike those of the ages of Papist and monastic darkness, we moderns are. Or should we say "were." (I pause here to note that the word "modern" dates from the fifth century A. D., and refers to those who wore their hair shaved, as opposed to the older logicians, who wore leonine manes.[12] Modernity always requires, and constructs, an inimical past.)

I have brought up the Church of St. John of Malta and its magnificent stained glass in order to pose a speculative question: what were medievals trying to accomplish with this technology? What were they trying to represent with stained glass? One more speculation, even through a glass darkly, if you will allow yourselves: if they had possessed modern technology, say lasers and three-dimensional holographic transmitting screens, what would medievals have constructed in the way of colored light breaking up the light of common day into myriad significant patterns? I give thanks to the semiotician errant Umberto Eco for raising this strange possibility.

5. These hypothetical questions are likely only to interest a few historicists and theorists. But I bring up these fantastic speculations, barely reined in by reason or evidence, because I believe they have already been answered in the history of art from the Impressionists through the Abstractionists. In Kandinsky, that quintessentially modern painter, I believe we can find a thread to lead us through this revisiting of the originary place of light that constitutes all significant landscape or townscape, if only by its demonic contrary.

Kandinsky was the most retrospective of painters, out of dire necessity. He was quite interested in the medieval romance world, as in *Verses Without Words* (1904). In so doing, he followed the lead of the Russian Symbolists, who looked for the chaotic present back to a past which seemed harmonious and unified. They were confronted with a contemporary fin-de-siècle culture which, they asserted, lacked the childlike wholeness and harmony Wordsworth and the New Testament so often depend upon.[13] Before the Fall into darkness, despair—or modern industrial alienation from the medieval family, farm, and craft that constitute a glimpse of heaven in Marx, Messianic Jew that he was—there was a time of harmony, integrity, oneness. It was of the utmost urgency that a saving vision be constructed if the modern world were to be endurable, that is to say, comprehensible, in terms of its exile and return from the world of harmonious light. While ill with fever as a child, Kandinsky experienced visions of what, throughout his life, he asserted to be the ultimate truth—these visions were, thank God, non-representational. Although light moved through them, no objects of the sort that surround us were evident; patterned light ruled these child dream-vision domains, a patterned light that took its force from its objectlessness, to translate the Russian *bespredmetnosht*.

Kandinsky later equated pictorial representation of the external world with materialism; only a painterly or writerly construction of pure forms, as Roland Barthes would have us say,[14] could render, or enable, spiritual vision and, thus, serve as an antidote to a world lost in the inessentials of matter, i.e., in the inessentials of the constructed linguistic and cultural code which enabled Ivan Ilych to understand the precise nature of the brocaded curtains he purchased when he thought he had finally hit the bigtime in society:

> "Our epoch is a time of tragic collision between matter and spirit," Kandinsky wrote, "and of the downfall of the purely material world view; for many, many people it is a time of terrible, inescapable vacuum, a time of enormous questions; but for a few people it is a time of presentiment or of precognition of the path to Truth."[15]

What his paintings would do, said Kandinsky, was to reconstruct "the new spiritual realm . . . the epoch of great spirituality."[16] His painting could refine the human soul, and the artist could function as Moses in pointing the way to a Promised Land they would never be allowed to dwell in. He compared himself and his fellow Symbolists to the early Christians who were trying to raise "the weakest to spiritual battle" (Ephesians 6: 11-16). Kandinsky took the right-wing Hegelian view that Christianity had incorporated the wisdom of all previous religions, cults, and philosophies. Russia herself would become the Third Rome. And the vehicle for traditio, the new traditio of the latest, and final, Rome, would be shapes of light, two dimensional evocations of three-dimensional patterns which would cause sympathetic vibrations in the soul, but which would bypass the rational, representational of intellect. Kandinsky's thinking here is strikingly like that of Walter Benjamin, who allowed himself to envision a mechanical, technological reproduction and production of works of art which would enact social revolution at a subconscious level.[17] This subconscious level would not be that of the modern advertiser, who is said to insert subliminal messages urging us to drink Pepsi, or vote for the Greens, but a purely formal rendering of the familiar world in a way which might unlock the saving power of the Messianic moment, the straight gate through which the Messiah would finally pass, the Messiah, in this instance, being a risen humanity alerted by art to the folly of its fallen perceptions, constructions, representations. The creation of art was the creation of a new world, and this struggle was reflected in Kandinsky's imagery of hurricanes, battles, floods, wars and other apocalyptic scenes, as his paintings from 1910-13 attest. Alternatively, he painted such titles as *Paradise* or *Garden of Love*, in an attempt to remove the "great dead black spot," i.e., the dark power that threatened to exile mankind from its birthright of a world of spirit into the fallen state of materialistic vision. For the seventeenth century, as for Blake, this was the great dragon that blotted out genuine perception by means of the awakened, visionary senses.

Kandinsky's painting *Black Spot I* (1912), features oppressive forms, highly abstract but vaguely insectlike, almost like the most monstrous of the denizens at the bottom of the sea, including one ravenous jawbone

or crustacean-like leg with a hideous protruding eye. Instead of the dragon imagery and hideous biomorphs of Breughel's *Fall of the Rebel Angels* and Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, he constructed abstract shapes which conveyed the essence of those visionary topoi. On the other hand, in paintings like *Paradise* or *Garden of Love*, we see a harmonious motion to the abstract still life, which is filled with electric, palpitating, and palpable protozoa-like forms, in which the spawning quality of Being as continual, unquenchable, infinite Becoming is made manifest. A freshness deep down things,[18] a subterranean current that constitutes an unalienable human wellspring or *Ursprung*, human and animal shapes dancing in the two-dimensional space of the painting, but with a color technology painstakingly developed by Kandinsky in order to allow the three-dimensional to be perceived through painterly alternations of reds, yellows, blues, greens, blacks which alternately recede and advance from the plane of the painting. Not stained glass, which Kandinsky consciously adapted in his early paintings and illustrations, and not three-dimensional holographs, which our young compatriots at the Vienna Biennale are working on, but formal signs, nonetheless, of a world of light that transcends and enables all artistic perception.

6. I anticipate the end of my commentary with Dante's mystic rose, composed of those who have reached salvation—one petal is St. Thomas Aquinas, one St. Bernard, another, grace willing, you or I—a glowing, flowering, emblematic hymn of praise which is Dante's version of the *fons et origo*, the original pulsations of meaningful light that anchor poetic and prophetic perception in the sphere of the awakened soul. The end of this journey, however, is his complementary image of the river of light found in *Paradiso* 30:[19]

> E vidi lume in forma di rivera
> fluvido di fulgore, intra due rive
> dipinte di mirabil primavera.
>
> Di tal fiumana usc̀ian faville vive,
> e d'ogni parte si mettìen ne' fiori,
> quasi rubin che oro circunscrive. (61-66)

And I saw light in the form of a river
between two banks,
painted with miraculous springtime flowers

From this river emerged living angelic sparks
which settled all over the flowers,
like rubies set in gold.

Here we find a version of the remembered Paradise that, like the mystic rose, is eternal through its very vibrancy, and through continual change, like a river of light giving off the glitterings or glimmerings that our jewelers try to capture, if only for an instant. And here we come to an end which, I hope, is also a beginning.

University of Alabama

NOTES

[1]*John Keats*, ed. Elizabeth Cook (Oxford: OUP, 1990) 32.

[2]20.3.1787: "Man habe auch tausendmal von einem Gegenstande gehört, das Eigentümliche desselben spricht nur zu uns aus dem unmittelbaren Anschauen." *Goethes Werke*, Hamburger Ausgabe, ed. Erich Trunz, 3rd. ed., vol. 11 (Hamburg: Wegner, 1957) 215.

[3]Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: New Left Books, 1971) 127-86.

[4]Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," *New York Literary World* (August 24, 1850), rpt. in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 5th ed. (2269).

[5]Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (London: Peter Owen, 1964) 113.

[6]Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967) 307.

[7]Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum Libri XX* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911) 13.

[8]*The Works of Henry Vaughan*, ed. L. C. Martin, 2nd. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957) 483-84.

[9]*Wordsworth: Poetry and Prose*, ed. W. M. Merchant (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1967) 576-581.

[10]*OED* s. v. "gleam".

[11]On the development of technology concomitant with this ideal, see J. C. Dickinson, *Monastic Life in Medieval England* (London: Black, 1961) 5-10.

[12]See A. Souter, *A Glossary of Later Latin to 600 A. D.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949) s. v. "modernus".

[13]See *The Life of Vasili Kandinsky in Russian Art: A Study of "On the Spiritual in Art,"* ed. J. Bowlt and R. Long (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners, 1984) 44-48 and *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, vol. 1, ed. K. Lindsay and P. Vergo (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982) 96-104 and 355-91.

[14]On the notion of the writerly, see Roland Barthes *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975).

[15]"The Death of Ivan Ilych," *The Raid and Other Stories*, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (Oxford: OUP, 1982) 245.

[16]On Christian aspects of Kandinsky's argument, see "Whither the New Art" and "Reminiscences / Three Pictures," *Kandinsky: Complete Writings*, 96-104; 378-79; quotation from 99.

[17]Walter Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit," *Gesammelte Schriften* I.2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974) 471-508.

[18]The phrase is from Gerard Manley Hopkins's "God's Grandeur".

[19]Dante Alighieri, *La divina commedia*, ed. Giuseppe Vandelli, 21st ed. (Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1988). The English translation is my own. On the petals of the mystic rose, see cantos 31-32.

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Patterns of Recollections in Montaigne and Melville*

WILLIAM E. ENGEL

> The picture of history—be it the history of mankind, of the world of organisms, of the earth or of the stellar systems—is a *memory*-picture. "Memory," in this connexion, is conceived as a higher state . . . and it forms the necessary basis of all looking-backward, all self-knowledge and all self-confession.
>
> Spengler, *Decline of the West*, III.1.v

What started out as a response has ended up as a full-fledged article, which is a tribute to the compelling case presented by Åke Bergvall regarding the extent to which "Renaissance and romantic poets were particularly eager to ascend both real and imaginary mountains" (44). By virtue of the judicious way the argument is staged, "Vision and Memory in Wordsworth and Petrarch" takes a cogent look at the inner experiences of these two poets writing about their ascents of actual mountains. The paradigm for analysis that is established works exceedingly well, irrespective of the extent to which "the fuller Augustinian context" (50) is evoked or assumed—and Bergvall even acknowledges there is no evidence that Wordsworth owned or read Augustine. Still, with the recent scholarship on the Church Father's place in English literature (and I am thinking here especially of Harold Weatherby's exposition of Spenser's theological allegory), Bergvall is wise to project a line of steady, if evanescent, influence.[1]

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*Reference: Åke Bergvall, "Of Mountains and Men: Vision and Memory in Wordsworth and Petrarch," *Connotations* 7.1 (1997/98): 44-57.

In the essay climbing, along with the privileged perspective it affords, is discussed as an allegory of spiritual life. Though each poet uses it differently, what remains constant is that outer landscapes are translated into pictures of the poets' internal mindscapes (49). So compelling is Bergvall's theme that it inspired me to reflect on related cases so as to bring into higher relief other, similar peaks that are to be found in the sweeping panorama of the literary historical vista implicit in the thesis "Of Mountains and Men." Specifically, the strangely poetic prose sketches of Michel de Montaigne and Herman Melville can be seen to fit commodiously within the self-conscious autobiographical literary pattern so carefully demonstrated by Bergvall. In fact (as I will endeavor to suggest in what follows), Montaigne can be seen as the "mountain" situated between and linking Petrarch and Wordsworth; and Melville is the American range that passes just out of sight from the summit of Wordsworthian thought: "poetry" being understood as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, taking its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity (48). Thus, in much the same way as can be said of Petrarch and Wordsworth, Michel Eyquem, from the highest point of his ancestral chateau ("de Montaigne"), records his impressions of the enhanced if still fragmentary perspective he has gained of his surroundings and self; so too does Melville, whether he scales the Mast-head in *Moby Dick* or Rock Rodondo in *The Encantadas* only to descry that from such a towering observation point paradoxically comes, at best, a dizzying glimpse into the abyss of the human heart.

I.

> *Memoria certe non modo Philosophiam, sed omnis vitae usum, omnésque artes una maxime continet. Assuredly memorie alone, of all other things, compriseth not onely Philosophy, but the use of our whole life, and all the sciences.* Memorie is the receptacle and case of knowledge. Mine being so weake, I have no great cause to complaine if I know but little. I know the names of Arts in Generall, and what they treate of, but nothing further. I turne and tosse over bookes, but do not studie them; what of them remaines in me, is a thing which I no longer acknowledge to be any bodies else. Onely by that hath my judgement profited: and the discourses and imaginations, wherewith it is instructed and trained up. The authours, the place, the words, and other circumstances, I sodainly forget . . . .(II.17, 377-78)[2]

It is with these words that Montaigne reiterated a Renaissance commonplace about "the case of knowledge" by reaching into his own storehouse of memory. He recycles a sentence from Cicero about the power of memory only to demonstrate, although perhaps self-ironically, that he has none. More specifically, he confesses that while he may have access to the names of things, he cannot claim knowledge of their substance; and further, that his recognition of this is the extent of what he can know despite of all his reading. The recollection and the subsequent application of those lessons and words from antiquity is what will wed theory to practice. So, despite Montaigne's claim to forget authors, places, and words, the seeds of the imported message, as mnemes, remained lodged within him and were capable of being situated in his discourse.[3] And yet, he continues his confession of the extent of his defective memory: "as much as any thing else I forget mine own writings and compositions. Yea, mine owne sayings are every hand-while alleadged against my selfe, when God wot I perceive it not" (II.17, 378). Fortunately for Montaigne though, he could refer to his writings and compositions, review and revise them, and thereby make of them a kind of "artificial memory." [4] Thus he records that: "For want of naturall memory I frame some of paper" (III.13, 356).[5]

Attention to memory, even if it took the form of a preoccupation with having none, was central to the humanist program of rhetoric (Invention, Judgment, Memory, and Elocution) and to human learning in general. Francis Bacon placed additional emphasis on memory as the foundation of the intellectual arts: "the use of this invention is no other but *out of the knowledge whereof our mind is already possessed, to draw forth or call before us that which may be pertinent to the purpose which we take into our consideration*. So as, to speak truly, it is no Invention, but a *Remembrance* or *Suggestion*, with an application" (3:389)[6]. Moreover, his discussion of "Suggestion," as the second part of the "Art of Invention," reiterates the principles of the place-system method used in artificial memory schemes: "certain *marks* or *places*, which may excite our mind to return and produce such knowledge as it hath formerly collected, to the end we make use thereof" (3:391). Further, before launching his discussion of the theatre of the mind, that locality "wherein poetry" plays out its "feigned histories," Bacon describes history as "that part of learning which answereth to one

of the cells, domiciles, or offices of the mind of man; which is that of the Memory" (3:342-43).

Bacon's treatment of the branches of human learning is based on conceits drawn from the classical *ars memorativa* and from allusions to Plato's theory of anamnesis—that all knowledge is predicated on remembrance.[7] It is hardly surprising then that unlike Sidney and other apologists for poetry who maintained that it incorporated the best of, and thus was superior to, history and philosophy, Bacon did not view poetry as an integral part of true learning. Still, he was bound to use poetically oriented metaphors to express this point. For example his narrative ushers us along, as if strolling down a corridor within a Memory Theatre of his own making; our guide cautions us: "But it is not good to stay too long in the theatre. Let us now pass on to the judicial place or palace of the mind, which we are to approach and view with more reverence and attention" (3:206). The judicial place, or palace of the mind, refers to the seat of judgment or reason and, according to use of the metaphor in the late sixteenth century, it was one of three seats or faculties of the rational soul. The other two faculties, were imagination and memory, which corresponded respectively to poetry and history.[8] History is, as the Ciceronian dictum put it, "lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis [the light of truth, life of memory, judge of life, and herald of antiquity]." Thus Alexander Ross wrote in his continuation of Raleigh's *History of the World*, "History is a necessity to all, but chiefly to those who are set upon the Pinnacle of Honour . . . who being placed upon the Watch-Towers, had need of better eyes, and a longer Perspective than those who live below."[9]

Montaigne was just such a man who, owing to fortune, circumstance and natural wit, was placed above many in his land. So too during each day of his "busy leisure," his retirement from public life, he scaled the stony pathway of stairs up to the top of "Montaigne" in both literal and figurative senses. By going up to his library in the tower of his ancestral chateau he gained a privileged perspective on his estate, as well as on his life and times. What is more, the same principles that informed the design of his library also animated his reflections and writing. He wrote from within a circular room that was filled with his numerous books and which was decorated with more than fifty *sententiae* on the beams overhead.[10]

The peculiar design of this room, while obviously quite personal with respect to the selected *sententiae*, reflects more generally the emblematic turn of mind typical of the Renaissance.[11] It was from within this material Theatre of Memory that Montaigne could gain an enhanced view of things both in the world and in his mind. From here he could survey his entire household and grounds—and the ground of his experiences.

> At home I betake me somwhat the oftner to my library, whence all at once I command and survay all my houshold; It is seated in the chief entrie of my house, thence I behold under me my garden, my base court, my yard, and looke even into most roomes of my house. (III.3, 49)

The locus of Montaigne's reflection, the site of his enhanced vision and writing, may be instructively seen in the light of Quintilian's words on the construction and aim of an artificial memory system.

> The first thought is placed, as it were, in the forecourt; the second, let us say, in the living-room; the remainder are placed in due order all round the impluvium . . . all these places are visited in turn and the various deposits are demanded from their custodians, as the sight of each recalls the respective details.[12]

It was from the imaginary retracing of one's steps through a familiar house that one could deposit and later retrieve bits of information. It was precisely from such a room that Montaigne ordered the apparent disorder of his thoughts and transformed them into the viable substance of his essays—and of his "essais," his trials or probings of the "self." Typical of a man who disdained pedants who recited words without understanding what they uttered (I.25, 138), he did not desire merely to accumulate information by means of his artificial memory, but sought to use such a system to order his thoughts, and ultimately to acquire knowledge and faithfully to represent the substance of what he discovered by virtue of this exercise. It was within this special room, he tells us, that his writing takes place in connection with his random perusing of books.

> There without order, without method, and by peece-meales I turne over and ransacke, now one booke and now another. Sometimes I muse and rave; and walking up and downe I endight and enregister these my humours, these my conceits. (III.3, 49)

Then, as if taking the reader with him as he shuffles in his mind's eye from room to room, he describes what is to be seen—and what is to be remembered. The point of origin for this exercise, which is also the center of his Memory Palace, is his library.

> It is placed on the third storie of a tower. The lowermost is my Chapell; the second a chamber with other lodgings, where I often lie, because I would be alone. Above it is a great ward-robe. It was in times past the most unprofitable place of all my house. There I [passe] the greatest part of my lives dayes, and weare out most houres of the day. I am never there a nights: Next unto it is a handsome neat cabinet, able and large enough to receive fire in winter, and very pleasantly windowen. And if I feared not care, more than cost; (care which drives and diverts me from all businesse) I might easily joyne a convenient gallerie of a hundred paces long, and twelve broad, on each side of it, and upon one floore; having already, for some other purpose, found all the walles raised unto a convenient height. Each retired place requireth a walke. My thoughts are prone to sleepe, if I sit long. My minde goes not alone as if [legges] did moove it. Those that study without bookes, are all in the same case. The forme of it is round, and hath no flat side, but what serveth for my table and chaire: In which bending or circling manner, at one looke it offreth me the full sight of all my books, set round about upon shelves or desks, five rancks one upon another. (III.3, 49)

Montaigne displays here a well-developed sense of being able to create places within his mind as in his home. This enables him to claim for himself ample space to stretch out and exercise his body as well as his mind. In the same spirit as Petrarch's and Wordsworth's mountain explorations, Montaigne's words take us along with him as he describes the places he encounters. Each object that comes into view warrants further elaboration—even a non-existent gallery of a hundred paces long. Because of the physical design of this room, as well as the disposition of his books within it, he was able to take in all of his volumes at a single glance; and, perhaps in gazing upon one of the "five rancks" of his books he would remember some anecdote or tale that would inspire him to rise, walk to the shelf and "turne over and ransacke, now one booke and now another." The design of the shelves coincides with the decorum of artificial memory schemes which esteemed five as the basis for mnemonic organization.[13] And so, whether glancing at the beams overhead or strolling through his library, Montaigne was put in mind of choice *sententiae* which fueled his "inventions," and which, in turn, furthered his program to "make trials"

of and to plumb the depths of "the self" that constituted the groundwork of his literary endeavor. This, after all, Montaigne declares in II.6 (58-59), was the philosophical goal of his retirement (see also II.10, 94) Thus situated, as heir to the estate whence his celebrated pen-name of Montaigne derives, his library was indeed the central *seat* of his chateau.

> It hath three bay-windowes, of a farre-extending, rich and unresisted prospect, and is in diameter sixteene paces void. . . . which pleaseth me the more, . . . that I may the better seclude my selfe from companie, and keepe incrochers from me: There is my seat, there is my throne. I endevour to make my rule therein absolute. (III.3, 49-50)

The surface correspondence, broadly speaking, between the three-windowed room mentioned in III.3 to the literary architecture of the three books of the *Essais* calls further attention to Montaigne's technique of introjecting his surroundings into his text even as he had projected textual elements onto the design of his library.[14]

The double theme of recalling the words and deeds of others and of searching for the appropriate place to sit in judgment pervades Montaigne's essays both early and late in his career. It is figured emblematically on his celebrated medal of the scales shown in balance; and is also evident in his personal motto, "Qui sçai je" [What do I know?].[15] In his "Apology for Raymond Sebond" (II.12), for example, Montaigne maintains that man is incapable of true knowledge—namely, that which goes beyond recollection or resemblance—especially when regarding himself. Academic philosophers held that while we cannot know what is true, we can recognize what is probable; however, Montaigne denied this, arguing that if we do not know the true (le vray), then surely we cannot know what resembles it (le vraysemblable).[16] Another, more intimate, way of looking at this double-bind which is so much a part of Montaigne's inherited intellectual tradition and which his text seeks to disengage, comes in his address to Mme. De Duras: "For, al I seeke to reape by my writings, is, they will naturally represent and to the life, pourtray me to your remembrance" (II.37, 520). As Steven Rendall has observed of this passage, "the resemblance that makes re-cognition possible depends upon a previous knowledge . . . . The transparency of meaning Montaigne postulates in the face-to-face encounter is at once the cornerstone of his conception of a written self-portrait and the mark of its fragility."[17]

Thus what distinguishes Montaigne's position from that of other upholders of the skeptical tradition in the Renaissance is his literary practice: the essays constantly move between the poles of "le vray" and "le vraysemblable." Consequently the essays themselves are used to wage an ongoing critique not only of the opposition between truth of higher forms and resemblances, but also of the age-old opposition between intelligible and sensible objects of knowledge. From his own textual practice, we know that Montaigne was a close reader of his own book, and his movement in and out of the different temporal strata of his *Essais*, just as his own text's movements in and out of those of others, kept in suspense the very structure of the opposition between truth and resemblance, between things apprehended by intelligence alone and things apprehended through sensation. Therefore, the author (or rather, some representation of what he aspired to portray of himself) is the matter ("la matiere") or substance, the groundwork, of the essays.[18] Consequently his translation of the Platonic axiom "knowledge is remembrance" into the program of the essays, in both word and in spirit, links Montaigne's use of *sententiae* to the larger epistemological concern of the Renaissance with respect to how man came to know, and to view his place in the world. Further, in the spirit of Augustine and Petrarch as discussed by Bergvall, Montaigne's writing is concerned with how he can get language to convey the furthest extent of his luminous and scattered thoughts, memories, and sensations. To accomplish this, Montaigne arranged *sententiae* in the essays in a way that corresponded to the placement of images in the arts of memory. Just as the *sententiae* were placeholders in Montaigne's text, the imaginary places and rooms constituting the great palace of the mind were repositories, storehouses and treasuries of past images, words and deeds.

With this in mind, we can see in a new light a key passage usually read as the author's most cogent statement of his union with his book:

> In framing this pourtraite by my selfe, I have so often beene faine to frizle and trimme me, that so I might the better extract my selfe, that the patterne is therby confirmed, and in some sort formed. Drawing my selfe for others, I have drawne my selfe with purer and better colours, then were my first. I have no more made my booke, then my booke hath made me. A booke consubstantiall to his Author: Of a peculiar and fit occupation. A member of my life. (II.18, 392)

It may well imply a union, but one that refers to the constitution of the character created as result of the essays—seen as they are as a composite element tacked onto the essayist's being and having a power over it. The resulting image he saw of himself was a fractured body which, like his book, was a pastiche, willy-nilly, of disparate apothegms and appendages collected and rearranged to suit his ends.

> To the end I may in some order and project marshall my fantasie, even to dote, and keepe it from loosing, and straggling in the aire, there is nothing so good, as to give it a body, and register so many idle imaginations as present themselves unto it. I listen to my humors, and harken to my conceits, because I must enroule them . . . . I never studie to make a booke; Yet had I somewhat studied, because I had already made it (if to nibble or pinch, by the head or feet, now one Author, and then another be in any sort to study) but nothing at all to forme my opinions: Yea being long since formed, to assist, to second and to serve them. (II.18, 392-93)

Montaigne saw, and could recognize, aspects of himself in the books he read and in the book he spent the last part of life writing and rewriting. Through fragments of the voices of others he sought to collect and represent the scattered and disjointed nature of the "self" he had sought to document and observe and come to know. It is in this sense that knowledge for Montaigne was based on re-collection. His interior terrain was that which the essayist sought to survey and scale through the process of writing. From atop his chateau, Montaigne sought to "register so many idle imaginations as present themselves" (II.18, 392). Thus his quest to recollect and, literally, to re-member, and thus to give a body to the *membra disjecta* of his experience, runs parallel to what Bergvall discusses in terms of Augustine's spiritual autobiography and Petrarch's ostensible goal in his *Rime sparse* of "trying to collect the scattered pieces of his life and love into a coherent and harmonious whole" (52).

II.

> It was during the more pleasant weather, that in due rotation with the other seamen my first mast-head came round. . . . Let me make a clean breast of it here, and frankly admit that I kept but very sorry guard. With the problem of the universe revolving around me, how could I—being left completely to myself at such a thought-engendering altitude,—how could I but lightly hold my

> obligations to observe all whale-ships' standing orders, "Keep your weather eye open, and sing out every time." . . . [B]ut lulled into such an opium-like listlessness of vacant, unconscious reverie is this absent minded youth by the blending cadence of waves with thoughts, that at last he loses his identity; takes the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of the deep, blue bottomless soul, pervading mankind and nature; and every strange, half-seen, gliding, beautiful thing that eludes him; every dimly-discovered, up-rising fin of some undiscernible form, seems to him the embodiment of those elusive thoughts that only people the soul by continually flitting through it. In this enchanted mood, thy spirit ebbs away to whence it came; becomes diffused through time and space.
>
> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, "The Mast-head," XXXV

Morris W. Croll observed in his discussion of Montaigne, Pascal, Burton, and Browne, that it was characteristic of the fragmented "baroque" prose style, so reminiscent of epigrammatic poetry:

> that an idea separated from the act of experiencing it is not the idea that was experienced. The ardor of its conception in the mind is a necessary part of its truth; and unless it can be conveyed to another mind in something of the form of its occurrence, either it has changed into some other idea or it has ceased to be an idea, to have any existence whatever except as a verbal one.[19]

And so too for Melville, who like Petrarch and Wordsworth, sought to communicate something of his effort to re-collect and then arrange the *membra disjecta* of his experience, especially as pertains to scaling precipitous heights. Like Montaigne before him, Melville sought ingeniously to recycle the words of others so that they might be made to speak beyond their original contexts and thus serve double-duty according to his own purpose. And what was the purpose toward which Melville's reinscription of Renaissance and Baroque topics and themes, *sententiae* and *exempla*, tended? In his turning to aphoristic turns of phrase (as the etymology of "trope" implies), Melville so thoroughly turned his attention to literary artifice that "for a time, indeed, his imitation of Browne's style bordered on ventriloquism."[20] Further, Melville's stylistic eccentricities, which throughout his literary career take him from the world of realistic descriptions to "symbolic thresholds," are rooted in his "discovery of Rabelais, Robert Burton, and Sir Thomas Browne."[21]

Given Melville's well-known affinity for Renaissance and Baroque literature, it is not surprising to discover just how often he applied to his own tales the dominant themes and techniques associated with ambling, encyclopedic essayists like Montaigne and Burton. This is especially true in *Moby-Dick* and *Mardi*, and yet can better be seen at a glance in *The Encantadas* (one of the five *Piazza Tales*) because, in effect, this short story is a mnemonic mirror in miniature, an abstract, of the journey toward self-discovery and -loss that is typical of the longer ocean-going novels. Compacted tightly within the loose structure of the ten sketches making up *The Encantadas* we can see evidence that Melville was conscious of and, at times, self-ironic about, his debt to Baroque allegory and the themes, techniques, and world-view most often associated with the Montaignean mounting of the heights of the self to survey what is to be found there. But most importantly, the ten sketches can be seen as a "decade" of ten background images displayed in a Memory Theatre, like those way-posts placed and disposed along a mnemonic route which thereby provides fertile topics of invention.[22]

It is with melancholy intimations that Melville acquaints his readers with the subject, scene, and tone of the ten sketches of the Enchanted Isles, couched as a digressive travel narrative.

> In many places the coast is rock-bound, or, more properly clinker-bound; tumbled masses . . . forming dark clefts and caves here and there, into which a ceaseless sea pours a fury of foam; . . . screaming flights of unearthly birds heightening the dismal din. However calm the sea without, there is no rest for these swells and those rocks; they lash and are lashed, even when the outer ocean is most at peace with itself . . . a most Plutonian sight. In no world but a fallen one could such lands exist.[23]

The scene described, which is populated by "unearthly birds" is all too earthly; in fact, quite literally, it is nothing but earth. How then is the traveller to describe this apparently alien landscape, the product of a fallen world? As Bergvall points out in this regard though with respect to Petrarch: "neither images nor language were always reliable, partaking as they did in the Fall" (53). Thus the depiction of the restlessness of this locale, paralleling a subdued restlessness within the soul of the speaker, was a fitting challenge to Melville as a "self-conscious symbolist."[24]

The short story begins with fragments of Spenserian verse and then launches into a description of the nature of the Enchanted Isles. Similar fragments preface each of the sketches, and, coincidentally, "Sketch Fourth" uses lines from *Faerie Queene* (I.10.53-55) quoted in part by Bergvall (44). *The Encantadas* concludes with lines ostensibly by a lone grave-marker that at once are emblematic of Melville's self-conscious literary design and also indicative of the Montaignean view that any construction is, as the etymology implies, the piling up of parts and, as such, necessarily marked by artificiality and transience. The text reminds us of this from the first sketch to the last. For example, the final sketch rhymes its way awkwardly and ludicrously toward a final word.

> It is but fit that . . . the Encantadas, too, should bury their own dead, even as the general monastery of earth does hers. . . . The interment over, some good-natured forecastle poet and artist seizes his paintbrush, and inscribes a doggerel epitaph . . . as a specimen of these epitaphs, take the following, found in a bleak gorge of Chatham Isle:—
>
> "Oh, Brother Jack, as you pass by,
> As you are now, so once was I.
> Just so game, and just so gay,
> But now, alack, they've stopped my pay.
> No more I peep out of my blinkers,
> Here I be—tucked in with clinkers!" (207)

Indeed, it is fitting that, at the end of the ten sketches, we are left with "clinkers!" to echo in the chamber of our mind, like a rock chink-clinking its way down a ravine. The verse, framed by the conceit of "grave-stones, or rather grave-boards" (206), is inscribed by one who has imagined himself to be another: the "good-natured forecastle poet and artist" gives words to and presumes to speak for another, for the one who is dead. He assumes the voice of someone who, from the vantage point of the future, would be in a position to say (had he breath to speak) that he was "tucked in with clinkers." The conceit of the grave-board which brings to a close the tenth sketch, and which is the last "voice" we hear from the Enchanted Isles, at once functions literally and allegorically. It is quite literally a *memento mori* emblem, and, as part of the larger allegorical structure both animating and giving shape to the more encompassing work, it enacts and depicts

the very process by which such an emblematic conceit conveys its meaning and then passes away into silence, into the dark night of "Nothing which we scarcely know."[25]

The good-natured artist (the anonymous forecastle poet, who is "Salvator R. Tarnmoor," who is Melville—a topic I can only introduce here but which will be discussed more thoroughly at the end of this section), through his craft, shows us an intimation of our own future passing. Such a graphic calling out to the passer-by from that bleak gorge of Chatham Isle is also, and more properly, a calling out to the reader who, in a moment, will have completed the text, and, like the passer-by will leave that marker behind and go on with his affairs. This moment of being about to pass beyond the text is figured as having been inscribed on the mocking sign-post of death, which suggests there is literally "nothing beyond the text" in question. This grimly ironic *memento mori* episode is facilitated by virtue of a host of fairly typical baroque framing mechanisms. The whole work, as macrocosm, defies and mockingly spurs the limits of mortal vision ("No more I peep out of my blinkers"), while alternative perspectives are represented in the smaller worlds, or islands, of the Enchanted Group in ways that undercut any pretense of ever being able to accede to a vantage point that affords a totalizing view. From first to last, the literary strategy characterizing *The Encantadas* is citation, combined with the exhaustive juxtaposition of copious descriptive tropes. Put in more philosophical terms, the text tacitly and repeatedly poses the question of how one goes about describing the nature of description.[26]

In what follows then, my necessarily truncated examination of several key moments from the opening sketches of *The Encantadas* will serve to flesh out how this vexed issue of seeking faithfully to represent description was integral to Melville's philosophy of composition. As if setting before himself the challenge of a commonplace-book exercise, Melville took as the subject of his narrative rocks-clinkers. Following a pastiche of Spenserian citations concerning "The Wandering Isles," which sets the pace and tone of the entire work ("For whosoever once hath fastened / His foot thereon may never it secure / But wandreth evermore uncertain and unsure") "Sketch First" begins:

> Take five-and-twenty heaps of cinders dumped here and there in an outside city lot; imagine some of them magnified into mountains, and the vacant lot the sea; and you will have a fit idea of the general aspect of the Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles. A group rather of extinct volcanoes than of isles; looking much as the world at large might, after a penal conflagration. (149)

The image opening the narrative is one which imports to a familiar urban setting an utterly alien natural world. The vacant lot of the sea becomes the chief background in this deserted Memory Palace, with its enchanted five by five heaps (a number and a sequence traditionally esteemed by mnemonists). The "chief sound of life" there is "a hiss" (150). Thus this "Plutonian" region is, by nature, incommodious to narration, and, indeed, to human life itself; further, it defies even the gaze which makes speaking about its differences possible.[27] But, as the ten sketches bear out, this in itself makes the Enchanted Group well suited for being adorned with distinctive and memorable tales imposed on the various isles from the outside—much in the same way as images conventionally are used in the classical *ars memorativa*.

> Indeed, there are seasons when currents quite unaccountable prevail for a great distance round about the total group . . . . The difference in the reckonings of navigators produced by these causes, along with the light and variable winds, long nourished a persuasion that there existed two distinct clusters of isles in the parallel of the Encantadas, about a hundred leagues apart. Such was the idea of their earlier visitors, the Buccaneers; and as late as 1750, the charts of that part of the Pacific accorded with the strange delusion. And this apparent fleetingness and unreality of the locality of the isles was most probably one reason for the Spaniards calling them the Encantada, or Enchanted Group. (152)

The "unreality of the locality" poses an epistemological problem of how one might come to know and then describe, and thus to represent, this most substantial, most material, and most "grounded" of subjects—rocks. One resolution is to attribute supernatural qualities to these rocks. But this does not solve the problem, because the label "the unreality of the locality" does not make it unreal or supernatural. By presenting the reader with the history of "the delusion of the double cluster," of positing two distinct groups, Melville brings into view the double issue of description and self-representation so prominent in the writings of Montaigne. While

The Encantadas is constructed with this in mind, the tale is more than just an ingenious literary exercise illustrating how the problem of attaining knowledge of an object is also the problem of narration, and of literature broadly conceived. Still, given the syncretic structure of the Encantadas (as a chain of islands) and of *The Encantadas* (a text, recall, that is mnemonically and allegorically composed of ten sketches), the possibility of there being a discrete, coherent "whole" is frustrated at every turn.[28] The Enchanted Group, like the text, may be compared to the description of a Galapagos penguin in "Sketch Third" as "neither fish, flesh, nor fowl . . . though dabbling in all three elements, and indeed possessing some rudimental claims to all . . . at home in none" (160).

This problem of description with respect to the nature of the space from and about which the narrator represents a land figured as "outlandish," has been addressed more generally by Walter Benjamin when he noted of the baroque allegorical mode, the self-confessed inability to possess the Truth, "its signifying technique is to represent Truth in its total act."[29] It is, perhaps, in accord with this view, that part of the narrative strategy mobilized in "Sketch First / The Isles at Large" is description through negative attributes.

> Another feature in these isles is their emphatic uninhabitableness. It is deemed a fit type of all-forsaken over-throw, that the jackal should den in the wastes of weedy Babylon; but the Encantadas refuse to harbor even the outcasts of the beasts. Man and wolf alike disown them. Little but reptile life is here found: tortoises, lizards, immense spiders, snakes, and that strangest anomaly of outlandish nature, the *iguana*. No voice, no low, no howl is heard; the chief sound of life here is a hiss. (150)

This "woebegone landscape," the object of narration, which never occasioned human life and can only accommodate it at the price of great hardship, is a space *naturally* devoid of human reference and referents—and so anything human that comes into contact with it stands out from the rocky background most emphatically. To speak about any of the petrific places requires that they be visited and their details noted and scrutinized: they must be invaded *visually*. And it is precisely in this movement that we are implicated with the narrator as transgressors in a realm unvisited and unviewed by humans. Our vision of these

memorable places however is conditioned by the movements of the narrator's roving eye, which ushers us through what amounts to an inversion of Dante's infernal descent, "as we ascend from shelf to shelf" (159). And so—as was seen to be the case with Petrarch and also Montaigne—the human eye can never take in the extent of subject in question from a single, albeit privileged or elevated, perspective; the same applies to the Enchanted Group which we can view from its egregious center (if center it can be said to have).[30] Therefore, in "Sketch Third," Rock Rodondo "takes on a metaphoric quality that gives it a poetic as well as geographical command of its surroundings. Like 'The Bell-Tower' of a great Italian Cathedral, which was to form the subject of a later story, the Rock rises precipitately to yield a view."[31]

Following our guide, we are taken up Rock Rodondo, only half-aware that it is another of Melville's mnemonic moral microcosms. In the instant when the prospective panorama is about to come into full view, we are told that we have reached an impasse. We can go no farther, and where we are is not far enough to accomplish all that we had desired from our prospective and steady ascent.

> To go up into a high stone tower is . . . the very best mode of gaining a comprehensive view of the region round about . . . . Much thus, one fancies, looks the universe from Milton's celestial battlements . . . . Having thus by such distant reference—with Rodondo the only possible one—settled our relative place on the sea, let us consider objects not quite so remote. Behold the grim and charred Enchanted Isles . . . . *If you could only see so far*, just to one side of that same headland, across yon low dikey ground, you would catch sight of the isle of Narborough. (158, 163, 165-66; my emphasis)

Reminiscent of Montaigne's projection of a gallery one hundred paces long, Melville's description of what we would have been able to see puts into practice a description of allegory, like that discussed by Benjamin, as representing one thing in terms of another while pointing out the limitations of this procedure.[32] Consistent with this motif, the first five sketches outline in different ways the recognition that narrative description, no matter how encompassing or copious, is bound to fall short. In the face of this recognition (which parallels the acknowledgment of one's mortality) our guide, identified as "Salvator R. Tarnmoor," narrates "Sketch Fourth

/ Pisgah view from the Rock" with a sense of playfulness reminiscent of Montaigne's interweaving of *sententiae* and *exempla* and of the satirical whimsy of Burton as "Democritus Junior" in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Much of the humor in "Sketch Fourth" turns on the ironic association of this vantage-point with Mount Pisgah (Deuteronomy 34) where Moses, prior to his death, is permitted by God to glimpse, although he cannot enter, the promised land.[33] This image describes our case as well with respect to the realm of Truth, where projected metaphors of exactitude must be used emphatically to supplement the natural limits of mortal vision.

> Did you ever lay an eye on the *real genuine* Equator? Have you ever, in the largest sense, toed the Line? Well, that identical crater-shaped headland there, all yellow lava, is cut by the Equator *exactly* as a knife cuts straight through the centre of a pumpkin pie. (166; my emphasis)

At each turn in the narrative—whether through the contemplation of the impossibility of figuring, let alone of seeing, the complete archipelago; or, through what is actually described as having been seen of the "grim and charred Enchanted Islands"—there are hints of irremediable melancholy. The hyperbolic dryness of these "five-and-twenty heaps of cinders" is reminiscent of the notion of "Melancholy adust," the corruption of any humor by excessive heat, which was a main subject in Robert Burton's *Anatomy*.[34] From Dürer's celebrated visual epitome which allegorizes the heavy humor to Shakespeare's "melancholy Dane," this state-of-mind brought about by an excess of dry elements was among the most codified syndromes of the Baroque.[35] Melancholy, as both a temperament and an emotional preoccupation, was a central psychological concern of the age—a preoccupation well known to Salvator R. Tarnmoor. And this raises the issue of the nature and character of the author of the ten sketches. Melancholy characterizes and that helps account for Tarnmoor's disposition and his yearning to travel and to scale great heights and look around at the surrounding landscape and within his own mindscape (as Bergvall puts it); so too does it account for Ishmael's need to forsake dry land and "see the watery part of the world" as a way of "driving off the spleen" in *Moby Dick*. But the course of melancholy runs

deeper still, for even though there is no doubt that Melville visited the Galapagos Islands, *The Encantadas* marks the only time in his literary career when he used a pseudonym.

Melville's masquerading as Salvator R. Tarnmoor, the author of "The Encantadas" when it was first published in *Putnam's Magazine* (1854), is reminiscent of Burton's intruding "upon this common theatre to the world's view... arrogating another man's name," and publishing his work under the "vizard" of Democritus Junior (I, 12-13). Salvator R. Tarnmoor, like Democritus Junior, is represented as melancholic; moreover, Tarnmoor is billed as a craftsman determined to provide the reader with several sketches, or draughts of draughts, describing an oceanic phenomenon which seems to pass all description. He is a sailor-turned-raconteur. Such a description of the narrator, and the thematization of the problem of narrative description, recalls Ishmael in *Moby-Dick* as well. The author's "authority" to tell the tale and reveal aspects of himself to the reader is not altogether undermined though by his use of an alter ego;[36] it does not detract from the power of this expression of what, in another context, Steven Greenblatt has termed "the will to absolute play."[37] Rather the result is a redoubled significance of the terms which Melville set up in his artwork, which he set in play through his journey of self-discovery and self-description, and which parallels his narration of the tour of the Enchanted Islands.

The name Melville chose for himself, the locus from which he enunciates his memories of a voyage to the Galapagos mixed with his filchings from Porter's *Journal* and other texts as well, is one brimming over with allegorical implications. "Salvator" conjures up the most mystical notion of Christianity: the Savior, who by a supreme act of *caritas* suffered to live among men and die on the cross. Thus was the Word made flesh.[38] The ultimate salvation of the individual, and of mankind, culminates in a final, "penal conflagration" like that alluded to in the opening of *The Encantadas*: "In no world but a fallen one could such lands exist" (29). "Salvator" suggests ironically one who heals or cures, and also one who would be saved or cured.[39] The Baroque tradition of writing as a curative both to writer and to reader figured most prominently in the projects of Montaigne and Burton, and to some extent in Browne's essays.[40] The inclusion of

middle initial "R" mediates the two parts of his alter-ego, Salvator and Tarnmoor. Further "Salvator R." encourages us to presume that his pseudonym recalls the Baroque artist Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), known best for his tenebrous allegorical landscape paintings, among the more well-known is one called "Melancholy."[41] As already suggested, the "R" is a phonemic hinge for "Salvator" and "Tarnmoor"; it echoes the terminal letter of his (rather) Christian name, and a medial and the final sound in "Tarnmoor."

The patronymic "Tarnmoor" calls to mind both a "tarn," a glacial lake left atop a mountain as the ice recedes, and "moor," a flooded and barren ground or a wasteland. Moor might also evoke the pathos of an Ishmael-like outsider, one who is out of place among the world of Whiteness, whether regarding people or whales. When taken together, these geological terms (tarn and moor) suggest the double image of a land which is antithetical to that of the arid, seasonless Encantadas: the tarn is water enclosed by land and the Enchanted Isles are surrounded by the open ocean. Both however intimate "desolation above Idumea and the Pole" (150). And Melville, a seaman himself (and a self-conscious allegorist), may well have been playing on the verb moor, meaning to secure a vessel (on the shore abutting the vast sea of meaning). The fixing of the location of the Isles, like the mooring or fixing of an image of the Isles in a narrative—like the fixing of one's identity in and through words—remains a fleeting mast-head dream at best, a delusion at worse.

III.

When all is said and done, and there are no more metaphorical mountains left to conquer, Wordsworth's like Petrarch's effort to account for what was discovered about his place in a grander scheme from the experience of gaining an elevated perspective ultimately comes down to what Melville, in his way, represented as the "fleetingness and unreality of the locality" that was but "one reason for . . . calling them the Enchanted Group" (152). What for Augustine is characterized as mystic union, for Melville is reduced to "the feeling that in my time I have indeed slept upon evilly enchanted ground. Nay, such is the vividness of my memory, or the magic

of my fancy, that I know not whether I am not the occasional victim of optical delusion concerning the Gallipagos."[42]

Melville's sketchy narrative about rising above fragments of ruin ("ropes now, and let us ascend. Yet soft, this is not so easy" concludes "Sketch Third") models and enacts a philosophy of composition, one based on re-collection and on the tentativeness of reliable vision whether concerning external or internal things, one that is predicated on the merging of memory (the human faculty associated with the recording of history) and poetry (associated with fancy). Petrarch on Mount Ventrous, Michel Eyquem from "Montaigne," Wordsworth on Snowden, and Melville as Tarnmoor on Rock Rodondo, each in his own way, illuminates a corner of the central chamber in the Memory Palace of the history of literary autobiography that is projected—and sketched—in Augustine's *Confessions* (X.8):

> I rise by stages towards the God who made me. The next stage is memory, which is like a great field or a spacious place, a storehouse for countless images if all kinds which are conveyed to it by the senses. . . . In the memory everything is preserved separately, according to its category. Each is admitted through its own special entrance. . . . All these sensations are retained in the great storehouse of the memory, which in some indescribable way secrets them in its folds . . . . All this goes on inside me, in the vast cloisters of my memory . . . . In it I meet myself as well.

Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

NOTES

[1]Harold L. Weatherby, *Mirrors of Celestial Grace: Patristic Theology in Spenser's Allegory* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1994). And, especially relevant to the essay referenced in this present response, see Åke Bergvall, "Between Eusebius and Augustine: Una and the Cult of Elizabeth," *ELR* 27 (1997): 3-30.

[2]Unless otherwise noted the English translations from Montaigne follow *The Essayes . . . of Lord Michael de Montaigne*, by John Florio, 3 vols. (1603; rpt. London: Dent, 1965) and will be identified by book, chapter, and page number.

[3]For a more complete exposition of "mnemes," namely rudimentary units of digested or mnemonically reduced bits of information in the form of *sententiae* and *exempla*, see my "Montaigne's *Essais*: The Literary and Literal Digesting of a Life," in *The*

Rhetorics of Life-Writing, eds. Thomas Mayer and Daniel Woolf (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1996) 283-98.

[4]On the distinction between natural and artificial memory, see Joan Marie Lechner, *Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplaces* (New York: Pageant Press, 1962) 170; and Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London, 1966; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) 20-41.

[5]Cf. *Oeuvres Complètes*, eds. Thibaudet and Rat (Paris: Gallimard, 1962) 1071, and *The "Essays" of Montaigne*, trans. Donald Frame (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1965) 837: Florio translates as "frame" Montaigne's verb "forger," which Frame renders as "make."

[6]This and all future references follow Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, collected and edited by James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Heath, 14 vols. (London: Longman, 1857-74), vol. 3 (1859).

[7]This last consideration I have developed more thoroughly (though not with respect to Bacon) in "Mnemonic Criticism & Renaissance Literature: A Manifesto," *Connotations* 1.1 (1991): 12-33, a study which has prepared the ground for this present essay. Indeed, my suggestive remark about Montaigne in that study stands as an abstract of this current discussion.

[8]Cf. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* II. ix.49-58 and Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, I.1.2.7 (this and all subsequent references to Burton follow the edition by A. R. Shilleto).

[9]Alexander Ross, *The History of the World, The Second Part* (London, 1652), dedication to Arundel, sigs. a1^{v}-b2. Cf. Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, III.ii.19-21.

[10]See Hugo Friedrich, *Montaigne*, trans. Robert Rovini (Paris: Gallimard, 1968) 22, and the translation by Dawn Eng (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991) 12 that the *sententiae* on the fifty-four beams "outline, in the manner of mnemonics, the skeptical main themes of the first two books of the *Essais*, in which a part of them is repeated." For a catalogue of the *sententiae* decorating Montaigne's library and brief comments on where they appear in the *Essais*, see Grace Norton, *Studies in Montaigne* (New York: Macmillan, 1904) 165-88; and Jacques de Feytaud's "Une Visite à Montaigne" in *Le Chateau de Montaigne*, Société des Amis de Montaigne (1971) 36-43, 53-62.

[11]See Engel, "Mnemonic Criticism" 14.

[12]*The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, trans. H. E. Butler, vol. 4 (1922; London: Heinemann, 1961) XI.ii.20 (223).

[13]*Rhetorica Ad Herennium* III.xvii.31.

[14]See Daniel Martin, *Le Triptyque des "Essais" de Montaigne et l'héraldique des dieux gréco-romains* (Paris: Nizet, 1996).

[15]See Donald Frame, *Montaigne: A Biography* (1965; rpt. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984) 174 ff.

[16]Frame, *Montaigne: A Biography* 168.

[17]Steven Rendall, "Montaigne under the Sign of *Fama*," *Yale French Studies* 66 (1984): 137-59, here 149.

[18]*Essais*, I.1, 1: "je suis moy-mesmes la matiere de mon livre . . . ." Cf. Florio's rendering of the same as: "Thus gentle Reader myselfe am the goundworke of my booke . . . ."

[19]Morris W. Croll, "The Baroque Style in Prose," in *Studies in English Philology in Honor of Frederick Klaeber*, ed. Kemp Malone and Martin B. Ruud (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1929) 427-56, here 430-31. This groundbreaking essay has been reprinted in *Style, Rhetoric, and Rhythm*, ed. J. Max Patrick (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1966).

[20]C. A. Patrides, introduction to *Sir Thomas Browne: The Major Works* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) 51.

[21]John Seelye, *Melville: The Ironic Diagram* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1970) 29.

[22]For a more complete analysis of these characteristic aspects of Renaissance Memory Theatres and Mnemonic Itineraries, see my *Mapping Mortality: The Persistence of Memory and Melancholy in Early Modern England* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1995) 13-54.

[23]Herman Melville, "The Encantadas; or, Enchanted Islands," *The Piazza Tales*, ed. Egbert S. Oliver (New York: Hendricks House, 1948)149-207, here 150-51. Future citations refer to this edition and will appear within parentheses in the text.

[24]Cf. Charles Feidelson, Jr., *Symbolism and American Literature* (1953, rpt. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983) 70, 162-212; and Jonas Barish, *Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy* (1960; New York: Norton, 1970) 86.

[25]It seemed appropriate to me here to cite (and thereby to echo) Heidegger's suggestive phrase, which opens up a path toward understanding "Nothing" in ways that twist free from defining it merely as the opposite of something or other. I use it because it points the way toward the clearing, a lighting, that shines and thereby brings to our vision the occurrence of "an open place" in "the midst of beings as a whole," which implies an abysmal blotting away of what we tend to understand as being merely the products of our minds, "as it might all too easily seem." Indeed, as Heidegger says just prior to the phrase cited: "There is much in being that man cannot master." It occurs at a decisive turning-point in his essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1935-36), translated by Albert Hofstadter, in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971) 53.

[26]This trademark of Melville's artistry is spun out at greater length in his longer, more celebrated, novels. For example, it figures prominently in *Moby-Dick* where the strategies of describing the object of inquiry include the tongue-in-cheek scientism of "Cetology," to the reverence and poetic reverie concerning the cathedralesque ruins of the whale in "A Bower in the Arsacides." Chapters 40 and 41 ("Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales" and "Of the Less Erroneous Pictures of Whales") clearly echo Browne's tone and resume his style of inquiring into "vulgar errors" from *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* XXVI ("Of Sperma-Ceti, and the Sperma-Ceti Whale")—parts of which Melville included in the "Extracts" prefixed to *Moby-Dick*.

[27]Pluto is a god notoriously of few words; he is used to taking without talking (see especially "The Rape of Proserpine" in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* V), and his region echoes with sighs and wails, not with words—for what can words avail in Hades?

[28]It is a happy accident of language (one perhaps not lost on Melville) that "Encantadas" echoes the Italian "Incatenta," a term used most often to signify the enchaining or linking of rhymes (most famously, Dante's use of *terza rima incatenta* for his *Divine Comedy*). "Incatenare" has Petrarchan overtones as well, with its figurative sense of "to captivate"—and the Enchanted Islands are nothing if not captivating; like Petrarch's Laura and Wordsworth's mountain-experience, they are allusive and alluring; they defy all efforts to descry and describe their strange other-worldly charm.

[29]Cf. Bainard Cowan, *Exiled Waters: "Moby-Dick" and the Crisis of Allegory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1982) 84.

[30]Seelye, *The Ironic Diagram* 101 compares the impossibility of a single mortal glance taking in the entire Enchanted group with the problem of seeing all of the White Whale in *Moby Dick*.

[31]Edward H. Rosenberry, *Melville* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979) 125.

[32]See Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: New Left Books, 1977) 179. Cf. Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," *Blindness and Insight* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983) 222-26.

[33]Cf. Edgar A. Dryden, "From the Piazza to the Enchanted Isles: Melville's Textual Rovings," *After Strange Texts: The Role of Theory in the Study of Literature*, ed. Gregory S. Jay and David L. Miller (University, AL: U of Alabama P, 1985) 46-68, here 62-63, which argues this sketch is a series of ironic contrasts which sets the visions of ideal worlds against fallen ones: "the isle can generate both the fallen and the Pisgah perspectives, one no less deceptive than the other."

[34]E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture: A Study of the Idea of Order in the Age of Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton* (London, 1943; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, n.d.) 70-71. The categories "adust" and a general overview of the pathology of the humors is covered in Burton's *Anatomy* I.1.2.2.

[35]See, for example, Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 145-49; and, more recently, Robin Headlam Wells, *Elizabethan Mythologies: Studies in Poetry, Drama, and Music* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994) 189: "the spirit of melancholy became one of the age's most characteristic features." See also Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady* (East Lansing: Michigan State College P, 1951); and, of course, Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Book I, deals ostensibly with the manifold causes of melancholy.

[36]Cf. Dryden, "Melville's Textual Rovings," 59: "as an obvious pseudonym it raises the problem of authorial signature and equivocates the status of the sketches."

[37]Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982), especially chapter 5, 193-221.

[38]Cf. Bergvall, "Of Mountains and Men" 53.

[39]This accords with the argument elaborating the "liminality of grief" and accounting for the "subversive mourning art" in Melville's prose, developed by Neal Tolchin, *Mourning, Gender and Creativity in the Art of Herman Melville* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1988), although *The Encantadas* is not included in Tolchin's study.

[40]See *Mapping Mortality* 116-117, 121-23.

[41]See *The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces (1839-1860)*, eds. Harrison Hatford, Alma A. MacDougall, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1987), "Editorial Appendix" 607. Also, as is quoted by Dryden, "Melville's Textual Rovings" 59, this is in keeping with Melville's earlier description of the enigmatic Jackson in *Redburn*, referred to as worthy of being "painted by the dark, moody hand of Salvator."

[42]As a fitting final note, I refer here to the original text, attributed to "Salvator R. Tarnmoor," and printed in *Putnam's Monthly*, 3.15 (March 1854): 313.

Connotations
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Shakespeare's "Removed Mysteries"*

R. CHRIS HASSEL, JR.

Maurice Hunt persuades me in "Old England, Nostalgia, and the 'Warwickshire' of Shakespeare's Mind" that several details in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* might have been prompted by one of Shakespeare's own early Warwickshire experiences, a summer pageant in 1575 at Kenilworth. I disagree, however, with his suggestion that such Warwickshire memories manifest themselves only in the early plays. Perdita's reference to "Whitsun pastorals" (*WT* 4.4.134) reminds us that the mental landscape of Shakespeare's past is still composed, as late as the romances, of memories of local drama, probably in this case the mystery plays which were performed during Whitsuntide.[1] Reginald Ingram and many other scholars have shown us that the Coventry mystery plays, or Whitsun plays, as they were sometimes called, were still being performed until 1579, when Shakespeare was just Perdita's age. Since the other mystery cycles were also suppressed during the 1570s, it is most likely that Shakespeare saw them performed during his teenage years. Coventry is of course just a day's walk from Stratford, and it is hard to imagine England's greatest playwright not going to see England's greatest mystery cycle.[2] But to me it is the informing presence of details from those plays in Shakespeare's major tragedies that suggests most persuasively that Shakespeare knew them intimately. I am currently investigating the ways in which the Herod plays and the mysteries of the "Troubles" and the "Trials" of Joseph and Mary may have influenced Shakespeare's representation of Macbeth and his exploration of the tensions between Desdemona and Othello. I have just argued that the art, the theology, and the drama of the Annunciation

*Reference: Maurice Hunt, "Old England, Nostalgia, and the 'Warwickshire' of Shakespeare's Mind," *Connotations* 7.2 (1997/98): 159-80.

informs Shakespeare's representation of Hamlet's misogyny as well as his tormented sense of moral responsibility and moral confusion. *King Lear*, too, glances with informed anachronism at the "side-piercing sight" of Crucifixion art, theology and drama, especially as the play explores the extraordinary suffering of the old king and the extraordinary empathy of witnesses of that suffering, people like Edgar, Kent and Cordelia.[3] Before we close our book on Shakespeare's possible Warwickshire memories, I think we should look more closely at the connotations of these possible allusions to religious art, and particularly to the mystery plays, in the great tragedies.[4]

While several critics have noticed that Herod and Macbeth both order a slaughter of innocents in a vain and futile attempt to preserve kingships threatened by prophecies, Herod and the Herod plays of Shakespeare's youth leave a richer and a more dynamic legacy in *Macbeth* than we have previously understood.[5] The witches' presentation of a line of kings that stretches out even to the crack of doom may be seen, for example, to echo and outdo the *ordo prophetarum* or line of prophets and kings which bludgeons Herod into accepting the promised Messiah and his own consequent overthrow.[6] And when Macbeth struts and frets in response to the prophecies and messages of his doom, he also shares the stage with the raging, boasting bluster of the comic Herod and his futile attempts to deny his own inevitable overthrow. "The Shearman and Taylor's Pageant," which contained the Herod material at Coventry, has a long procession of "profits," plus the boasting and then the fearful Herod that so often parallels and influences Macbeth in all his glory (and inglory). David Staines and Robert Weimann agree that the influence of the mystery plays made the "grandiose epithets," the "grotesque boasting and ranting," the non-canonical wrath and rage become "almost proverbial attributes" of the foolish and the fearsome Herod.[7] The *Chester* figure characteristically boasts of his powers over the sun, the moon and the rain (ll. 171, 175-77). The "mightiest conqueror" of the *Coventry* "Pageant" proclaims: "For I am evyn he thatt made bothe hevin and hell, / And of my myghte powar holdith up this world rownd." He calls himself "the cawse of this grett lyght and thunder" as well as earthquakes and clouds, "prynce . . . of purgatorre and cheff capten of hell," adding: "All the whole world . . . /

I ma tham dystroie with won worde of my mowthe."[8] *York*'s Herod boasts that all the planets are his subjects, and includes under his heavenly dominance "Blonderande þer blastis, to blaw when I bidde."[9] The ironic impotence of these claims is manifest in their outrageous impossibility, like the threats of an evil Sheriff of Nottingham in a Robin Hood pantomime, at which even the children can hiss their disapproval.

Herod's boastfulness must lurk behind Macbeth's more frightening rant about his own powers when he tells Lady Macbeth that he would

> . . . let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
> Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep
> In the affliction of these terrible dreams
> That shake us nightly. . . . (3.2.16-19).

His rhetoric almost convinces us of his potential to reduce the frame of things to chaos, shake heaven and earth (or heaven and hell) to their very foundations. But we know at the same time that Macbeth cannot even command his dreams to stop, for all his ranting. These are words of desperation, not power. Nor can he, despite his sonorous and ominous greeting to the witches in 4.1, control any more than Herod the wind or the waves, earthquakes and floods and seasons, the very principles of created matter:

> Though you untie the winds and let them fight
> Against the churches, though the yesty waves
> Confound and swallow navigation up,
> Though bladed corn be lodged and trees blown down,
> Though castles topple on their warders' heads,
> Though palaces and pyramids do slope
> Their heads to their foundations, though the treasure
> Of nature's germens tumble all together
> Even till destruction sicken, answer me
> To what I ask you (4.1.52-61).

Macbeth's ironic disadvantage is even greater than Herod's because there is such a discrepancy between his powerful poetry and his cosmic impotence. The Coventry records also contain many references to the costs of repairing Herod's helm, scepter, crest, falchion, and gown, all details

indicating a frantic, furious dressing and undressing that I think might have influenced Macbeth's own nervous commands to Seyton about arming and disarming himself in his final hour upon the stage.[10]

Shakespeare reveals in other plays his considerable knowledge of the Herod figure from the mysteries. Hamlet uses the name as the theatrical eponym for overacting: "It out-Herods Herod" (3.2.13). Henry V overcomes Harfleur by threatening to match the deeds and to reproduce the visual and audible effects of Herod's cruel slaughter of the innocents even as he imitates the ranting tyrant with his own purposeful overacting:

> Your naked infants spitted upon pikes,
> Whiles the mad mothers with their howls confus'd
> Do break the clouds as did the wives of Jewry
> At Herod's bloody-hunting slaughtermen (3.3.38-41).

Mrs. Ford's "What a Herod of Jewry is this" (2.1.19) probably associates Falstaff's preposterous love letters and the equally preposterous self-image which wrote them with Herod's over-inflated ego and his usual obliviousness to the possibility of failure.[11] Of the three references, only this last seems to refer to a general understanding of the Herod figure rather than a specific reference to his strutting and fretting theatrical representation. That the remnants of the Coventry cycle reproduced in the Craig edition also contain the pageants of nine worthies, obviously reminiscent of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and a reference to "two worms of conscience" new to the cycle in 1561, just three years before Shakespeare's birth, reinforce our sense that Shakespeare's Warwickshire memory bank included a rich array of such deposits.[12] Margaret's prophecy against Richard, "The worm of conscience still begnaw thy soul" (1.3.222), could be one of the early withdrawals.

The mysteries lie just as clearly behind Shakespeare's representation of Othello's distrust, Iago's detraction, and Emilia's and Desdemona's responses. In fact, the "open relish and obscene repartee" of the detractors,[13] Joseph's evidence and his expressed doubts, Mary's protestations of innocence and her vigorous defense by an Emilia-like maid, and a final clarifying trial and judgment all invite us to consider the ways in which these "Troubles" and this "Trial" might clarify and intensify our

sense of Shakespeare's treatment of analogous material. Most of the cycles represent Joseph's suspicions about Mary's pregnancy, his complaints about being an old man with a young wife, and his concerns about his lost reputation. *York*, however, is unique in representing the Puella's courage in the face of Joseph's threatening interrogation, a role in which she anticipates and often parallels Emilia. Though I would not trade away the mystery of Iago's iniquity to make this point, I suspect that part of his motiveless malignity, and part of Don John's too, lies in the transparent theatricality of their predecessors' generic evil and their gleeful detraction of Mary. To give just three examples, Iago is given lines like "That she loves him, 'tis apt and of great credit" (2.1.281) as he tests the plausibility of his slander. The second detractor in the N-Town "Trial" anticipates him: "Be my trewth al may wel be, / For fresch and fayr she is to syght. / And such a mursel, as semyth me, / Wolde cause a ȝonge man to haue delyght." The gleeful detractors also enjoy taunting the court and Joseph too with their reminders that "A ȝonge man may do more chere in bedde / To a ȝonge wench þan may an olde" and the "olde cokolde" cannot enjoy the "fresche wench." They go so far as to delight in the young virgin's unseemly sexuality, as in "Such a ȝonge damesel of bewté bryght, / And of schap so comely also / Of hire tayle ofte-tyme be lyght / And rygh tekyl vndyr þe too" ("right ticklish," Block, p. 399). Iago cynically and gleefully juxtaposes Desdemona's youth ("She must change for youth") with their lack of "sympathy in years" and Othello's "weak function." He also suggests that Desdemona is "inviting," "full of game," and delights in "the act of sport," and he urges her "fresh appetite" and "history of lust and foul thoughts." "Blessed fig's-end" indeed.[14]

Such close parallels enhance even more crucial differences, however, since the angel who assures Joseph of Mary's innocence and the magic potion which proves her guiltless at the trial are replaced in *Othello* by the evil angel Iago and the lost handkerchief. In *Othello*, prayers and protestations to heaven are as frequent as they are in the "Trials" and "Troubles" plays, but they are always ineffective. Falsehood and truth are not made plain until it is too late to save any of the principals. Even when Othello asks "Are there no stones in heaven / But what serves for the thunder?" (5.2.235-36), Iago remains standing in defiance. The many

Marian signs Othello might find in Desdemona are difficult to read, and do not "mend him of his misse."

When Polonius instructs Ophelia to hold a book when Hamlet discovers her, some critics and directors agree that he contrives her visual similitude to representations of the Virgin at the moment of the Annunciation. Once again, however, little has been done with this inviting allusion to related art, the mysteries, and theological controversies.[15] Polonius calls this image "devotion's visage." Claudius ironically reinforces the connection to religious art by speaking in immediate response of the "painted words" and "plastering art" of their false iconography here. Hamlet's taunting of Polonius with words like "God-kissing carrion" and "Let her not walk i'th'sun. Conception is a blessing," helps us see something of the misogyny and the moral disillusionment that also lie ironically behind this network of Annunciation imagery in *Hamlet*. Claudius's "painted words," like Hamlet's taunts, both suggest the ribboned words of Gabriel's greeting to Mary and the frescos and wall paintings which so often embodied them. Among those words are Gabriel's "Behold the Virgin shall conceive" and Mary's acquiescent and graceful response "Let it be," a phrase Hamlet may finally also echo as he nears his own tragic end both acquiescent and confused. But though a young Shakespeare could have seen many of the Annunciation motifs I think he played with in *Hamlet* in both the Warwickshire art that survived the iconoclasts' fury and in the representation of Gabriel's greeting and Mary's response in the Coventry Pageant,[16] it is likely that he also used newer motifs from Northern Renaissance art that he probably did not see in person. Since reformation art and reformation iconoclasm, not to mention disputes about Mary's complex role as *Theotokos*, Mother of God, all continued into Shakespeare's adulthood, it is not surprising that such motifs were in the air and on the tongue in London, if not always in the eye or on the wall. The Tudor queens also controversially appropriated Annunciation imagery into their own royal iconography.[17] Controversy, suppression, destruction and reappropriation all have a way of underlining, making prominent and fascinating, the very things they try to destroy. But none of this precludes the likelihood of an earlier planting of these Annunciation images and ideas in Shakespeare's fertile imagination.

My sense of the broad fields in time and space from which Shakespeare might have drawn his memories of these Annunciation motifs carries over into the other tragedies, especially when the influences stem more from the "discourses" of art and theology than from the mysteries. Edgar's "side-piercing sight" allusion (4.6.85) invites his audience to consider in *King Lear*, remember and process, the associations they would draw between both Edgar and Lear and the crucified and suffering Christ of art, theology, and the mysteries.[18] To be fair, there is no extant Coventry play of Christ's Passion, though of course there would have been such a play, and three of the four we have contain a speaking Longinus, compassionate and contrite, his sight, intriguingly, restored by Christ's blood.[19] The allusion also has no neat or necessary connection to the surviving crucifixion art in Warwickshire. Much of that art depicts Longinus holding the spear at the Crucifixion, but none of it contains the very traditional image of the pelican, which Shakespeare obviously knows as well since he invitingly paints it into his anachronistically pre-Christian canvas with Lear's reference to his "pelican daughters." Christ's humiliations and the more literal instruments of His passion are lavishly enacted in the mysteries, but His possible despair of God's presence and grace, a motif whose associations also seem to inform Lear's despair, Edgar's, and Gloucester's, is much more common in the theological discourse of writers like Calvin, Andrewes, and Donne than it is in the cycle plays. Even when the mysteries may stand directly behind Shakespeare's representations of Lear, as when the First Torturer in the Towneley/Wakefield "Buffeting of Christ" mocks Christ because "the elementys," "the wyndes" and "the firmamente" are not "hym obeyng tyll," other narrative versions compete for influence. Gower's Nebuchadnezzar is also made humble amidst "the hevenliche myht" of the storm, so that when Lear speaks of the "good divinity" "When the rain came to wet me once, and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not cease at my bidding," he could be referring to either 'source,' or even more likely the general folk tradition of the unholy wild man cured through humiliation.[20] This kind of allusion is richer in its connotations than the more direct and more exclusive references to the mysteries in *Macbeth* and *Othello*, but it is also almost impossible to 'date,' since its texts are printed rather than performative.

Clifford Davidson tells us that Shakespeare's father "was recorded as chamberlain [of the Guild Chapel, Stratford] to have covered over the controversial wall paintings" of several saints and a last judgment, apparently "forced to conform in 1563-4," the year of Shakespeare's birth, to the new regulations about religious art.[21] This is a devastating personal detail of Reformation iconoclasm, and I find numerous possible references to it in Shakespeare's tragedies at moments of transition and sacrilege. "Is this the promised end, / Or image of that horror" is the question raised by both Edgar and Kent just after the apocalyptic last battle and Cordelia's execution, and just before Lear's death to come. Macduff too recalls "the great doom's image" when he witnesses to the "most sacrilegious murder [that] hath broke ope / The Lord's annointed temple, and stole thence, / The life o'th'building."[22] Macduff even refers to the image of Duncan's murder as Confusion's "masterpiece." When Hamlet, furious about what he vaguely calls his mother's "act" or "deed" against his father, suggests that heaven and earth would "glow" "With heated visage, as against the doom," "thought-sick at the act" (3.4.41, 46, 49-52), he too arguably compares their faces to those agonized souls represented in Last Judgments. Othello recalls the same iconography more than once in his final act, most clearly when he predicts his own damnation:

> When we shall meet at compt,
> This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
> And fiends will snatch at it . . . .
> Whip me, ye devils,
> From the possession of this heavenly sight!
> Blow me about in winds! Roast me in sulphur!
> Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire! (5.2.274-81)

Here Othello transforms the Marian figure usually depicted in Last Judgment art near the top of the triangle of judgment, interceding for sinners at Christ's right hand, into the condemning god of judgment, just as earlier he has tried to paint Desdemona among the damned by calling her "a liar gone to burning hell" in response to her graceful intervention on his behalf at the moment of her death.[23] This repeated underlining of the 'image' rather than merely the idea of doomsday, last judgment,

suggests though of course it does not prove the continuing power of the memory from Shakespeare's childhood of this desecrated religious image.

This complex interplay of past and present, local and universal, persistently engages me when I try to attribute details in the mature plays to "the Warwickshire of Shakespeare's memory." Some connections are more solid than others. If we accept Hunt's demonstration of parallels between the Kenilworth entertainment of 1575 and details in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we are persuaded to assume a direct connection between a specific experience early in Shakespeare's life and passages in the play. The entertainment only occurred once. If we affirm an influence from the mysteries of the Herod figure on Macbeth, or of Joseph and Mary on Othello and Desdemona, it is likewise logical to assume that the young Shakespeare saw the Coventry plays, since the mysteries were all officially suppressed by the time Shakespeare was fifteen. We are on more slippery ground when we connect Shakespeare's apparent preoccupation with what he repeatedly refers to as 'images' of the Last Judgment with his knowledge that his father was forced to cover that wall painting in the Guild Chapel in 1563-64. But it seems plausible to me that that erasure which Shakespeare would surely have heard about during his childhood, that remembered absence, could have become a powerful presence in his later works. If Hunt and Fraser are right that Shakespeare would have walked through Banbury each time he returned to Stratford from London, Shakespeare is even more likely to have remembered, since Banbury was one of the centers of iconoclastic fury into the early seventeenth century.[24]

I am less confident that we can connect Shakespeare's use of Annunciation motifs in *Hamlet* and Crucifixion motifs in *King Lear* to some set of Warwickshire remembrances. Davidson shows survivals in Warwickshire of Annunciations and Crucifixions despite the destruction and suppression of religious iconography during the early years of Elizabeth's reign, but of course such representations also survived elsewhere in England. Mary's and Joseph's representation in the York and N-Town mysteries of the "Troubles of Joseph" and "Trials of Mary and Joseph" also seem much more directly influential than the more local Coventry plays in Shakespeare's representation of Othello's distrust, Iago's detraction, and Emilia's and Desdemona's responses. We have, of course, only two of the Coventry

plays, but Shakespeare must have seen in Coventry something like the York or the N-Town versions of the Mary and Joseph plays, as well as the Coventry representations of Christ's suffering and death. In fact, since the N-Town play was apparently sometimes an itinerant cycle, it too could have been put on near Stratford during Shakespeare's youth. There is another remote but unsettling possibility. Leeds Barroll has recently reconstructed the "poor fortunes" of Shakespeare's company during the "twelve successive months of theatre closings from plague: April 1603 to April 1604." Barroll also shows that Shakespeare characteristically did not write plays during such periods, and that he seems to have written *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*, the three great tragedies most influenced by the mysteries, within two years after the theatres reopened. Dutton comments that "the last recorded mystery play, at Kendal, was [only] apparently suppressed" in 1605. This means that Shakespeare would have had both the time and the opportunity to have seen the mystery plays just before he was to write their resonances into *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *King Lear*, though it would have required a serious journey to Kendal.[25] But of course common sense tells us in any event that Shakespeare's memories of the Warwickshire mysteries would only have been sharpened by this still entirely hypothetical trip to the edge of the Lake District. His crowning works would inevitably have been poorer if he had wiped from the table of his memory "all trivial fond records," "all forms, all pressures past / That Youth and observation copied there" (*Hamlet* 1.5.99-101), including those of the great saints and sinners of medieval art and drama. Such efforts to reconstruct influence, much less date memory, are inevitably imprecise. But against that imprecision I would set the likelihood that there are many more examples than we can ever imagine in Shakespeare's works and words of "the forms of things unknown" (*MND* 5.1.15) from his Warwickshire past. It is impressive that scholars can give "a local habitation and a name" to as many early influences as they have found. The result is a sense of the work and the worker that is more profound than one somehow isolated from the art and drama, not to mention the great historical turbulence, of Shakespeare's most formative years.

Vanderbilt University
Nashville, Tennessee

NOTES

[1]The phrase "more removed mysteries" is from Ben Jonson's preface to *Hymenaei*, and apparently describes his use of Neoplatonic symbolism in the masques (*Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel [New Haven: Yale UP, 1969] 76). The quotation from *The Winter's Tale* and all subsequent references to Shakespeare cite *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, ed. Alfred Harbage (New York: Viking Reprint, 1977).

[2]See R. W. Ingram, "Fifteen seventy-nine and the Decline of Civic Religious Drama in Coventry," *The Elizabethan Theatre VIII*, ed. G. R. Hibbard (Port Credit, Ontario: P. D. Meany, 1982) 114-28. See also Harold C. Gardiner, *Mysteries' End* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1946) 72-85; Hardin Craig, *English Religious Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955) 354-63; Glynne Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, 3rd. ed. (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), ch. 7. Richard Dutton, "Censorship," *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia UP, 1997) 390, calls the end of the mysteries "a slow process of attrition, which perhaps lasted until 1605, when the last recorded mystery play, at Kendal, was apparently suppressed."

[3]See "'Painted Women': Annunciation Motifs in *Hamlet*," *Comparative Drama* 32 (1998): 47-84.

[4]Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: OUP, 1977) 31-84, and Cherrell Guilfoyle, *Shakespeare's Play Within Play* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1990), have both recently discussed connections between Shakespeare and the mystery cycles.

[5]David Staines, "To Out-Herod Herod: The Development of a Dramatic Character," *The Drama of the Middle Ages*, ed. Clifford Davidson et al. (New York: AMS Press, 1982) 207-08; Jones 82. Glynne Wickham, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1969) 230.

[6]See Staines 224; and Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933) 2: 125, 131-70, 458-62. See also *The Chester Plays*, ed. R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills (London: EETS [S.S. 9], 1986) 2: 131-32. M. D. Anderson, *Drama and Imagery in English Medieval Churches* (Cambridge: CUP, 1963) 23, mentions Maurice Serpet's idea that the Old Testament liturgical plays, and thus the mysteries, might have been offshoots of the *ordo prophetarum*. See also Craig 66-67.

[7]Staines 212, 219; Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*, ed. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978) 66.

[8]"Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors," *Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. Hardin Craig (London: Oxford UP, 1957 [EETS, E.S. 87]) 17-18, ll. 488-89, 493, 503, 498-99.

[9]"Herod," *The York Plays*, ed. Richard Beadle (London: Edward Arnold, 1982) 134, l. 4. Cf. Staines 223; Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (London: Routledge, 1972) 203.

[10]See, e.g., *Macbeth* 5.3.33-36, 48-50, 54; 5.5.46-52.

[11]For notes on these lines, see the Arden eds: *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen, 1982); *Henry V*, ed. J. H. Walter, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1954); and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed. H. J. Oliver (London: Methuen, 1971).

[12]See *Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays* for the prophets (12-16), the boastful and the fearful Herod (16-28), the repair records (86-87), and the "Two Worms of

Conscience" (101). The "worm of conscience" in Chaucer's "Doctor's Tale" (see *OED* "worm" n. 11. a) could of course be a common source for both references.

[13]Woolf 174.

[14]*York's* "Joseph's Trouble" 117-20; "The Trial of Mary and Joseph," *The N-Town Play*, ed. Stephen Spector (Oxford: OUP, 1991 [EETS, S.S.11]) 1: 142, ll. 90-103. Cf. *Ludus Coventriae*, ed. K. S. Block (Oxford: OUP, 1960 [EETS, E.S. 120]). *Othello* 2.3.15-26, 23; 1.3.347; 2.1.223-26, 253, 247.

[15]Bridget Gellert Lyons in "The Iconography of Ophelia," *ELH* 44 (1977): 60–74, and Arthur McGee, *The Elizabethan Hamlet* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987) 138, both notice that the iconography of the Annunciation informs this scene. Linda Kay Hoff, in *Hamlet's Choice* (Lewiston: Mellen, 1988) 173-235, uses some of *Hamlet's* Annunciation motifs to discuss the play as Reformation allegory. The Olivier film shows us an Annunciation fresco as background to the scene.

[16]See Clifford Davidson and Jennifer Alexander, *The Early Art of Coventry, Stratford-Upon-Avon, Warwick, and Lesser Sites in Warwickshire* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1985) 3-5, 18-22, 88, 112-14. See also *Coventry*, "Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors," 3-4, ll. 47-99, and 109.

[17]See John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989) 182-83, 201, 211, 259-61; Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia UP, 1989) 177-78, 194; and Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977) 125-26.

[18]On this image in *King Lear*, see Robert G. Hunter, *Shakespeare and the Mystery of God's Judgments* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1976) 183; Peter Milward, *Biblical Influences in Shakespeare's Great Tragedies* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987) 189-90; John Doebler, *Shakespeare's Speaking Pictures* (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1974) 8; and Russell A. Peck, "Edgar's Pilgrimage," *SEL* 7 (1967): 227.

[19]See the *Chester* "Passion" 1:321; the *York* "Mortificacio Christi" 368; the *N-Town* "Burial" 1: 341.

[20]"The Scourging," in *The Towneley Plays*, ed. Martin Stevens and A. C. Cawley (Oxford: OUP, 1994 [EETS, S.S. 13]) 1: 276, ll. 205-8; *The Complete Works of John Gower*, ed. G. C. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon, 1901) vol. 2, Book 1, 113, ll. 2845-50. For a full discussion of the "wild man" tradition, see Penelope Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1974).

[21]Clifford Davidson, "The Anti-Visual Prejudice," *Iconoclasm vs. Art and Drama*, ed. Clifford Davidson and Ann Eljenholm Nichols (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1989) 35, 37 (citing Walter H. Frere's edition of *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the period of the Reformation* 90). Even though much religious art was suppressed and destroyed during the iconoclastic fury of the English Reformation, the work of Davidson and his colleagues has shown us how much of that art also survived in and around Warwickshire. See Margaret Aston, "Iconoclasm in England: Official and Clandestine," *Iconoclasm vs. Art and Drama* 73; Davidson and Alexander 3, 21-22, 88, 112-14.

[22]*King Lear* 5.3.264-65; *Macbeth* 2.3.74, 62-65.

[23]Though critics have often associated Desdemona and Christ, they have seldom compared her to the Virgin. See, however, Milward 62; and Hunter 138. In *Shakespeare's Christian Dimension* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994) 416, Roy Battenhouse connects

Desdemona's intervention on Cassio's behalf with Mary's intercession. *Othello* 2.1.246; 2.3.342.

[24]Aston (75-76) cites several historians, including Alan Crossley in *A History of the County of Oxford*, 7-8, 23, 98, to remind us of this.

[25]Spector suggests that this "play was itinerant, at least at some point in its history" (xiii). Leeds Barroll, *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater: The Stuart Years* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991) 14-19, 123-26, 133-34. Dutton (290) cites Audrey Douglas and Peter H. Greenfield, eds., *Records of Early English Drama: Cumberland, Westmoreland, Gloucestershire* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1986) 17-19: "The Kendal Corpus Christi play, still in existence at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was possibly unique in English town life at this late period. Various sources, both manuscript and antiquarian, document the history of the Kendal play between 1575 when the borough was incorporated and 1605 when the play was apparently suppressed."

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A "Grotesque" Reply to Y. Yamada and B. Boehrer*

ROCCO CORONATO

Pondering a reply to Yamada's and Boehrer's illuminating remarks on my article, I have been stuck between answering by merely clarifying some points of my argument or by accounting for its criticism on the basis both of my larger PhD thesis and of the ensuing chain of re-thinking, self-criticising (what Boehrer much too approvingly, or ironically, renames "self-distinction" in keeping with the Jonsonian-Eliotian image) and much scattering out of brains which has taken place in the meantime. What has come out of this is a reply directed not only to Yamada and Boehrer, but also to some of the questions yet unexpressed in my article.

I will begin with reformulating some points perhaps not fully cleared up there. Boehrer puts his finger on what is probably a methodological problem: whereas I had initially promised to reject "reference-spotting," thus calling for a consideration of Jonson as primarily a crafty playwright, later on in the article I fell back on the same habit, and continually so (Boehrer 241-43). But instead of deprecating what I was just about to do in the course of my article, I was questioning the long-lived abuse of Jonson's legendary erudition as a polemical means of deflecting his theatrical craftsmanship into trite, pedantic translation. Surely, reference-spotting is not a bad idea, as long as it helps us appreciate the transformation of carnivalesque motifs into drama. This leads me to a second methodological point. I find it difficult to dissociate the idea of "self-distinction" from a probably unwanted pejorative sense. Nor do I think that Jonson's practice was limited to an ante-literam Bloomian relish for

*Reference: Yumiko Yamada, "Deeper into the Bakhtinian Labyrinth: A Response to Rocco Coronato, 'Carnival Vindicated to Himself?'" *Connotations* 7.2 (1997/98): 220-39; Bruce Boehrer, "Carnivalizing Jonson: A Reply to Rocco Coronato," *Connotations* 7.2 (1997/98): 240-45.

patricide and a quest for originality. Rather, it is precisely in the light of his usage of the sources that Jonson makes the case for a revision of Bakhtin's carnival. Is this richness just a priggish display of erudition, which can easily produce the misdemeanour of reference-spotting, or is it a unique intertextual potential for gaining partial access, so to speak, to the workshop of the playwright? If the age of Jonson represents a turning point in the history of carnival, an assumption that can be shared without being a Bakhtinian believer in overturning, its salience can best be appreciated by approaching the literary texts via some detours—and here come the sources.

These are, however, only minor points. The real problem concerns the sense and usage of the terms "carnivalesque" and "grotesque." While thoroughly sharing Yamada's argument on Bakhtin's de-classicising "castration" of Rabelais, I am at odds with its purpose. It is not simply that I find it hard to reconcile the creation of Rabelais as a "guardian angel of the communist populace" (220) with Bakhtin's notorious problems with Stalinism and, most importantly, with his inherently anti-materialist, religious drive which has been consistently brought to the fore in recent criticism:[1] this problem of consistency should be left to the believers in carnival as a manifesto for liberating the masses. Also, it might well be that while denying Communism any formal value in his system, Bakhtin was somehow bound to fuel his poetics of carnival with a heightened perception of communality as the first mover of society and literature. But if I understand Yamada's argument correctly, its aim is not only that Jonson and Rabelais were quite alike and that the latter was not *that* popular as Bakhtin would have had it, but also to sketch out the reconstruction of "the value system advocated by Jonson and Rabelais" and secure "a more positive view" of the three works by Jonson I considered in my article (223). This moral interpretation, although deeply ingrained in Jonson's classical make-up, does not seem to be so very widely apart from Bakhtin. Anti-Bakhtinianism, for what this or any other label is worth, may end up by revamping the same intrusion of the moral sphere into literature that lies at the core of Bakhtin's exalted vision of carnival as a folkloric belief in the subterranean value system of the mythical popular comic culture. Truly, Jonson and Rabelais prefaced their works under the

aegis of *prodesse et delectare* (who didn't?): the problem is how much we can extract from this conventional framework in the light of the self-contradicting results of their works. To put it bluntly, one has to decide between the conventional moralism of Renaissance literature and its expression. One of the merits of Bakhtin's devastating theory of carnival is a beneficial sort of indifference to moral intentions and an invitation to go beneath the surface of classicism. Indeed, literature reduced to "instruction" would be a rather desolate area.

At the end of this reply, I still have to set the record straight on the meanings of both terms, words and distinctions that lie at the basis of carnival and the 'anti/pro Bakhtin' question. And there is still another objection of Boehrer's that prompts me to qualify my argument. Boehrer notes that, while I "espouse a dominant commitment to moving beyond simplified binary oppositions" (244), in the end I let them swarm through my paper, for instance "through the old tension between literary history and theatrical performance." In this case, it is not enough to say that I was again criticizing the *ab*use of oppositions, like popular/classic, by which Jonson was ultimately labelled "elitarian." The point made by Boehrer is central to any appreciation of the carnivalesque and the grotesque: are these terms necessarily based on opposition, as Bakhtin implied with his theory of inversion and the clashing of cultures? I can couple this objection with another one coming from Yamada, this time about my being still entrapped into a "Bakhtinian spell" (220). Then, what are we to do with Bakhtin's terms? Perhaps Bakhtin practiced a devilish trick and forced even his detractors somehow to share his destructive assumptions: this would make it hard to resist the idea that even the humanist appreciation of Jonson and Rabelais is shot through with an apologetic desire to defend the classics, as if they needed it—by the same token it might be asked: was Plautus a classical or an obscene author? Was humanism devoid of any compromising with what might perhaps be called the more mundane materialism of the mannerist or grotesque tradition, or are we anachronistically interpreting Renaissance texts according to neoclassicist standards? Or, more generally, what came first, the carnivalesque or the grotesque? If there is such a thing as a uniformly grotesque culture, is there any point in calling authors either learned or popular?

To try and answer some of these questions: Bakhtin's most original idea was to give carnival a superior status, which was vested with grotesque realism. Now, despite the difficulties attending the development of the term, the grotesque offers that blend of popular and learned themes, mixtures of materialist and spiritualist elements, Carnival and Lent, so characteristic of the counter-culture I am interested in exploring. Instead of stopping short with criticizing an antithetical interpretation it might be possible to go a step further and envisage another kind of culture, unveiled by the rites of carnival, in an inverted order with respect to Bakhtin's theory. Inversion is inseparable from the grotesque—but the inversion of thought here is *expressive* in so far as it reproduces the disseminated culture of contrast by means of that iconic excess that Bakhtin read as the universally carnivalesque oppositional culture. In this sense, I think that we may salvage the most precious part of Bakhtin's theory, the idea of getting us into connection with the relatively undiscovered domain of the grotesque, without implying that its aim was a ritual regeneration or even liberation. I know that in this vision of Bakhtin as a sort of Internet server, I risk the same pitfall of positing a cosmic culture that universalizes both its opponents and admirers. But the grotesque unveiled through the usage of carnivalesque sources can at least be placed in textual strategies of adaptation, rather than in a flamboyant poetics or philosophy.

University of Florence
Italy

NOTE

[1]See for instance Charles Lock, "Carnival and Incarnation: Bakhtin and Orthodox Theology," *Literature and Theology* 5 (March 1991): 68-82; for a general reassessment of Bakhtin's influence, see Caryl Emerson, *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997) and the excellent review article by Joseph Frank, "Lunacharsky Was Impressed," *The London Review of Books* (19 February 1998): 18-20.

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Trading Meanings:
The Breath of Music in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*

NICHOLAS F. PICI

"We played music in the house all the time," recalls Toni Morrison in a 1992 interview with Dana Micucci (275). Indeed, Morrison was inundated with music and song during her childhood years in Lorain, Ohio. Morrison's mother, Ramah Willis, was just one of many musicians on her mother's side: she was a jazz and opera singer and played piano for a silent movie theater, while Morrison's grandfather was a violin player (Micucci 275, Fussel 283). Morrison remembers how her mother sang everything from Ella Fitzgerald and the blues to sentimental Victorian songs and arias from *Carmen* (Fussel 284). That music should play such an important role in much of Morrison's writing, then, will probably come as no surprise for her readers. Virtually all of her novels touch upon music in some way or another. And whether that music is slave work songs, spirituals, gospel, or the blues, and whether the vehicle she uses to convey this musical experience is content, language, form, or a blending of all three, the musical motifs are unmistakable in Morrison's writing and inextricable from it. In the case of her second-most recent novel, though, music becomes an even more dominant, overriding force and assumes a role that is, ultimately, more important thematically and aesthetically to the novel's own peculiar artistic integrity than any of the roles music plays in her earlier novels. Morrison's *Jazz*, in effect, breathes the rhythms, sounds, and cadences of jazz music, radiating and enunciating, reflecting and recreating the music's central ideas, emotions, and aural idiosyncrasies perhaps as well as written prose can.

In investigating this topic, a two-pronged approach is taken. First, I endeavor understand exactly *how* and *to what extent* Morrison incorporates elements of jazz music in her novel *Jazz*; subsequently, questions as to *why*

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debpici00703.htm>

Morrison establishes jazz as a central concern of the novel can be explored. To demonstrate how jazz manifests itself in the novel, four areas are examined: 1.) Morrison's own thoughts and words on the subject; 2.) the content of the novel itself; 3.) the stylistic techniques and language of the novel; and 4.) the structure of the novel. After discovering some of the ways in which Morrison uses and recreates the effects of jazz, one can then begin pondering the significance of this motif and begin speculating about how jazz clarifies Morrison's vision and amplifies the overall meaning of the novel.

Morrison on Jazz

Morrison, as always, seems very willing to discuss the methods and aims of her writing in the case of music and *Jazz*, too. She is most revealing about her ideas regarding this subject in a 1996 interview with David Hackney. In responding to a question about the novel's structure, Morrison says that she "was very deliberately trying to rest on what could be called generally agreed upon characteristics of jazz" (5). She then goes on to address about five distinct characteristics or qualities of jazz music. First, Morrison notes that "jazz is improvisational; that is to say, unanticipated things can happen while the performance is going on, and the musicians have to be alert constantly" (5). Along these same lines, she describes the music as egalitarian, in that a single musician never "dominates the whole performance"; this is "exactly" why, in her novel, Morrison employs multiple voices and viewpoints to narrate the story: "No voice is the correct one, the dominant one" (6). Third, Morrison contends that jazz compositions tend to follow a general musical pattern or arrangement in which a coherent melody is constructed, dissolves away, and eventually returns: "When I listen to jazz," she remarks, "or as anyone does, to a jazz performance, whatever [the musicians are] playing, you hear the melody and then it goes away or seems to, or they play against it or around it or take it off to another zone. Then sometimes it comes back and you can recognize it" (6). In applying this concept to her novel, Morrison says, "I wanted that narrative line or melody to be established immediately in the

first pages, and when the question becomes whether the narrator was right in his or her expectations of exactly what the story was, that is the 'melody' being taken away" (6).

A fourth characteristic of jazz, according to Morrison, locates the music in a historical framework, the author suggesting that she intended for the music to function as an embodiment of the ethos of the African-American experience during the 1920s, the time in which the novel's story takes place. *Jazz*, in this way, acts as a "continuation," so to speak, of *Beloved*, a novel that, according to Morrison, reverberates with "classical, spiritual gospel" (6) undertones. More specifically, she reveals that "for the beginning of the twentieth century, I wanted that feeling of dislocation and inventiveness and startling change that was representative of those enormous migrations that were taking place among African Americans, and certainly was characteristic of the music" (6).

Finally, Morrison claims that jazz music is instilled with a certain degree of romanticism, a romanticism dramatized in the novel most poignantly via the central love story (or stories). Speaking to this notion of romance, she talks about the true-to-life story upon which her novel is based, a story in which an eighteen year old girl (who becomes Dorcas in the novel) insisted on allowing the ex-lover who shot her to (Joe Trace in the novel) get away; the girl, not unlike Dorcas, eventually bled to death, having told no one who fired the shots. Morrison comments on her initial reactions to this story: "That seemed to me, when I first heard it, since she was only eighteen years old, so romantic and so silly, but young, so young. It is that quality of romance, misguided but certainly intense, that seems to feed into the music of that period" (6). She goes on, "I was convinced that that reckless romantic emotion was part and parcel of an opportunity snatched to erase the past in which one really didn't have all those choices, certainly not the choices of love" (6). Finally, referring to the character of Dorcas, Morrison says, "I wanted this young girl to have heard all that music, all the speakeasy music, and to be young and in the city and alive and daring and rebellious" (6).

In other interviews and essays, as well, Morrison speaks specifically of jazz or related topics and considerations. In a 1981 interview with Thomas LeClair, for instance, she describes jazz as "open on the one hand

and both complicated and inaccessible on the other" (28). More generally, in her essay "Memory, Creation, and Writing," she offers a paradigm for what could be called a black aesthetic:

> If my work is to faithfully reflect the aesthetic tradition of Afro-American culture, it must make conscious use of the characteristics of its art forms and translate them into print: antiphony, the group nature of art, its functionality, its improvisational nature, its relationship to audience performance, the critical voice which upholds tradition and communal values and which also provides occasion for an individual to transcend and/or defy group restrictions. (389)

Incidentally, these traits of the black aesthetic also characterize what could be called the "jazz aesthetic" and, moreover, all seem to inform Morrison's novel *Jazz*. Finally, in her essays "The Site of Memory" and "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation," Morrison elaborates upon her notions of reader participation and communality of the artistic experience — qualities that are plainly analogous to jazz music, though not explicitly related as such in these essays. In describing her writing process, for instance, Morrison maintains that she "must provide the places and spaces so that the reader can participate. Because it is the affective and participatory relationship between the artist or the speaker and the audience that is of primary importance" ("Rootedness" 341). In the same vein, she declares, "What I really want is that intimacy in which the reader is under the impression that he isn't really reading this; that he is participating in it as he goes along" ("Site" 121). *Jazz*, as will become clear later, creates just such an environment of intimacy and reader-writer interaction.

Musicians and Scholars on Jazz

Keeping in mind Morrison's own conception of and thoughts about jazz, it will now be helpful, in order to verify the reliability of the author's statements, to look at how jazz scholars and musicians characterize their art form. In his *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, jazz scholar and musician Mark Gridley defines jazz, in the most general sense, as music possessing two basic elements: improvisation and jazz swing feeling. Improvisation is, essentially, spontaneous musical composition: when musicians

"improvise," they make up the notes as they go along. Gridley compares improvisation to "the impromptu speaking each of us do every day when we talk 'off the cuff.' We use words and phrases that we have used before. But now we improvise by using them in new ways and new orders that have not been rehearsed" (4). This is similar to a jazz musician's ability to employ and manipulate musical notes, chords, phrases, and sounds in new orders on the spot without previous rehearsal. Originality, surprise, and unexpected results arise from and are the benefits of improvisation.

More difficult to describe is swing feeling. In laymen's terms, music "swings" or "grooves" if it "makes you want to dance, clap your hands, or tap your feet" (Gridley 5). This compulsion to move one's body along with the music can result from several factors: a constant tempo; cohesive group sound between band members; a pleasurable rhythm; and "spirit" (that ineffable, intangible "energy" or "soul" that radiates from certain kinds of music). Gridley notes, however, that for "music to swing in the way peculiar to jazz, more conditions have to be met" (6). Swing feeling, in the jazz sense, is characterized by syncopation, an alternation of tension and release in the listener, and swing eighth note patterns. Syncopation occurs when a musician accents off-beat notes, usually in an irregular manner; it is, in other words, the "occurrence of stress where it is least expected" (Gridley 6). The feelings of tension and release evoked in listeners by the "alternation of more and less activity in a jazz line" (6) also contribute to swing feel. The swing eighth note pattern is a specific sequence and duration of notes often played in jazz music—its implications are moot for my purposes here.

Other key aspects of jazz become crucial not only when defining what this music is but also when exploring the relationship between jazz and Morrison's literature. First, jazz music and performances are invariably multi-instrumental: that is, jazz is typically a band-oriented music, rather than solo music. Trios, quartets, quintets, and big bands composed of various instrumentation are the typical "vehicles" of jazz music. These bands usually feature one or two primary soloists and a rhythm section that provides accompaniment and additional soloing.

Another important feature of jazz is its use of polyrhythms to create a sense of tension and complexity in its sound. Polyrhythmic music is

characterized by the sounding of different rhythms at the same time and is usually accomplished by playing rhythms of two or four pulses over rhythms of three pulses. "Polyrhythms," according to Gridley, "are created by patterns which pit a feeling of four against a feeling of three. . . . In addition to that, the onset of one pattern is often staggered in a way which results in something less than perfect superimposition atop another pattern" (364). For instance, in a typical modern jazz piece, several different rhythms can be heard simultaneously: there is a specific rhythm in the saxophone's melodic line, one in the bass line, the rhythms created by the pianist's two hands, and the rhythms emanating from each of the drummer's four limbs (364).

A further outstanding characteristic of jazz involves the repetition of brief patterns. Riffs, short musical phrases repeated throughout a song which are common to jazz music, can function in two distinct ways: "Sometimes they are theme statements, and sometimes they are backgrounds for improvised solos" (129). Along these lines, many jazz compositions revolve around a distinctive "melody or prewritten theme," known as the "head" (402). The head, as suggested by Morrison, is the particular melody which is established, disappears, and re-appears during the course of the jams and improvised solos of a jazz piece. "Jig-A-Jug," a raucous, upbeat tune written by tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman, clearly illustrates such a head arrangement: a catchy, melodic theme established in the first minute and a half of the song precedes ten minutes of intense improvisation and soloing by each of the four band members (a pianist, bassist, drummer, and Redman on sax); ultimately, the head melody returns, providing the listener with a familiar sound and a sense of resolution and release.

One final characteristic of jazz to consider is the music's call-and-response format. Call-and-response occurs in two ways in jazz. First, since much of jazz is improvised, the musicians in a jazz group could be said to be constantly communicating with each other using their special brand of musical language: they inhabit a musical environment in which one musician must be constantly responding to and provoking the others. More specifically, in true jazz call-and-response format, as Gridley explains, one member or section of a jazz group "offers a musical phrase that is like a

question" while another member or section "follows it with a new phrase that is like an answer" (47). This call-and-response "communication" becomes even more evident when musicians "trade fours" or "trade twos" between themselves—that is, when they alternate solos between each four- or two-measure section of a song (14). Secondly, the term "call-and-response" can refer to the audience-musician interplay that almost inevitably arises at a live jazz performance. It is not uncommon for the audience to play a vital role at a jazz show. For instance, audience members might yelp, shout, or clap at the resolution of a particularly inspiring jam, or they might even dance their way through an entire set of music. Such gestures do not simply show the audience's passive approval; more importantly, they become immediate ways of prodding, provoking, and energizing the musicians, thereby creating a peculiar matrix of constant interaction and interplay between artist and observer.

While this overview of jazz is by no means complete or even very substantial, it does cover the basics of jazz sound and theory and, by acting as both a point of departure and homing beacon, can help the reader to navigate with clearer direction through the churning seas of Morrison's novel. Some striking overlaps, in fact, may already be apparent between Morrison's understanding of jazz and the more technical conceptions of the music.

Jazz and Subject Matter

The subject matter of *Jazz* provides the first body of textual evidence indicating the presence of jazz music in Morrison's novel. In examining the novel's subject matter, the first point of significance is that the word "jazz" appears nowhere within the text of the novel: after greeting the reader on the cover and title page, the term never resurfaces inside the novel. Nevertheless, indirect references to and suggestions of the music are ubiquitous. This "cloaked" music, sometimes mentioned fleetingly and sometimes discussed in greater depth, takes on a variety of appellations in the novel: it is called "race music" (79) by the narrator; Joe Trace describes it as "sooty"; and Alice Manfred, giving her Puritanical

slant on this music of the city, calls it "lowdown music" (57) and "juke joint, barrel hooch, tonk house, music" (59). The fact that Morrison never refers to the music specifically as "jazz" simply adds to the mystery, elusiveness, and uncertainty that permeate the novel and give the novel its distinctive flavor.

This music is described in a number of different ways and in a variety of contexts throughout the novel. The "Fifth Avenue drums" show up periodically, usually establishing the background for the "belt-buckle tunes vibrating from pianos and spinning on every Victrola" (59) in the City. The sounds of jazz fill the streets of the City day and night, careening off the rooftops where the makeshift juke bands play. The novel's elusive narrator describes just such a scene in the following section:

> Young men on the rooftops changed their tune; spit and fiddled with the mouthpiece for a while and when they put it back in and blew out their cheeks it was just like the light of that day, pure and steady and kind of kind. You would have thought everything had been forgiven the way they played. The clarinets had trouble because the brass was cut so fine, not lowdown the way they love to do it, but high and fine. . . . On the rooftops. Some on 254 where there is no protective railing; another at 131 . . . and somebody right next to it, 133. . . . So from Lenox to St. Nicholas and across 135th Street, Lexington, from Convent to Eighth I could hear the men playing their maple-sugar hearts, tapping it from four-hundred-year-old trees and letting it run down the trunk. . . .
> That's the way the young men on brass sounded that day. Sure of themselves, sure they were holy, standing up there on the rooftops, facing each other at first, but when it was clear that they had beat the clarinets out, they turned their backs on them, lifted those horns straight up and joined the light just as pure and steady and kind of kind. (196-197)

Here, by viewing them as holy, the narrator, in a sense, deifies these rooftop musicians. On another level, this passage also brings to light Morrison's historical accuracy with regard to the instrumentation of combo jazz of the 1920s. Early jazz bands were usually composed of a mixture of the following instruments: trumpet or cornet, clarinet, trombone, tuba, piano, drums and occasionally saxophone, guitar, and string bass (Gridley 54, 82).Throughout the novel, Morrison remains faithful to jazz history by referring only to these particular instruments and by never mentioning instruments that had not yet come on the jazz scene. On yet another level,

the language of the passage, in its non-standard punctuation, curious repetition of words, and distinct rhythmic feel, begins to mirror the characteristic musical forms of jazz—a feature that will be discussed later.

It is largely through Alice's eyes, though, that many of the impressions of jazz in the novel's subject matter are given. In the following passage, for example, Alice offers her take on the overpowering effects of jazz music:

> . . . the dances were beyond nasty because the music was getting worse and worse with each passing season the Lord waited to make Himself known. Songs that used to start in the head and fill the heart had dropped on down, down to places below the sash and the buckled belts. Lower and lower, until the music was so lowdown you had to shut your windows. . . . Because you could hear it everywhere. Even if you lived, as Alice Manfred and the Miller sisters did, on Clifton Place . . . you could still hear it, and there was no mistaking what it did to the children under their care—cocking their heads and swaying ridiculous, unformed hips. (56)

Maintaining this outlook throughout the course of the novel, Alice tries (in vain) to keep her niece Dorcas, whom she has long provided for, away from the "City seeping music that begged and challenged each and every day" (67). Dorcas, however, does "succumb" to the music's seductive powers, as illustrated in the party scene during which Dorcas and her friend, Felice, fall under the spell of the "fast music" (64). In this particular episode, the narrator reveals that "illusion is the music's secret drive: the control it tricks them into believing is theirs; the anticipation it anticipates" (65). Alice, furthermore, feels that the music urges people to "do wrong" (67) and that it "made you do unwise disorderly things. Just hearing it was like violating the law" (58). Even jazz lyrics, in Alice's view, are "greedy, reckless words, loose and infuriating" (60). At the same time, though, Alice also senses tremendous hostility and an underlying anger lurking beneath the "flourish and roaring seduction" (59) of the music; she even feels that the music "had something to do with the silent black women and men" (56-57) marching in protest of the July 1917 race riots in St. Louis.

The most interesting (and problematical) aspect of the novel's musical subject matter, though, lies not in its sheer diffuseness but in its peculiar changeability. The music, as depicted in the novel, is mutable, viewed by

different people in different ways. It assumes various identities depending on the perceiver and the circumstances in which it is being referenced. Sometimes it is sordid, provocative, disorderly, and chaotic; other times, divine, exciting, restoring, and invigorating. Putting the phenomenon into a cultural-historical framework, Gerald Early comments upon the divided response jazz music received during this time:

> Jazz in whatever form, was not a completely respectable music in the twenties. . . . Americans disliked jazz because as rib-rock Protestants they were uncomfortable with the idea of music's existing for sensual pleasure, for the joy of the vulgarity that is symbolized and elicited. This fear transcended color; many blacks ostracized their brothers and sisters who played this music, and it was common for the believers to call jazz and blues "the devil's music." (177)

But at the same time, as Early is quick to point out, jazz was also being viewed by many Americans as "sacred music," as a "transcendent" art form (177). In this light, Morrison's characters can be perceived as microcosmic representations of America's conflicting, dual response to jazz during the musical form's advent in the 1920s.

Counterpointing Alice's "fire-and-brimstone" view of jazz music, the penultimate scene of the novel illustrates jazz music's marked powers of restoration. In this particular scene, Violet and Joe have apparently come to terms with their relationship and their recent calamitous past; and as Violet, Joe, and Felice talk in their apartment, a jazz song creeps in their window from a neighboring home, helping to re-new Violet and Joe's love for each other, fueling the couple's "dance of reparations," and indicating their future happiness or "felicity" together. It is Felice, in fact, who, in the following passage, recounts this episode: ". . . the music floated in to us through the open window. Mr. Trace moved his head to the rhythm and his wife snapped her fingers in time. She did a little step in front of him and he smiled. By and by they were dancing" (215). The "rooftop passage" mentioned earlier represents another counterpoint to Alice's outlook. In her apotheosis of jazz musicians, the narrator describes the soothing, conciliatory grace of jazz music: "You would have thought everything had been forgiven the way they played," these "holy" rooftop musicians (196-197). In these instances in the novel, music acts, in the

words of Richard Hardack, as a "rope, a bridge, a re-cording" (466), as a healer rather than as a perpetuator of sin, disorder, and violence.

Thus, it could be argued that Morrison is using the subject of jazz music in her novel as a metaphor for the ever-changing conditions of African-American life in the 1920s and as a reflection of the perpetual human struggle between right and wrong—a struggle magnified in the historical, socio-cultural specificity of black experience during this time. When Violet and Joe "train-dance" (36) into the City for the first time, for instance, as their movement from country to city and from South to North draws nearer and becomes more real, the high-spirited, chaotic sounds of jazz take the fore and help to reinforce the atmosphere of change, hope, and anxiety that envelops the characters and the narrative as a whole.

Jazz and Stylistics

Morrison, however, goes beyond mere content when attempting to recreate a distinctive jazz "feel" and sound via the novel's style and structure. She employs repetition, unconventional punctuation, and internal rhyme to create a polyrhythmic background for narrative "improvisations"; and she also employs call-and-response techniques, verb tense shifts, and jazz imagery in order to enhance the jazzy ambiance of the narrative.

First, words and phrases are repeated between and within certain lines in the novel, thereby operating as analogues to jazz riffs. For instance, when Golden Gray, describing the suffering he feels as a result of having never met his father, relates his feelings in terms of having a severed limb; and in this description, certain words and phrases are repeated both to emphasize meaning and to enhance rhythmic effect:

> Now I feel the surgery. The crunch of bone when it is sundered, the sliced flesh and tubes of blood cut through, shocking the bloodrun and disturbing the nerves. They dangle and writhe. Singing pain. Waking me with the sound of itself, thrumming when I sleep so deeply it strangles my dreams away. There is nothing for it but to go away from where he is not to where he used to be and might be still. Let the dangle and the writhe see what it is missing; let the pain sing to the dirt where he stepped in the place where he used to be and might be still. (158)

Golden Gray's "singing pain" echoes throughout this passage, while the phrase "where he used to be" is included (almost awkwardly) in two consecutive sentences. "Blood" courses through the second sentence of the passage, appearing twice within a six-word interval. The "dangling and writhing" of nerves also receives added emphasis through repetition.

Along the same lines, in the "rooftop passage" mentioned earlier, the phrase "kind of kind" (196-197), repetitive and strange and provocative in and of itself, shows up in consecutive paragraphs to mimic the supposed rhythms emanating from heights above. Other examples of repetition and riff-like passages suffuse the novel. This is meaningful because, as Henry Louis Gates asserts in *The Signifying Monkey*, "the riff is the central component of jazz improvisation. It is a figure, musically speaking, a foundation, something you could walk on" (105). Thus, much like jazz riffs, which provide an underlying foundation for the meandering jazz solo, these repetitions in language provide a stable infrastructure within Morrison's otherwise circuitous narrative. Moreover, these repetitions add to the novel's rhythmic movement, compelling us to read the text aloud in order to get the full effect of the language's "musicality." Alan Rice, in fact, asserts that the rhythmic movement engendered in Morrison's novel via use of repetition is the most important attribute of Morrison's "total jazz aesthetic" (424). Rice contends, "It is Morrison's conscious use of repetition as a literary device which foregrounds the musicality of her novels and makes them resemble the involved, convoluted, non-linear, and improvisatory solos of the African-American musicians she values so much" (424). These riffs, Rice argues, serve in authenticating Morrison's "jazzy, prose style" (425).

In his close, stylistic analysis of *Jazz*, Eusebio Rodrigues comments not only on the presence of repetition but also on the effects of punctuation and rhyme within Morrison's prose. In one of the passages from the novel that Rodrigues analyzes, the novel's narrator describes Alice's aversion to jazz music: "It faked happiness, faked welcome, but it did not make her feel generous, this juke joint, barrel house, tonk-house, music. It made her [furious] for doing what it did and did and did to her" (59). Rodrigues, offering a rather convincing stylistic analysis of these lines, contends that the "harsh blare of consonants, the staccato generated by the commas that

insist on hesitations needed to accelerate the beat, the deliberate use of alliteration and of words repeated to speed tempo—all come together to recreate the impact of jazz" (735). Dissecting another section of the novel in a similar manner, Rodriguez goes into even greater detail. In this particular passage of the novel, Dorcas is lying in bed, comforted by the fact that the infectious sounds of the city music are not far off:

> Dorcas lay on a chenille bedspread, tickled and happy knowing that there was no place to be where somewhere, close by, somebody was not licking his licorice stick, tickling the ivories, beating the skins, blowing off his horn while a knowing woman sang ain't nobody going to keep me down you got the right key baby but the wrong keyhole you got to get it bring it and put it right here, or else. (59-60)

Rodrigues responds in the following manner:

> Language [here] is made to syncopate, the printed words loosen up and begin to move, the syntax turns liquid and flows. It is not just the jargon—licorice stick for clarinet, ivories for the piano, skins for drums—but the sounds of jazz that arise from the text and hit the ear.
>
> The syllables "ick" and "ing" act in counterpoint. The "ick," first sounded in "tickled," continues to sound, like a pair of drumsticks clicking, in licking, licorice, stick, ticking. . . . The participial ending "-ing" (set up by the first "knowing") is repeated to maintain a continuous flow of movement: licking, tickling, beating, blowing, knowing, going. Internal echo-rhymes ("where," "somewhere") quicken the tempo. . . . The whole passage ends with a period that is no period, for the voice does not drop but continues to sound. "Or else" is indefinite, incomplete, it is a warning, or else a promise. It resonates, and how does one punctuate a resonance? (735)

Countless other passages in the novel could be analyzed and interpreted in a similar fashion—and legitimately so. Thus, Rodrigues' close textual analyses help shed light upon the stylistic care and artistic deliberation Morrison puts forth in crafting the language of this novel—or any of her novels for that matter.

In further attention to form, Morrison also manipulates her sentence structures and employs non-standard punctuation to impart a jazz-like, polyrhythmic tone in her novel. Intentional sentence fragments and run-ons abound (as they do in most of Morrison's novels), imbuing her style with

either a staccato, stop-start feel or else an effusive, legato-like flow. For example, in the following passage in which Alice contemplates Joe's murdering of her niece, Morrison breaks up nouns and adjectives with periods, allowing them to stand on their own as complete syntactic units: "It [the killing] had not been hard to do; it had not even made him think twice about what danger he was putting himself in. He just did it. One man. One defenseless girl. Death. A sample-case man. A nice, neighborly, everybody-knows-his name man" (73). Even though a stop-start flow is produced here, the "multi-descriptor" ("everybody-knows-his-name man") counters this disjointedness; contributes a rhythmic, improvisational feel to the broken idiom; and transforms the passage into a multi-rhythmic unit—a unit that reflects very directly the African American tradition of blending elements of language and music.

In contrast to such fragmented syntax, Morrison, in the middle of the following passage in which the narrator celebrates the City's dark appeal, strings together several phrases and words without any sort of punctuation:

> And if that's not enough, doors to speakeasies stand ajar and in that cool dark place a clarinet coughs and clears its throat waiting for the woman to decide on the key. She makes up her mind and as you pass by informs your back that she is daddy's little angel child. The City is smart at this: smelling and good and looking raunchy; sending secret messages disguised as public signs: this way, open here, danger to let colored only single men on sale woman wanted private room stop dog on premises absolutely no money down fresh chicken free delivery fast. And good at opening locks, dimming stairways. Covering your moans with its own. (64)

In addition to its run-on segment, this passage ends with the slant rhyme "moans" and "own": reminiscent of a jazz lyric, this rhyming works to heighten the overall jazz feel of the passage.

Such syntactical patterns mimic jazz in a number of ways. In playing a solo, a jazz musician may slur the individual notes of a phrase together in a legato fashion, then, while still in the same solo, switch to a staccato mode in which the notes are clearly and abruptly terminated after being sounded—much like Morrison's alternating between fragments, run-ons, and standard "complete" sentences. Similarly, a jazz composition as a

whole may be digressive and meandering while at the same time incorporating fragmented phrases and irregular pauses and rests throughout. Moreover, jazz, at its roots, intends to thwart listener expectations with its unorthodox, experimental rhythmic and harmonic patterns; likewise, Morrison tries to reach the same effect by unusual, non-standard punctuation and sentence structure.

Morrison also employs certain call-and-response techniques to further enhance and color her novel with jazz hues. For example, in the following passage, the narrator poses a series of questions and answers regarding the "unarmed women" of the socio-gender "wars" being waged at the time:

> Who were the unarmed ones? Those who found protection in church and the judging, angry God whose wrath in their behalf was too terrible to bear contemplation. He was not just on His way, coming, coming to right the wrongs done to them, He was here. Already. See? See? What the world had done to them it was now doing to itself. Did the world mess over them? Yes but look where the mess originated. Were they berated and cursed? Oh yes but look how the world cursed and berated itself. Were the women fondled in kitchens and the back of stores? Uh huh. Did police put their fists in women's faces so the husbands' spirits would break along with the women's jaws? Did men . . . call them out of their names every single day of their lives? Uh huh. (77-78)

This question-answer format very much resembles the call-and-response interplay between minister and congregation in traditional black churches and creates a texture much like that of a jazz jam session in which musicians "talk" to each other and prod one another on with notes and phrases that sound like questions and answers. It is this type of antiphonal call-and-response technique that Rice submits as a primary element of Morrison's jazz aesthetic (426).

In addition to this intra-textual call-and-response technique, Morrison, as she attempts to do in all of her work, also lays the groundwork for reader participation within her novel. This reader engagement manifests itself most markedly when Morrison (or, rather, the narrator) switches, rather disarmingly, to a second person point of view, as she does periodically throughout the novel. For instance, in describing the scenery around the cabin Golden Gray comes upon during his search for his father,

the narrator uses "you" with a double signification to confront and challenge the perceptions of both the reader and Golden Gray: "The sigh he [Golden Gray] makes is deep, a hungry air-take for the strength and perseverance all life, but especially his, requires. Can you see the fields beyond, crackling and drying in the wind? The blade of blackness rising out of nowhere, brandishing and then gone?" (153).

In the last lines of the novel, Morrison employs a similar tactic. Here, envious of Violet and Joe's "public love," the narrator expresses her wishes to experience the same kind of uninhibited love:

> I . . . have . . . longed to show it—to be able to say out loud what they have no need to say at all: *That I have loved only you, surrendered my whole self reckless to you and nobody else. . . .*
>
> But I can't say that aloud, I can't tell anyone that I have been waiting for this all my life and that being chosen to wait is the reason I can. If I were able I'd say it. Say make me, remake me. You are free to do it and I am free to let you because look, look. Look where your hands are. Now. (229)

Again, the narrator could be referring to her imagined lover when using "you"; but she may also be acting as a soundingboard for Morrison herself who seems to challenge the reader to revel in the literary experience. Interpreting this final passage, Paula Gallant Eckard maintains that "the narrator speaks directly to us"; she then astutely points out, "In all probability, our hands are holding the written text itself, and as readers we 'make' and 'remake' its music, language and meaning" (19). It is with such artifice that Morrison provides, in her own words, the "places and spaces so that the reader can participate" ("Rootedness" 341), thereby creating a literary environment that necessitates reader involvement. Such an environment reflects strikingly the dynamics of a live jazz performance, during which call-and-response audience participation invariably engenders an interactive musical discourse between musicians and listeners.

Intensifying the novel's jazz feel and tone, verb tense shifts help create a sense of ever-changing perspective. Throughout the text, tense oscillates continually between present, past, and present progressive, oftentimes shifting without warning or without clear reason or discrimination. Such changes in tense are suggestive of the shifting perspectives evident in a

jazz composition when the different band members share the solo spotlight, each offering his or her own "view" or interpretation of the tune being played. These tense shifts are also reminiscent of changing time signatures—a trend pioneered in jazz by pianist Dave Brubeck and his experiments with compound meters. In Brubeck's "Blue Rondo A La Turk," for instance, the meter alternates between an unorthodox 9/8 and regular 4/4 time; this odd juxtaposition of meters creates a clear and unequivocal tension (during the 9/8 measures) and release (when the 4/4 measures are played). Similar sensations of tension and relaxation will almost certainly occur while reading Morrison's novel, the author forcing the reader to contend with and reconcile the novel's many tense shifts.

The final feature of Morrison's jazzy stylistic technique, as Eckard alleges, involves the author's consistent use of certain jazz imagery and words specific to jazz in her novel. Even the first word of the novel, "Sth," recalls the sound of a ride cymbal (the principal cymbal of jazz drum rhythms) or, as Rodrigues suggests, the "muted soundsplash of a brush against a snare drum" (733). Eckard is more specific, though, in her analysis and observes that "[j]azz terms permeate the text" (16). Eckard then goes on to give textual evidence to support her claim, pointing to words like "triplets, duets, quartets" (*Jazz* 50) and "scatty" (*Jazz* 89) as clear jazz references. Executing a close reading of her own, Eckard suggests that the following passage of *Jazz*, in which the narrator describes Violet's hairdressing techniques, is "rendered through musical terms" (16):

> When the customer comes and Violet is sudsing the thin gray hair, murmuring "Ha mercy" at appropriate breaks in the old lady's stream of confidences, Violet is resituating the cord that holds the stove door to its hinge and rehearsing the month's plea for three more days to the rent collector. She thinks she longs for rest, a carefree afternoon to . . . sit with the birdcages and listen to the children play in snow. (*Jazz* 16)

In response to this passage, Eckard convincingly claims that words "such as *murmuring, stream, breaks, cord* (chord), *rehearsing, rest, listen, play* carry jazz meanings" (16). She also rightly proposes that Violet's "Ha mercy" functions as a "linguistic punctuation of a metaphorical stream of jazz" (16). Even the word "birdcage," according to Eckard, glimmers with the suggestion of Charlie Parker's nickname, "Bird," and the famous jazz clubs,

Birdland in New York and Birdhouse in Chicago (17), named after this sax master and vanguard of be-bop jazz. Eckard's insightful reading, thus, helps to ground Morrison's novel even more firmly on a solid jazz base.

Jazz and Structure

Whereas Morrison's style reflects more the sounds and rhythms of jazz, the structure of the novel mirrors the typical patterns and configurations of jazz compositions. For instance, one might say that the novel begins with a head melody. The narrator lays out the controlling events of the narrative in the first two paragraphs of the novel, at once revealing the affair between Joe and Dorcas, Joe's eventual killing of his younger lover, and Violet's attempted stabbing of Dorcas's corpse at the funeral. Thus, Morrison accomplishes what she claims she set out to do: that is, establish her "narrative line or melody . . . immediately in the first pages" (Hackney 6) of the text. And, retaining its semblance to a jazz composition, which by virtue of itself will inevitably stray from the established head, the novel, after implanting this initial melodic foundation in the reader's mind, begins to distort, decorate, play with, and improvise upon these central events. Rodrigues maintains that in between the beginning "set melody" and the end of the novel "are amplifications, with improvisations, variations and solo statements, a virtuoso display of jazz" (740). Rodrigues also rightly contends that after this initial head arrangement, the novel abruptly drops the reader "without warning, into a confusing world" (733). Through his examination of the reader/text relationship, Rodrigues goes on to describe (quite accurately, in my opinion) the experience of trying to read and comprehend the rest of Morrison's novel:

> The confusion arises from the speed of the telling. Fragments of information rush along unconnectedly. . . .
>
> . . . We read on impatiently, wanting to interrupt and ask questions, but this voice [of the narrator] is in a reckless hurry to tell everything at once without stopping. . . . It slows down at last, a little out of breath, hinting at some kind of mystery at the end [of the first section]. We read on, bewildered but intrigued, looking at the words, listening to their rhythm, their rhythms, seeking desperately to discover the meanings of the text. Halfway through the novel we pause to take stock, to put things together, to get our bearings. (734)

In fact, it is probably not uncommon for readers to stop more than just once in order to "get their bearings" when exploring the dense, meandering paths of *Jazz*. "Like a soaring trumpet" (Eckard 14), the narrative moves along an indeterminate track, repeating itself in places and going off on unanticipated tangents in others, circling back to the head at times while moving off into mysterious spaces at others.

The chapter breaks also contribute, in their own curious way, to the jazz-like structure of the novel. Instead of dividing the sections of her novel into carefully enumerated or titled sections, Morrison signifies each chapter break with blank pages. That is, she stops with one idea or motif, inserts at least one full page of white space, and then picks up the idea or motif from the last sentence of the preceding chapter in the first sentence of the subsequent chapter. All the chapters operate under this design. For instance, the first chapter ends in the following way, with the narrator hinting at the state of Violet and Joe's relationship: "He is married to a woman who speaks mainly to her birds. One of whom answers back: 'I love you'" (24). The next chapter then begins, "Or used to" (27). Thus, the narrator picks up right from where she left off. Rodrigues comments on this structural technique: "Morrison produces a textual continuum by using transitional slurs and glides across sections. . . . Such carry-overs make for rhythmic flow" (740). In other words, by bridging or linking her chapters as she does, Morrison creates a sense of rhythmic continuity within an otherwise circuitous and disconnected narrative. Even though the reader may want to pause after finishing a chapter, Morrison, by transferring one idea to the next so fluidly, makes this rather difficult. Expanding on this idea, Rodrigues implies (perhaps a little too confidently) Morrison's breaking away from Western standards of art succinctly embodied in the symphony—via these stylized chapter breaks: "Unlike the clearly demarcated movements of a symphony, the sections of *Jazz* never come to a complete stop. Like nonstop sequences during a jam session, they keep moving restlessly on and on giving the text a jazz feel" (740).

Finally, the multiple voices and varying points-of-view of the novel work in reflecting what Morrison calls the "egalitarian" nature of jazz music. The novel constantly shifts viewpoints and narrative tone: Violet, Joe,

Dorcas, Alice, Golden Gray, Felice, and of course the narrator are among those characters who are permitted to give voice to their respective outlooks on the novel's central events and life in general. As suggested earlier, this multiplicity of visions found within Morrison's novel mirrors the multi-instrumentation of combo jazz and the various solo "viewpoints" from which a tune is played by the different band members.

Thus, the novel's overall structure, for all intents and purposes, breaks from such conventional narrative techniques as linear, horizontal movement, nicely divided chapters, and singular point-of-view. Instead, *Jazz* is recursive, tangential, disjointed yet rhythmic, and many-sided in its form. In this way, Morrison's novel is much like a jazz solo that explores all the angles, views, and possibilities available within a very wide and flexible melodic framework. Morrison's novel will not come up to the expectations of readers counting on a more straightforward narrative, in much the same way that jazz music undercuts the expectations of its listeners. Eckard testifies to this by asserting that "black music sets up expectations and then disturbs them at irregular intervals. Improvisations, cuts, and departures from the 'head' or theme and from normal harmonic sequences are evidence of this process" (13). And as Eckard points out, the same could be said of Morrison's literary form.

Jazz Scholars on Jazz

Jazz scholars often struggle in their attempts to describe verbally the music which they study. In their respective books on jazz, Jonny King, Ingrid Monson, and Charles Hartman all explore this common difficulty of transforming the concepts, sensations, and appeal of jazz music into written language. Using metaphors, ironically enough, of "conversation" and "language" to help explain the improvisational interplay that occurs between jazz musicians during a jam session, King bluntly admits that jazz improvisation "doesn't translate well into words" (9). Monson describes the problem in more general terms: "Translating musical experience and insight into written or spoken words is one of the most fundamental frustrations of musical scholarship . . . no matter how

elegantly an author writes, there is something fundamentally untranslatable about musical experience" (74). These scholars make valid points. Nevertheless, even though it is virtually impossible to reproduce exactly the forms, sounds, and feelings of jazz in written language, especially written prose, Morrison must be extolled for her efforts. And as a result of these admirable attempts to infuse a certain jazz style and structure into her novel, Morrison does achieve the necessary degree of "function within form" that crystallizes a text's aesthetic integrity and wholeness. Ultimately, *Jazz* becomes a more complete and integrated work of art because of Morrison's formalistic ingenuity.

Furthermore, *Jazz* is not the only Morrison novel in which elements of jazz music can be detected. Rice warns critics to "be wary of isolating this novel as her only jazz-influenced work. All of her novels have been informed by the rhythms and cadences of a black musical tradition" (423). To illustrate such influence, Anthony Berret, in citing a passage from the novel *Tar Baby*, a passage replete with deliberate repetitions, goes so far as to make a direct comparison between Son (the central character of *Tar Baby*) and jazz great John Coltrane (281).

Significance and Meaning of Jazz in *Jazz*

With the aforementioned evidence at hand, it is clear that Morrison very deliberately and conscientiously constructed her novel with certain principles and ideas of jazz music in mind. Thus, the question arises: How does Morrison's jazz aesthetic function in the novel's wider context of meaning? In other words, how does this jazz aesthetic inform and clarify Morrison's overall vision within the novel?

The significance and meaning of Morrison's jazz aesthetic can be interpreted in several ways, the resulting interpretations, each one valid in its own right, helping to shed light upon some major ideas of the novel. For instance, throughout *Jazz*, Morrison foregrounds the street musicians of the City and their music, rather than "night club jazz" or the flapper scene with which 1920s Harlem is often associated. By treating jazz in such a way, Morrison undercuts Fitzgerald's popularized vision of and notions

about music in the "Jazz Age," a term Fitzgerald himself originated (Early 180): that is, instead of being portrayed, as it is in *The Great Gatsby*, as a mere background for the glamorous lifestyles and "lavish parties" of the rich (Griffin 193), jazz constitutes an integral part of the African American city life in Morrison's novel. Jazz music radiates from Victrolas, glides off rooftops, and ricochets between buildings of the City, infecting the soul of everyone it reaches. Furthermore, by leaving the music "anonymous," so-to-speak, and by never once mentioning the names of popular 1920s jazz musicians—names like Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, or Paul Whiteman—Morrison shifts her emphasis toward the folk traditions of this music and to its communal, grass-roots appeal. In so doing, Morrison casts the traditions of jazz in a less recognized but equally (if not more) important historical light.

Jazz also helps play out a primary theme of Morrison's novel—the opposition between city and country. Setting up this duality in the novel, the narrator characterizes those African Americans who had migrated to northern cities in the following manner: ". . . they were country people, but how soon country people forget. When they fall in love with a city, it is for forever, and it is like forever. . . .There, in a city, they are not so much new as themselves: their stronger, riskier selves" (33). Gerald Early's comments locate this idea within a larger cultural-historical framework:

> Once again [during the 1920s], as had become the common cultural dialectic in American life since the middle of the nineteenth century, it was city versus small town, agrarian values versus urban trends. It was just these forces of opposition that clashed during the struggle over Prohibition. . . . In the instance of Prohibition, small town, agrarianism, and the conservative Christian reformism instinct won. In the case of jazz, it was the urban, secular, more liberal element of the culture that won. (178)

Berndt Ostendorf also discusses the origins of jazz in terms of the divergent cultural values of city and country: "Jazz, and this is of central importance, emerged in cities and developed with increasing distance from the cotton fields—it is therefore essentially a city culture. It flowered in cities where a number of classes and cultures merged and meshed" (166). It only makes sense, then, that jazz, itself a fluid and communal music, "emerged," as Ostendorf maintains, "in such cities which allowed a maximum of fluidity

and contact" (166). Jazz, therefore, functions as a metaphor, both historically and within Morrison's novel, of urban cultural values. Via its fast-paced, chaotic, liquid-like sound and its musical eclecticism, jazz reflects the rapid pace, flux, and cosmopolitan atmosphere of cities like New York and Chicago during the 1920s and even today. These city values stand in stark contrast to the slower-paced, tranquilized country atmosphere in which both Violet and Joe were born and raised. Ultimately, then, the jazz of Morrison's novel embodies the cultural milieu of city life and, more specifically, the sense of risk and strength that a city can impart in those who enter its bounds.

By incorporating jazz as she does, Morrison is also trying to reproduce and pay tribute to the music's original powers of cultural unification. Envisioning fiction and specifically the novel as the "new," modern-day black art ("Rootedness" 340), Morrison grounds her prose in the traditions of jazz music hoping to create an art form that will reclaim the uncanny ability jazz once had in joining a people together by dynamically reflecting the African American imagination and black experience in general. Rodriguez clarifies and expands upon this idea:

> In *Jazz* Morrison transposes into another medium the music that sprang out of her people and expressed their joys, their sorrows, their beliefs, their psyche. This music—spirituals, blues, ragtime, jazz—has spread throughout the world in our time, and is no longer uniquely or exclusively African-American. There's need now, suggests Morrison, to make fiction do what the music used to do, tell the whole wide world the ongoing story of her people. (736)

Because jazz no longer is (and actually never was) an exclusively black art form, Morrison wants to find a fresh way of artistically representing the common experience in which African Americans share. Along these lines, Berret proposes, "To preserve or restore this intimate circle of affection and understanding, or perhaps to recreate it in the new urban environment, Morrison transposes into her fiction the techniques of jazz that have performed this function so successfully, especially for her people" (271). Thus, in her novel, Morrison attempts to recreate the group togetherness engendered and nourished by jazz—a music that, according to Berret, "presupposes a village atmosphere" and "urges participation by all the senses" (270). Moreover, Morrison seems to be searching out

a new aesthetic mode of expression for the African American experience—specifically, a literary mode that will reflect the ideas, implications, and stylistic tendencies of jazz.

The preceding interpretations of Morrison's jazz aesthetic share a common thread: they all somehow demonstrate or suggest the spirit and times of the Jazz Age. And this may perhaps be the pivotal implication of the novel's jazz motif. That is, Morrison's jazz aesthetic, above all else, is meant to reflect the ethos of 1920s Harlem and, more universally, of 1920s America in general. Encapsulating this idea and explaining in general what this ethos entails, Linden Peach proposes that "it is the sensuality, the unpredictability and the dissonance of African-American life during the Jazz Age which the novel probes and develops" (116). Jazz music and Morrison's characteristic jazz aesthetic, by virtue of their defining characteristics, work well as emblems of the overall "uncertainty and unpredictability of people's lives in the 1920s" (Peach 116). In this light, Morrison's novel, as well as jazz music itself, could even be viewed as showing a distinctive modernist flare and sensibility. Characterized by ideas of flux, fragmentation, and social breakdown, modernism informed the basic ideology of early twentieth century America. Explaining this relationship between modernism and jazz music, Mark Harvey reveals that it was during "the 1920s when jazz most explicitly carried the modernist spirit here and abroad and when its innovations challenged the old order of Western music and culture" (128). It seems as though Morrison, who in her essay "Unspeakable Things Unspoken" refers to "the complex, contradictory, evasive, independent, liquid modernity" of the Jazz Age (26), was well-aware of the far-reaching influences of modernism and its relationship to jazz music when writing *Jazz*: understanding this relationship, Morrison, it could be argued, seized the opportunity to use this music as a metaphor for the defining ideas of modernism—ideas that become magnified when considering certain events of historical significance, such as the black migrations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As mentioned earlier, *Jazz*, called by Griffin "Morrison's most explicit migration narrative to date" (184), focuses much of its attention on the problems and ramifications of this migratory experience. In fact, this may just be the novel's primary aim: to explore

how blacks struggled with and tried to reconcile the psychological and environmental dualities—the displacement and excitement, the hope and disillusionment, and the newness and disorder—that awaited them in the cities of the North. These migrations demanded of a person a complete reorientation of experience, a reformulating of his or her values, personal vision, and comportment. It was change that permeated the lives of blacks during the 1920s and it is this sense of change that Morrison attempts to instill and reflect in her novel. It is a mutability most poignantly illustrated in the character of Joe Trace, who undergoes seven distinct changes during his young life and who compares himself to a snake that must constantly shed its skin (129). And it is change as embodied by the protean sounds of jazz and, in turn, within Morrison's literary jazz aesthetic.

Finally, even though Morrison focuses exclusively on the role of jazz in 1920s black Harlem, jazz has always been, as Morrison is certainly well aware, a very inclusive art form. When one traces the evolutions of jazz, it becomes clear that jazz is more a product of several converging musical, historical, and cultural forces than a distinct, sharply-defined music invented by a certain group of people at a specific historical moment. Writer and musician Ralph Ellison embraces and gives voice to such a multi-cultural, even-handed understanding of jazz in his writings. Paraphrasing Ellison's ideas, Ostendorf submits the following: "Jazz is the only pure *American* cultural creation, which, shortly after its birth, became America's most important cultural export"; it is, moreover, "a hybrid, a creole, a fusion of heterogenous dialogues from folk traditions of blacks and whites" (165). Far from diminishing the novel's integrity, though, this fact only helps to universalize Morrison's work. With these ideas of inclusion, heterogeneity, and creative freedom embedded in its very fibers, jazz, as it operates within Morrison's novel, becomes emblematic of the struggles and experiences of not only "black America," but America as a whole.

Morrison says that "music was everywhere and all around" during her childhood (Morrison, "All" 284). Thus, it is not shocking to discover that music is also ubiquitous in her novel *Jazz*. However, the implications and true power of the novel's musical motif lies not in its omnipresence, but in its malleability. Much like members in a jazz quintet "trading fours"

between themselves—one musician throwing out musical questions and phrases that are promptly deflected by another's musical responses and counterpoints—this novel, particularly in its treatment of jazz, constantly oscillates between several different meanings. Ultimately, then, Morrison might well be viewed as a literary musician, "trading meanings" between herself and the words she writes.

University of Dayton
Ohio

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Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* and Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good* as Contributions to a Definition of Culture

CHRISTIANE BIMBERG

Caryl Churchill and Timberlake Wertenbaker belong to Great Britain's most distinguished female contemporary playwrights. Over the years they have helped to shape out of alternative, experimental kinds of theatre new dimensions and directions of development in the mainstream theatre.

Top Girls (1982) and *Our Country's Good* (1987) are concerned in different ways with the genesis of culture(s) over long periods of time in the history of human civilisation. They demonstrate in a subtle and at the same time thrilling way how people form their own cultural, social, economic, political and linguistic identities. Remarkably enough this is shown in both plays through directing the spectators' attention to the lives of women whose ability to determine culture in their own terms has been more limited than the men's so far.

Caryl Churchill elucidates the issue of the compatibility of profession and family for contemporary women. She confronts the spectators with the workaday routine in an Unemployment Agency in Britain in the 1980s, i.e. with examples of rivalry, jealousy, comradeship and career struggle. At the beginning of the play Marlene, the female protagonist, has just been appointed head of the Agency after having worked up her way to that position for years.

The beginning of the play is constructed in a logically consistent way. Marlene's appointment offers a unique occasion for celebration. After lots of efforts taken in the past this is a decisive step in her career. As she doesn't have time to go on a holiday she decides in favour of a party:

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> Well, it's a step. It makes for a party. I haven't time for a holiday. I'd like to go somewhere exotic like you [Isabella] but I can't get away. [...] (1)[1]

At this point of the action the spectator's/reader's curiosity and interest in later developments on the stage is aroused by the fact that Churchill starts right in the middle of the "story": She does not dramaturgically present Marlene's advancement at the end and on top of a long series of efforts leading up to the event, but confronts the recipients with the result on the present-time level of the play. Only later glimpses of Marlene's past are revealed step by step so that the reader/spectator (henceforth only "spectator") is able to see her appointment as the culmination of a longer and by no means easy process.

At first sight the party in celebration of Marlene's career advancement seems to call for a display of triumph on Marlene's part. Yet Caryl Churchill enhances the potential of that scene's impact by inserting alienating and as it were modifying levels of reference that start to manipulate the spectator's responses and gradually change the standards of evaluation of past, present and future events. This is done by way of a dramaturgical time sequence that deviates from the logical chronology, moving from the present-time level of the play to events that happened a year earlier. Along with it goes a dramatic exploration and further revelation of Marlene's personality against a widening social, personal and private background, which has a climactic effect on the spectator: (1) The play starts with a celebration of Marlene's appointment to which five other women from the past are invited (Act One). The recipients see Marlene on top of her career (result). (2) Subsequently the office life of Marlene and her male and above all female colleagues is presented in greater detail (Scenes II.i; II.iii). The audience's awareness of the inherent difficulties of the job(s), including the clash between the working and the personal worlds, is increased (process). (3) Finally the private background of Marlene's life and her split personality are revealed (Scenes II.ii; Act Three) (conclusion).

Once more the dramatic tension is kept up through letting the office scenes and the scenes of private character alternate. A special effect is reached when in II.iii. both worlds meet or rather clash: Angie, Marlene's neglected child that is brought up by her sister Joyce as her own child,

arrives in Marlene's office to ask her "aunt" for support to get away from home. Marlene is thus unexpectedly confronted with the late consequences of her former immaturity. Only Act Three, which contains events that according to the logical chronology had taken place a year earlier, makes it clear to the spectator, too, that Angie is a "lost case," a child with no future anyway. Already a year ago it was clear that she would have few chances in life and in the working world: Joyce could not offer her adequate facilities of education or other appropriate intellectual stimuli and Marlene was too ignorant and selfish to care in time.

To return to the main issue of the play: it is during the First Act that the present-day world of working women in Britain is juxtaposed with the lives of five fictitious, partly historical, partly literary female figures of the past. The modern issue of the compatibility of profession and family for women is expanded into a discussion of various possible forms of female identity. Churchill confronts the characters and the audience with the diverse, at times modest, at times bolder efforts of women from very different cultural backgrounds to gain more physical as well as mental freedom. The characters include Isabella Bird (1831-1904), who was the daughter of a Church of England clergyman, lived in Edinburgh and later travelled abroad as a mature woman; Lady Nijo, a concubine of a Japanese emperor and later a Buddhist nun, who was born in 1258 and travelled the country on foot; Dull Gret, a figure from the Brueghel painting *Dulle Griet*, in which a woman dressed in an apron and armour leads a crowd of women charging through hell and fighting the devils; Pope Joan who is thought to have been Pope between 854 and 856 and Patient Griselda modelled after the type of the obedient wife in Boccaccio, Petrarch and Chaucer.

The cultural geography implied by the play spans the globe and the time narrated covers a period of more than a thousand years. The first act (which takes up 29 pages in print) contains narratives, comments, questions and cross-references of the women. The continuous dialogue mainly consists of retrospective reflections that reveal the parallels as well as differences between the women's lives.[2] Marlene therefore is faced with the difficult task of holding the conversation together. The whole dialogue creates the effect of a floating web of sounds and thoughts, at times acquiring qualities of the stream-of-consciousness technique.

During this intensive process of talking and listening the self-portraits of the characters are checked continuously by the women's comments on each other's stories and lives as well as by Marlene's responses. Due to their different backgrounds, the women voice different opinions: the rites and customs at the Japanese court in the thirteenth century narrated by Lady Nijo with passion and tolerance are termed "rape" by Marlene (3). The taking away of Griselda's children by her husband, which is felt by Griselda to be a legitimate test of loyalty, is characterised by Marlene as the cruel act of a psychopath (22).

All this part of the action focuses on the women's own wishes and anxieties. It leads to finding out how much space for individual action the women were able to eke out for themselves under the conditions of their times and cultures. Parallels as well as differences between now and then are pointed out in a theatrically very striking way, which makes past and present mirror and reflect each other.

Consequently, various emotional effects such as terror, astonishment, disbelief, pity, anger, and joy are evoked in the different spectators, depending on the contrast between past and present cultural conditions, as well as the differences in age, sex and individual attitudes of the spectators. Seen in a more rational way, the merits of the contemporary career woman Marlene and of all her mates on the stage as well as in social reality appear in a modified light after this view at what women who lived under yet more adverse conditions were able to achieve. As a result, culture (religion, monarchy, patriarchy, colonialism etc.) does not merely appear as an instrument of female oppression but as a challenge and finally an impetus for development. It challenges the women's will to shape life in female terms at least to some extent. Isabella Bird, Lady Nijo, Dull Gret and Pope Joan turn culture into an instrument and a weapon of self-improvement. With the exception of Patient Griselda, whose submission provides the greatest provocation not only for Marlene and today's audiences but also for the other female characters from the past, all those characters question male regulations, conventions, values and organisation of society. They try to circumvent or subvert them to various degrees, passive and trifling as some of their ways of resistance might appear to more rigid positions of twentieth-century feminism. Thus even Patient Griselda's passive perseverance demands some admiration at last.

Abstracting from the colourful details of the play and summarising the contents will lead to a more modified evaluation. In other words: what is Marlene's promotion in comparison with the achievements of those other women who already in much earlier times left the field of domestic activities or religious devotion (Isabella, Gret, Joan), gained knowledge in times of a male hierarchy within the education system by dangerously neglecting the demands of their own sex (Joan), travelled widely under more dangerous and inconvenient conditions than those accompanying twentieth-century business travelling (Isabella, Nijo), entered upon partnerships and sexual relations unsanctioned by church or state (Nijo, Joan), often also had children (Nijo, Gret, Joan, Griselda), brought them up in very adverse circumstances (Gret), even fought battles (Gret), managed to infiltrate the world-wide male power network, even made it to the top of it (Joan) and broke with the traditional gender roles attributed to them?

The dramatic impact on the spectator of all the stories and dialogues is the awareness that women define themselves diversely in different geographical and cultural spaces and at different times. At first female identity is presented as largely if not exclusively defined by authoritarian influences from outside, i.e. male categories of value and self-esteem such as the respect, obedience and duties to gods, monarchs, fathers and husbands, or by the mother role (particularly through giving birth to boys). Along with it go definitions by literacy and education, clothing, ceremony and charity. It is of particular importance that literacy and education are seen and presented in an ambivalent way, on the one hand as being used by women for reasons of status (the case of Lady Nijo) with the effect of affirming patriarchy, on the other hand with the effect of transforming and supplanting patriarchy (the cases of Isabella Bird and Pope Joan). Literacy, academic studies and gaining education per se do not appear as a way out of the "enclosure," though they are shown as providing a source of personal fulfilment for some time for Pope Joan, Lady Nijo and Isabella Bird. Travelling, which often goes along with acquiring education, serves the function of a liberation of one's mind in Isabella Bird's and Lady Nijo's cases. It provides a means of getting physically away and thus distancing oneself at least temporarily from old vistas even if this does not result in an immediate and thorough pulling down of old regulations.

As the succeeding scenes of the daily routine at the office and the private backgrounds of Marlene and her female colleagues demonstrate, it is only since the twentieth century that women start to define themselves by professional activities, but these often go together with frustrations in the private lives of the women and an undisguised cult of the self. Female identity in *Top Girls* is achieved at a high risk, with great efforts only. In Marlene's case the price for such a relative achievement seems to be quite high. She has acquired an excellent, yet very specialised professional qualification without displaying any signs of engaging in that more universal, as it were humanist literacy and education of the women of the past. Marlene is the first woman to have a profession proper but none of her energies is devoted to any other purpose than her own professional getting on. There is no trace left of the certainly doubtful, frequently enforced, but nonetheless to some extent valuable and necessary charity of the women from the past. Marlene does not even care about the other members of her family.

Furthermore, because of adopting a male power behaviour, which shows her to be an emotionally poor human being, she is trapped in a different way than the women from the past were, though she appears to have mastered the men-made system. She is in fact in danger of being caught in the last refuge of men, the working world, and becoming nothing less, but also nothing more than just *another* man, perhaps not even a better one. Finally she sacrifices that potential of female identity completely that used to offer one of the few possibilities of self-definition and self-esteem for the women of the past, the potential of having children.

Critically enough the play seems to imply that the unfortunate decision a lot of women arrive at even today is still the difficult alternative of "no profession" or "no family," and this despite the fact that the twentieth century has opened up to women new possibilities of self-determination through birth control and a more favourable legislation. In the play none of the working women's lives (of Marlene, Win, Nell, Jeanine, Louise or Shona) displays a happy or satisfactory balance between the professional and the private sides, something always being wrong in the one or the other area. Ultimately even Marlene's function as a role model is questioned. The devastating psychological effects of some career women's

selfish ways of life on other people are indicated in the example of the neglected girl Angie. The girl will be forced to sit idly at home or marry early. In spite of her own experiences and insights Marlene was not able to make sure that her daughter would face better or at least equally fine prospects in life.

How much of the potential of a complex female identity is still left unrealised in a number of the female characters is also demonstrated by the behaviour of Mrs. Kidd in II.iii. She is the wife of a male colleague of Marlene's who had hoped to become head of the Unemployment Agency himself. Mrs. Kidd suggests to Marlene to resign in order to avoid the situation of a man having to work for a female boss, which would be unbearable for her husband, and reveals her fear of being maltreated by him. In five minutes Mrs. Kidd undoes everything that those women from the past have achieved in a millennium. They have been indirectly paving the way for Marlene who was to live up to that moral obligation if possible.

At the end of the play there is no firm standard of judgement left because along with the questioning of a male-dominated organisation of society, culture and values goes a considerate rethinking of the extreme consequences of hard-line feminist positions, a questioning of the propriety of adopting male modes of behaviour by working women and the yet quite frequent sacrifice of a family for the sake of a professional career. The play demonstrates the relative importance of technological and medical progress as well as of political or legal declarations of equality between men and women. These ought to be used with discretion. If the efforts of past female lives are to have positive results and if the collective memory has a function, then every woman will have consciously to negotiate the terms of her life and struggle for an individually satisfying balance between profession and family. Equality and emancipation cannot be prescribed, neither for men nor for women. It requires more than outwardly more favourable conditions for women to achieve individual harmony, fulfilment and satisfaction. This explains perhaps why already the title of the play allows various nuances of pronunciation, implying admiration, enthusiasm, doubt or even contempt, depending on the speaker's own views and interpretations.

Consequently, culture in *Top Girls* is characterised as a divided one, in geography and time, between men and women. The modest and temporary

identity or self-definition that is achieved by the female individuals and wrested from the surrounding cultures is a limited one still, concealing with difficulty contradictions, tensions, gaps, clashes, and struggles. It is by no means a stable, permanent, homogeneous category. On the contrary, it is doubtful and hides latent dangers, requiring and provoking a continuous redefinition. It seems as if the development towards (a particularly female) identity, i.e. something not very clearly defined yet, is still more important than a settled result. Of particular value is Churchill's dialectical way of thinking, of always being aware of the opposite side of an issue. She makes us see the frustrations and moderate successes of women in the past and the victories and triumphs as well as the efforts and sacrifices of women in the present. In other words, Churchill displays a critical attitude towards social progress as far as feminist issues are concerned.

Timberlake Wertenbaker considers the issues in question in a play about the origins, methods and results of colonial domination. She shows colonialism in the making and the contradicting forces lying beneath it from the beginning. She goes back to a historical incident of major importance in the history of the British Empire, i.e. the foundation of the English colony of convicts in Australia in 1787. Her presentation of the "colonial story" in her adaptation of Thomas Keneally's novel *The Playmaker* is not a male one of glory, missionary duties and heroic deeds for one's native country. Wertenbaker rather questions that kind of historiography by writing (in a similar though not identical way as Caryl Churchill) an unofficial, "female" history as a personal and subjective form. It is a history written from inside, not so much from the viewpoints of the rulers (though this is not left out), but rather from those of the convicts, i.e. those people who have been let down by society. Particular attention is given to the female convicts who are exploited, abused and oppressed more often and in more poignant ways than the male convicts.

From the outset of the play the central problem connected with setting up a convict colony is evoked. For the more enlightened and educated representatives of the British law and government on the new continent this is the fundamental philosophical issue of educating instead of

punishing people (I.iii.).[3] The contrasting attitudes of the colonisers in that scene bear witness to the extreme political, legal, moral and humane difficulties. Wertenbaker confronts the audience with the optimistic and abstract humanist message of educating people even under prison conditions (Governor Arthur Phillip) and the necessity to pass sentence and punish quickly (Judge David Collins); moreover she wants to make her audience aware of the clash between justice and humaneness and the fact that bad habits are difficult to break (Captain Watkin Tench). The controversial discussion results in the governor's project of letting the convicts stage a play for the sake of their spiritual and moral instruction, in preparation for their (at least for some of them) possible return to "civilised" society at home.

Convict *colony* and *colonialism* are interrelated here not just for phonetic or lexical reasons. Not every colony is simultaneously a convict colony, too, or grows out of one as the history of British colonialism in other parts of the world such as Ireland and India demonstrates. But Australia is a special case: for a European 200 years ago Australia almost meant an extraterrestrial territory rather like an uninhabited planet in our own time. At least Wertenbaker's presentation of the conditions of this voyage to Australia which lasts eight months and a week (13) and covers 15 000 miles of ocean (1) seems to imply that association.[4] Nonetheless British law, institutions, culture, attitudes and habits are transported very rigidly into that "extraterrestrial" place. The convict colony is meant to be a positive image of British colonialism, a good example to be copied by other nations.

The discussion about the proper treatment of the criminals is linked with a discussion of the general merits and disadvantages or dangers of the theatre that includes the Puritan accusations against plays in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the respective answers (I.vi.) and aims at finding out about the usefulness and propriety of a play to change people. The play in question is George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*, which is simultaneously to celebrate the King's Birthday on June 4. Once again the officers apply different points of view that fit in with their formerly expressed opinions on the question of education and punishment.

The arguments range broadly and contrastingly from particular details to more abstract issues. It seems as if a fight of spirit versus matter, of the

belief in mental change versus the oppressing facts of reality is being waged: the arguments *against* the theatre concentrate on practical requirements and such urgent needs as the lacking supplies, objections against convicts as actresses and actors, the belief in the innate nature of crime in convicts, the lacking belief in changes of behaviour by a play, the attitude that other spare time activities are personally more satisfying to the officers, objections against the contents of the play and the conviction of punishing being the principal purpose in a convict colony, reservations against the foreign playwright Farquhar and the foreign philosopher Rousseau who advocated education instead of punishment and the ensuing dangers of insubordination, disobedience and revolution (the positions of Ross, Campbell, Tench, Dawes).

The arguments *for* the theatre refer to the chance of a preferment in the military career through supporting the governor's scheme of the play, the contents of the play, parallels between that play about officers and the real officers, the necessity to include female convicts because there aren't any other women in the colony, the model set by noble characters, fine speeches and sentiments, some hope that the play might change the nature of society in the convict colony, that people might forget about material needs and punishments, that the play may help sanctioning matrimony and provide an opportunity to display compassion with sinners according to Christian doctrine by allowing (particularly the female) convicts to play and, finally, that the experiment can do no harm (the positions of Clark, Johnson, Collins, Phillip, Johnston). Though Major Robbie Ross vehemently objects to the acceptance of the play for performance, Governor Phillip carries the motion and holds it up later when Lieutenant Ralph Clark becomes frustrated during rehearsal.

Thus a thoughtful discourse concerning *theatre*, *colony* and *colonialism* is established by Wertenbaker. Whereas the overall scheme seems to support the pragmatic connection between the three component parts (the use of the *theatre* in a convict *colony* for the sake of upholding the greater scheme of *colonialism* in general), the detailed course of the discussion about using a play at all suggests a different meaning. While *colony* and *theatre* have been discussed already in their positive *and* negative implications, *colonialism* (either in the play or in the historical reality of that time) has

not. In the course of Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*, the play of a dramatist from Ireland (who came from England's first colony, was also an officer, made a late theatre career in London and wrote on doubtful but usual military practices of recruiting people for the army) develops into a touchstone for convicts and officers alike, a test of *colony* and *colonialism*. Meant to be a competition with the convicts' favourite entertainment, hanging, the theatre project signals that the play is a stage for the colony as the colony is a stage for colonialism in the world. Phillip's remark in II.ii. encourages such a reading:

> A Play is a world in itself, a tiny colony we could almost say. (25)

In other words, *play* and *colony* are used as synecdoches, they imply the whole world.

Consequently, not only theatre and colony but also colonialism in general is put to the test. The play, "the diagram in the sand" (25) for the Governor, which reminds the slave boy of his intelligence, serves as a bulwark of education versus the punishment model of reality (the reality of the play and that of society). This is also indicated by the double functions of characters on the different levels of reality and the theatre: Midshipman Harry Brewer, who suggested playing to his convict mistress and loves to hear her say her lines, has to find a hangman in between. The women convicts do not want to act with Ketch the hangman, who ironically is to be Justice Balance in the performance of *The Recruiting Officer* (18). Lieutenant Ralph Clark, who would never be in a play in England (37), is to organise the rehearsals of the play. This has been ordained for the convicts by their gaolers and rulers.

The absurdity of transferring English law, an instrument of colonisation, and English theatre alike into the "extraterrestrial" territory of a remote convict colony, is presented as a doubtful enterprise from the beginning. Wertenbaker shows that the export of English culture has consoling as well as problematical effects on officers *and* convicts. Gaolers and prisoners are exposed to heavy physical and mental pressures and show precarious and even destructive and self-destructive modes of behaviour.

The convicts have been sentenced to absurdly high penalties for comparatively insignificant crimes without mitigating circumstances being

allowed for. The female convicts were often sold to men at the age of ten in London. On the journey, too, and in the colony they have always been badly used by the men. For some of the women it is difficult to come to terms with their situation and bad reputation. Among the officers the question how to treat them is discussed and answered differently. Their responses range from compassion and growing respect to contempt and agree with their general views about education and punishment and the role a play can fulfil in it. Furthermore, the education and punishment issue is aggravated in relation to the female convicts: the governor tries by all means to avoid the example of the first execution of a woman in the colony.

Moreover, even among the female convicts there is no unanimous solidarity. Nor are the biographical and social boundaries drawn in England between convicts and officers due to special merits but seem to have come about in an arbitrary way, by "fate" and circumstance. Midshipman Harry Brewer for instance thinks that he might be one of the convicts if he had not joined the navy.[5] The officers are plagued by physical hardships and spiritual anxieties, too. They also seek comfort and are in need of mutual reassurance. Some of them are on the verge of losing the ability to differentiate between dream and reality.

The colony dilemma (heavy physical and mental pressures on gaolers and prisoners alike; cultural, social and ethnic dislocation) in fact intersects the *whole* colony and crosses the boundaries made so far by social and gender determinations. Under the conditions given and for a limited span of time the cultural and social differences usually separating officers and convicts in England are diminished in that "extraterrestrial" territory because both groups are far from being homogeneous in themselves and because the members of both groups are uprooted and dislocated alike. They have become culturally, socially and ethnically distanced from England, their families and usual spare time activities.

All of them have taken along their dreams, hopes, frustrations, fears, anxieties and obsessions to Australia. All are exposed to the disconcerting conditions of a foreign continent that frequently appears hostile to them. Major Robbie Ross clearly describes the character of their stay as a sort of punitive expedition:

> This is a profligate prison for us all, it's a hellish hole we soldiers have been hauled to because they blame us for losing the war in America. This is a hateful hary-scary, topsy-turvy outpost, this is not a civilisation. I hate this possumy place. (34)

Wertenbaker shows the double face of colonialism. The inside point of view of the colonisers who comprise officers *and* convicts displays the humanely touching side of it. The colonisers' efforts to adjust and accommodate themselves to the new continent are shown as efforts to come to terms with it. The rather absurd efforts to transfer English architecture, the theatre and observatory, plants, gardening and various other English spare time activities to those exotic regions can be seen as satisfying the need for consolation, to mitigate the foreignness of present conditions with some familiarity. Yet this view from inside is contrasted with the outside point of view of the cruel impact on the native population (the genocide). The colony and the theatre thus become a test place for human behaviour and take on a symbolical meaning.

The collaboration of officers and convicts in the rehearsals of Farquhar's play becomes in fact a catalyst, triggering off examples of the best and worst kinds of behaviour in a spiritual crisis. During rehearsal some of the rulers of the colony and some of the prisoners are united in a process of theatrical creation none of them would have had the chance to participate in England. The convicts take on roles of socially far superior characters who behave in morally doubtful ways in the play, however. The acting of the convicts reverses their real roles and supplants the social reality of England as well as of the colony to which part of the social reality of England has been exported in an artificial way and where it can only be maintained with difficulty. The convicts bring facets of their old social roles into the play. They cling to their old social reality, their former experiences with the theatre and former assumptions in different ways and to various degrees. Yet as the theatre and the colony are shown to be just two different ways of illusion, they finally succeed in the transfer because their fluid identities imply the mental adjustment to diverse expectations and demands of the day. At last the boundaries between the female convicts and the officers are crossed, already before the rehearsals

by Duckling and Brewer, and during the rehearsals in a more conscious and deliberate way by Mary and Clark.

All scenes focussing on theatricality are logically constructed and psychologically convincing. Wertenbaker exploits the comic and the tragic potential implied in such an unusual situation, showing fun, amazement, crisis, despair and new hope in the theatrical process that refers back to reality. The levels of reality and theatre are permanently crossed, which leads to some confusion among the players, but in the long run to deeper insights and an awareness of the convicts' situation on the foreign continent. The officers' attitudes towards education and punishment and the usefulness of a play are thus tested in practice: for a time reality (punishment) seems to gain advantage over the theatre (education) but the latter triumphs at last.

The result of these various processes of crossing boundaries and making shifts is "disorder," on the one hand affirming some of the officers' suspicions (cf. above), on the other hand providing the insight that the old social gender, moral, professional and ethnic identities have been overcome and that redefinitions of identity are emerging in Australia. When Churchill's play ends the convict-actors have become aware of their creative potential and their professional chances on the new continent. Here all people transferred from Britain are foreigners and it is difficult to treat Jews, Irishmen or Madagascans in the way they have been treated as outsiders in England.[6] One of the results is also a new self-confidence and the recognition of the power of a play to contribute to survival. The capacity of the theatre to change reality is proved in the sense that the actors and actresses have gained a new awareness of their changed reality and their potential roles in it. In the case of Mary and Clark the risk of a partnership between female convicts and officers is now accepted with full responsibility and a consciousness of the internal and external dangers implied in it (as for instance in the former relationship between Duckling and Brewer), particularly the necessity to conceal true feelings before other people and to come to terms with emotions of doubt and jealousy.

Consequently, in Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good* culture and identity are shown to be precarious, unstable categories. There is a growing

awareness of the fault, the effort and the absurdity to transport Englishness, to export, imitate and copy British culture or, to be more precise, British upper middle-class culture, for the good of mankind.[7] The theatre experiment as a symbolical embodiment of colony and colonialism has revealed the potential and the limits of both of them. There is in fact only a slight change to be seen during the course of *Our Country's Good* as to the colonisers' transgressing the borders between adjustment to foreignness and setting oneself off from foreignness: There are, for example, some initial efforts of the officers to naturalise plants as well as habits taken over from England.[8] Only some of the officers, however, notice positive differences and derive some pleasure from the exotic side of the new continent such as the colourful birds, the kangaroo or the unusual sight of the reverse star constellation.[9] By most of the British inhabitants the differences are felt more keenly. Even at the end of the play hardly any honest efforts are made to look at the different culture of the new continent in a non-superior way. The officers rather view the scene with suspicion from a distance. Their attitudes range from looking at the natives as if they were insects to feeling endangered by the savages (23).

For these reasons the governor is not only a "Governor-in-Chief of a paradise of birds" (1), but simultaneously one of a "colony of wretched souls" (25), to which the convicts and the officers belong and (not noticed fully by the colonisers yet who are busy with fulfilling the immediate tasks of the day) to which the aborigines will soon have to be counted, too. Through references to the American Revolution (34), the French Revolution, the British colony of Ireland, Germany at the time of Farquhar's writing *The Recruiting Officer* (20) etc. Timberlake Wertenbaker indicates that Australia is becoming just another historical and geographical battlefield for contrasting social and ethnic interests.

The colonial enterprise is no good either for the convicts, the officers or the aborigines: a rigid copy of the home culture does not work, nor is it without danger for the native population. Wertenbaker shows diverse processes of levelling: on the one hand she presents (as Shakespeare did in *The Tempest*) the threat of colonialism to level *cultural* differences. On the other hand she also shows the levelling of *social* differences within

the colonisers' culture, that is to say between officers and convicts during the theatre experiment. Whereas the theatre experiment turns out to be a partial success for the colonisers (officers and convicts), the experiment of colonialism has to be regarded as a failure with regard to the extinction of the native culture and its representatives.

At the end of *Our Country's Good* at least part of the British home culture still functions as a humanising potential that the colonisers may develop and modify under the new conditions. The identity arrived at is a kind of transnational and transethnic synthesis that demands a self-willed discipline from the convicts and calls for more self-determination. The doubtful political message of an unconvincing patriotism in Wisehammer's rewritten prologue and his turning the deportation of English convicts into a deliberate mission for the country's good is in fact rather a revelation of a maturing process brought about through the challenge by the home culture as well as the foreign. Paradoxically enough, the convict Wisehammer can generously claim an identification with British colonialism (the imperialism of the future) because he has made the experience that the old identification categories (geography, history, culture, language, gender etc.) do not work any more:

> From distant climes o'er wide-spread seas we come,
> Though not with much éclat or beat of drum,
> True patriots all; for be it understood,
> We left our country for our country's good;
> No private views disgraced our generous zeal,
> What urged our travels was our country's weal,
> And none will doubt but that our emigration
> Has prov'd most useful to the British nation. (38)

Seeing the convicts' prospects as future playwrights, theatre managers, actors and actresses on the new continent as well as their ensuing *denationalised* identity, against the background of the Shakespearean stage at the time of nationalism replacing feudalism[10], Wertenbaker focuses on the shift of identities along with cultural transfers in general.

The aborigines have not yet taken up their role as historical agents instead of objects at the end of the play. Colonialism as seen from the native

population's view point demonstrates the inhumane impact of a thoughtless cultural export and the attitude of Eurocentrism. A lone Aboriginal Australian comments on the arrival of the First Convict Fleet in Botany Bay on January 20, 1788 and thus on colonial enterprise in general as a dream that has lost its way and should better be left alone (1). Later in the play the Aborigine describes that lost dream as an unwanted one that has stayed nevertheless. To the same measure as the theatrical experiment displays its partly positive effects and the social differences between the officers and the convicts are getting blurred, the contrast between the colonisers and the aborigines is increasing. Before Farquhar's play is about to be performed, the native inhabitants are shown as stricken with European diseases fatal for them (another way of pointing to the doubtful cultural export and the genocide following it) and in danger of disappearing from the historical agenda. Another imbalance is left for the colonisers to cure . . . .

Top Girls and *Our Country's Good,* which question cultural progress and criticise cultural Eurocentrism, can be read and seen as contributions of the contemporary British theatre to a definition of culture. This is not done by establishing one-sided hierarchies, canons, priorities or preferences, but through showing the complex and contradictory tendencies of culture to constitute identities. What the authors want to point out is: *identity* can only be achieved through contrast and *diversity* within one culture, or between several kinds of culture in one society, or through fighting a dominant culture.

Universität Dortmund

NOTES

[1]References are to the Student Edition of Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* (with commentary and notes). London: Methuen, 1991.

[2]See for example the talk between Marlene, Isabella and Nijo about drinks, p. 2.

[3]References are to the edition of The Royal Court Writers Series published by Methuen in association with The Royal Court Theatre London 1989. The issue is a

thoughtful evocation by Wertenbaker of the respective debates in eighteenth and nineteenth-century philosophy and literature. The question has been answered in different ways at different times without having been solved in a fully satisfactory way by now. Wertenbaker frames her treatment with a quotation preceding the play from R. Rosenthal's and L. Jacobsen's *Pygmalion in the Classroom.* It refers to the promotion of supposedly particularly intelligent (but randomly selected) children. Their intellectual performances turned out to be fine indeed due to the teachers' paying special attention to them and expecting more from them. This can be regarded as a case of how wishful thinking influences reality positively. The passage forms a link with an incident later in the play, however. When the Second Lieutenant Ralph Clark gets frustrated during the rehearsing process, he is persuaded to go on by governor Arthur Phillip who reminds him of the intelligence inherent in people born in poor circumstances and encouraged to rely on their abilities. The governor wants Clark to see his convict-actors in that light (24). Cf. also the reference to the play as "the diagram in the sand," which reminds the slave boy of his intelligence (25). Last but not least a connecting link can be seen between this reference to the positive impact on individual development through mentally challenging and promoting people and Churchill's Angie: from her nothing is actually expected and she is not encouraged intellectually. Therefore she has no chance of making it in her later life.

[4]See for example I.i.

[5]P. 3.

[6]Cf. p. 22 (the end of I.xi), 36, 37.

[7]Cf. p. 9, particularly the discussion about the staging of a play by Farquhar, some "London Ass" from Ireland.

[8]Cf. p. 11.

[9]Harry Brewer notices that the trees look more friendly from here and that the eucalyptus tree is unique (11).

[10]See for instance Sideway's declamation of lines from Shakespeare, p. 19.

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Convicts, Characters, and Conventions of Acting in Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*[1]

VERNA N. FOSTER

Few plays endorse the social and cultural value of theatre as explicitly as Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*. Like Thomas Keneally's novel *The Playmaker*, on which it is based, *Our Country's Good* recounts an historical event, the first production of a play in Australia: *The Recruiting Officer*, performed by convicts in Sydney Cove in 1789. The convicts' participation in the rehearsal and performance of George Farquhar's play reforms their manners, enables them to become a community that cares about and is prepared to make sacrifices for something larger than the individual, allows them to undermine at least in small ways oppressive authority, and gives to each of the actors a sense of self worth and hope for the future. The production of the play also transforms Ralph Clark, the officer who directs it.[2] From a timid, self-serving individual who originally undertakes the task to curry favor with the Governor, he becomes someone willing to make a personal sacrifice for the play and able to appreciate the convicts as individuals with their own points of view. *Our Country's Good* concludes with the beginning of the first scene of *The Recruiting Officer* performed to the music of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and the laughter and applause of the First Fleet audience, in which the actual theatre audience joins. In accordance with the author's wishes, Wertenbaker's play shows "how theater can be a humanizing force" for victims of brutalization.[3]

Theatre critics in both London and New York have generally praised *Our Country's Good* as a celebration of "the redemptive powers of theatre."[4] Several academic critics, however, have noted some problematic erasures and unresolved tensions underlying the optimistic progress and triumphant conclusion of *Our Country's Good*.[5] For one, Wertenbaker

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virtually abandons Keneally's presentation of colonization in favor of her own metatheatrical concerns. For another, the transformation, *via* theatre, of the convicts as individuals and as a community that *Our Country's Good* celebrates can also be taken, as Ann Wilson has argued, as a form of cultural colonialism, whereby the convicts are co-opted into performing a play from the literary tradition of their rulers and oppressors to honor the King's birthday.[6]

Wertenbaker does reduce Keneally's treatment of colonization to four brief choric appearances by a lone bemused and ultimately diseased Aborigine. The metatheatrical focus of her play, however, allows her to foreground other forms of power relations. The critical debate over whether the convicts' experience of theatre produces conformity to or subversion of authority is enacted in *Our Country's Good* itself. Susan Carlson comments that the play's reception (in England, America, and Australia) "suggests that the negotiation over aesthetics and ideology remains a part of its shifting texture" and that the play makes "viable not one voice but many."[7] The multiple voices may, as Jim Davis has suggested, reflect the "workshopping process" among actors and dramatist (often used by director Max Stafford-Clark at the Royal Court Theatre) by which the play was constructed.[8] The characters' names, though they are mostly historical and derived from Keneally, that Wertenbaker attaches to these multiple voices help to clarify the views on theatre and its language that are placed in contention in *Our Country's Good*, as we shall see. By giving the convicts personalities and opinions appropriate to their names, Wertenbaker adapts Farquhar's dramatic practice (in naming the gallant Plume, the rudely bold Brazen, and so on) for her own purposes. Whatever the origin of the disparate voices in *Our Country's Good*, several of them variously reflect Wertenbaker's own views on theatre expressed elsewhere or in her own theatrical practice. Discussions of theatre and theatrical role-playing among both officers and convicts and the whole process of casting, rehearsing, and finally performing Farquhar's play raise questions about power relations produced by cultural, social, and gender roles. Such questions serve as a critical counterpoint to the main theme of *Our Country's Good*—theatre's power to improve the lives of the oppressed—complicating but by no means negating Wertenbaker's endorsement of theatrical good.

Where Keneally dedicates his novel "To Arabanoo and his brethren, still dispossessed," Wertenbaker's epigraph to her play foregrounds her own concern with the educability of those who are oppressed and dispossessed in contemporary England and America as well as in colonial Australia. The epigraph quotes from an American sociological study of education published in 1968, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, a passage describing how children designated especially able performed better than their peers: "The change in the teachers' expectations regarding the intellectual performance of these allegedly 'special' children had led to an actual change in the intellectual performance of these randomly selected children."[9] *Pygmalion in the Classroom* concludes, appropriately enough, with a comment from Eliza Doolittle: "The difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated."[10] In Shaw's *Pygmalion* Eliza becomes a lady in the first instance because Colonel Pickering treats her like a lady. Others treat her like a lady because she learns to speak like one. Professor Higgins' transformation of Eliza into a woman who esteems herself and gains the respect of others by giving her access to a more refined and elegant discourse than that of the cockney flower girl has its counterpart in the transformation of the convict-actors in *Our Country's Good* through their mastery of the language of George Farquhar. In a scene titled "The Authorities Discuss the Merits of the Theatre," Governor Phillip advocates the performance of *The Recruiting Officer* as a means of civilizing the convicts: by having them speak a "refined, literate language" and express "sentiments of a delicacy they are not used to" (9), he intends to make the convicts tractable to authority without recourse to the whip.[11] "What is a statesman's responsibility?" he asks Ralph in a later scene. "To ensure the rule of law. But the citizens must be taught to obey the law of their own will. I want to rule over responsible human beings, not tyrannize over a group of animals" (25).

Phillip's opinions accurately reflect the conservative views of the authorities in early Australia. Theatre was encouraged because it was seen as an instrument of reform, social cohesion, and "ritual reaffirmation of British ideals and customs."[12] To some extent Phillip voices as well some of Wertenbaker's own views on theatre, language, education, and the connections among them. When Captain Tench objects that it would be

better for the convicts to learn to farm and build than to watch a play, Phillip emphasises the civic value of theatre: "The Greeks believed that it was a citizen's duty to watch a play" (10). Commenting on the importance of theatre to ancient Greek democracy, Wertenbaker has similarly observed that "theatre is for people who take responsibility." Again like Phillip, she has stressed the importance of "language" in the theatre, "because it is best heard in the theatre and language is a potent manifestation of hope."[13] And Phillip's citation of Plato's *Meno*, in which Socrates demonstrates that a slave boy can learn mathematics if he is treated "as a rational human being" (24), makes the same point about self-fulfilling prophecies in the expectations we have of people that Wertenbaker highlights by her choice of epigraph. But though Wertenbaker presents Phillip as benevolent, unorthodox, and idealistic and allows him to express views that she shares, the conservative and hegemonic implications for the convicts of his theatrical project are obvious and underscored as well by his similar attitude towards the Aborigines: "They can be educated" (8). By contrast, officers who are less generous and more brutal than Phillip regard the convicts as inherently criminal and ineducable. They see the performance of *The Recruiting Officer* as potentially dangerous—allowing convicts to laugh at (stage) officers, for example, and leading to "threatening theory" (11), as Major Ross, the play's chief opponent, puts it. Curiously, the most unsympathetic character in *Our Country's Good*—along with two of the convicts (Dabby and Wisehammer)—most clearly sees the subversive possibilities of theatre. In the event, the convicts' participation in *The Recruiting Officer* proves both Phillip and Ross to be right. Through playing Farquhar's characters the convicts do become more conformable to the standards of civil society and more obedient to that society's rules, but the language of the play also gives them a kind of equality with their jailors and a position from which to criticize the abuse to which they are subjected.

Governor Arthur Phillip, whose name, while historical, evokes perhaps all that is best in conservative English tradition (King Arthur, Sir Philip Sidney) represents benevolent rule, though hardly democracy.[14] His distinction between government by force and government by the willing participation of the governed conforms to Antonio Gramsci's classic

definition of cultural hegemony. Cultural hegemony, explains Bruce A. McConachie in an essay that applies Gramsci's concept to theatre history, "works primarily through legitimation, the half-conscious acceptance of the norms of behavior and the categories of knowledge generated by social institutions, public activities, and popular rituals viewed as 'natural' by the people whose actions they shape." In particular, he notes, language itself, according to Gramsci, "massively shapes a social group's ideology and culture" but at the same time "creates opportunities for political activists (theatre practioners among them) to motivate people to shape a progressive future."[15] Thus in giving the convicts in his charge access to a more elegant language than any they have known, Phillip provokes in them the desire to contain their own unruly behavior but also creates the possibility for new forms of opposition to the ruling order as the convicts learn to adopt and even adapt Farquhar's language for their own purposes.

Two incidents, in particular, illustrate the twin impulses of subversion and conformity generated by the convicts' participation in *The Recruiting Officer*. In act two, scene five, Major Ross, refusing to give the convicts privacy for their rehearsal, orders three of them to make shameful spectacles of themselves. He orders Mary Brenham, for example, to display a tattoo high on her thigh. To put an end to this humiliation, the convicts start acting Farquhar's play, thereby transforming Ross's indecent and oppressive gaze into a spectatorial gaze determined by the actors. Sideway, playing Worthy, chooses to begin with lines that implicitly challenge Ross's behavior: "What pleasures I shall meet abroad are indeed uncertain; but this I am sure of, I shall meet with less cruelty among the most barbarous nations than I have found at home" (27). The actors' triumphant appropriation of Farquhar is brief, however, as Ross orders another convict to be whipped for an earlier crime, and the rehearsal falls to pieces at the sound of his offstage cries.

A more complex effect of the convicts' theatrical activity occurs towards the end of the play, when Liz Morden, the most intransigent of the female convicts, finally admits that she was not involved in a theft of food from the stores. Though initially, in accord with the convict code of honor, she prefers to be hanged rather than beg for her life, Liz obeys the Governor's

demand that she tell the truth so that she may continue in the role of Melinda for the good of the play. Thus Liz chooses to collaborate with her jailors, exchanging the convict code for the rule of society, as Governor Phillip had hoped and predicted. But though Liz does indeed conform, her act of obedience helps to undermine the oppressive social order with which she is cooperating: her word is taken before that of a drunken soldier. Major Ross blames the play for this overturning of authority: "It's that play, it makes fun of officers, it shows an officer lying and cheating" (35). And he warns Phillip that he "will have a revolt" on his hands (35). The Governor remains unperturbed. For the social consequences of the convicts' participation in *The Recruiting Officer*, while mildly subversive, would seem on the whole to support his own goal of benevolent rule.

More far-reaching than the socio-political developments made possible by theatre, though still ambiguous, are the psychological transformations effected in the convict-actors, particularly through their immersion in the language of Farquhar's play. Most obviously, their individual transformations make them happier, better able to cope with the circumstances of their lives, and more hopeful about the future: "Tomorrow" (36), Arscott testifies, "when I speak Kite's lines I don't hate anymore. I'm Kite, I'm in Shrewsbury" (31); and Ketch Freeman, the convict-turned-hangman, who wants a part in the play so that he might be loved, is finally accepted by the other convicts. The most dramatic transformations occur in the women. According to Ralph (who is admittedly becoming romantically interested in her), Mary Brenham in speaking "those well-balanced lines of Mr. Farquhar" has seemed even early in the rehearsal process "to acquire a dignity" that may strengthen her moral character (10); shy Mary gradually adopts the confidence and courage of Silvia Balance. Violent, uncouth Liz Morden, too, gains respect and self-respect by learning to speak in the accents of Farquhar. Her promise to Governor Phillip that she will do her best as Melinda, made in "well-balanced lines" that might have come from *The Recruiting Officer* itself, is one of the emotional highpoints of Wertenbaker's play: "Your Excellency, I will endeavour to speak Mr. Farquhar's lines with the elegance and clarity their own worth commands" (35). Liz has found the ability to use the vocabulary and syntax of Farquhar in accepting her role in his play. Liz's education through

learning to speak a new language is similar to the experience of her almost-namesake, Eliza Doolittle. In fact, Wertenbaker may well be invoking *Pygmalion* deliberately as she does implicitly in her epigraph, for while most of the characters' names and the parts they play are taken directly from Keneally's novel, Wertenbaker chooses an Elizabeth to play Melinda rather than Keneally's Nancy Turner.

It is not only the convicts who are transformed by their involvement with *The Recruiting Officer*. Ralph's concern for the play grants him an eloquence he did not previously possess in speaking up on behalf of its performance, as Major Ross sarcastically notes: "Where did the wee Lieutenant learn to speak?" (10). Ralph's sympathies broaden, too. If the convicts, slowly, internalize the civility of Farquhar by using his language, Ralph's work with the convict-actors enables him finally to understand and respect a code of behavior different from his own: it is Ralph who explains to Governor Phillip that Liz refuses to beg for her life because of "the convict code of honor" (34).

Our Country's Good certainly allows the audience to rejoice in these changes. But Ralph's appreciation of the convicts' value and values remains limited to the hegemonic benevolence displayed by Governor Phillip from the beginning. And, more importantly, the play dramatizes some potentially adverse political consequences of the convicts' personal engagement with the characters and language of *The Recruiting Officer*. While their theatrical experience energizes some of the convicts, others seem to be lulled into a false sense of well-being. When Arscott *becomes* Kite in Shrewsbury, he forgets his hatred and thus his justifiable anger against his oppressors. In fact, he becomes an oppressor, one who scavenges for a living by tricking the leavings of society into joining the army, in Farquhar's play. For Ketch achieving community as an actor substitutes for having the courage to throw in his lot with the community of convicts. His name, Ketch (from Jack Ketch, the hangman) Freeman, points to the contradiction between what he does and what he wants to be in playing Justice Balance.[16] Most disturbingly, Mary, recreated as Silvia-Mary, in the name of romantic love enters into a demeaning sexual relationship with her director and jailor, Lieutenant Ralph Clark, who plays Silvia's lover, Captain Plume, in *The Recruiting Officer*.

Much depends on how the convicts take on their respective roles, on what it means to each of them to play a part. For Mary, as for Arscott, acting means that she must "*be*" (13) her character. Liz, by contrast, says that she will try to "*speak*" Farquhar's lines with "elegance and clarity" (35); and Dabby Bryant, the most skeptical of the convicts, though one who is very keen to act in the play, stands sufficiently outside her own character, Rose, as to criticize her: "No way, I'm *being* Rose, she's an idiot" (13). (All emphases mine.) Simply put, a representational or Stanislavskian approach to acting, in which the actor becomes his or her character, tends to silence the convict's own critical voice, while presentational or Brechtian acting, in which the actor distances himself or herself from the character portrayed, encourages the act of social criticism.

Wertenbaker spells out these different theories of acting in a discussion between Mary and Dabby that has no counterpart in Keneally's novel. Mary, whose name evokes purity (though she is not a virgin) and simplicity, is an idealist like Governor Phillip and a Stanislavskian. She worries that she is not sufficiently like Silvia to play her adequately: "She's brave and strong. She couldn't have done what I've done" (13)—that is, Silvia could not have whored for food. Because she identifies with her character, Mary accepts Silvia's standards as correct, or "natural," despite her different circumstances. Dabby, whose name connotes both an expert in roguery and a bawd (a part she played for Mary on board ship), gives the appropriate Brechtian response: "She didn't spend eight months and one week on a convict ship" (13).[17] Dabby then tells Mary that she can "*pretend*" to be Silvia (13). (Emphasis mine.) She implies an acting style that, by ostending the difference between Mary as actor and Silvia as character, would inevitably expose the contradictions in a code of behavior that takes no account of the artificial inequity produced by class distinctions or material circumstances. Later, over Mary's protests, Dabby similarly calls into question socially assigned gender roles by saying that she wants to play Kite and arguing that it is no more of a stretch for her to play a man than it is for Wisehammer, urban and Jewish, to play a country lad (32).

Dabby's presentational approach to acting, particularly her advocacy of cross-casting, receives endorsement from the real-life theatrical event

in which Dabby is a character. In the Royal Court Theatre's original production of *Our Country's Good*, directed by Max Stafford-Clark, and, so far as I know, in all subsequent productions, the same actors are required to play both convicts and officers, with several of the officers' parts being played by female actors and the costume-changes taking place on stage. This Brechtian technique underscores the contingency of social and gender roles and, according to Frank Rich of *The New York Times*, helps to liberate the audience from "divisions of sex and class."[18]

The *Verfremdungseffekte* created by Wertenbaker and Stafford-Clark (for example, the use of placards or oral announcements to indicate scene titles) frame and mirror similar critical distancing effects that occur, sometimes by accident, in the scenes from *The Recruiting Officer* that we see rehearsed in *Our Country's Good*. The inexperience of the convict-actors and the inadequacy of their costumes and props—filthy rags instead of fine clothes, a piece of wood for a fan—repeatedly result in a provocative split between actor and character. In fact, the more rudimentary the staging of *Our Country's Good* and the dirtier the actors as both convicts and officers, the more radical Wertenbaker's play seems to be in displaying both social injustice and the transforming power of theatre.[19] The huge disparity between Liz and Melinda is a case in point. In act one, scene eleven, "The First Rehearsal," Ralph, attempting to get some realistic, Stanislavskian acting out of Liz, urges her to "imagine" *being* a rich lady for whom it is "normal" to live in a big house. Liz responds by masticating, explaining, "If I was rich I'd eat myself sick" (21). In other words, Liz, whether naively or knowingly, transforms her portrayal of Melinda into a Brechtian *gest* that denaturalizes the social and, as Wisehammer insists, *abnormal* distinction between a rich lady and a starving felon. During a later rehearsal Dabby similarly fails, or rather refuses, to identify with her character, Rose. When Ralph instructs her to blush in an enticing way, she replies, "I don't blush" (32). By ostending the difference between herself (in this case, a real country girl) and her character, Dabby's response emphasises how Rose is an icon of female sexuality constructed by men (playwright George Farquhar, who named her, and director Ralph Clark, who asks Dabby to *be* "Rose" by blushing).

Dabby's insistence that "I want to play myself" (31) enables her to take a critical stance throughout the play. Mary, by contrast, of all the actors is the one who most becomes her part, to the extent that she takes on Silvia's identity offstage, falls in love with her own officer, and is loved by him, in turn, not for the Mary she was but for the Silvia-Mary she has become. Ralph woos Mary in Plume's lines to Silvia: "'Will you lodge at my quarters in the meantime? You shall have part of my bed.' Silvia. Mary" (33). Believing, as Mary does, that actors have to *be like* the characters they portray, Ralph worried initially that female convicts would not be able to play ladies: "But how could a whore play Lady Jane?" (4) in Nicholas Rowe's *The Tragedy of Lady Jane Grey*, which he has been reading aboard ship. Since obviously a whore could most appropriately play "Lady Jane" (slang for female genitalia), Wertenbaker's ironic pun serves to conflate ladies and whores and make fun of Ralph's prudishness.[20] That Mary *can* play a lady in Farquhar's play—that she becomes Silvia for him—enables Ralph to take her as his mistress.[21] Wertenbaker presents the wooing scene as a romantic encounter on the beach at night. She does not, however, allow the audience to see the lovers' relationship solely in romantic terms. In giving herself to Ralph, Mary is fulfilling not only her own romantic fantasies but also Lieutenant Faddy's coarse prediction that she would sell herself to Ralph (10). And her second-best status is underscored both by Wisehammer's warning that Ralph will have to put her "in a hut at the bottom of his garden" and call her "his servant in public, that is, his whore" (30) and again in the final scene when Ralph says that if they have a daughter, she will be called Betsey Alicia, the name of the wife back in England whom he idealizes (37). Mary apparently acquiesces. Her identification with Silvia transforms her into a woman whom Ralph can love but at the same time precludes her from using her performance in *The Recruiting Officer* to comprehend in full the injustice of her real-life situation.

Several of the other convicts, however, better able than Mary to stand outside their parts, do politicize their involvement with Farquhar's play. Sideway, as I have already noted, chooses lines from *The Recruiting Officer* to rebuke Ross's brutality. Sideway's unnatural acting style—comically imitated from "*grandiose eighteenth-century theatrical pose[s]*" (19) and thus

displaying, as his name suggests, an oblique approach to acting or perhaps "side" (pretentiousness)—creates the necessary distance for him to adopt Farquhar's lines for his own purposes when the need arises.[22] Liz goes further; she does not simply *adopt* Farquhar's lines. Instead she tells Governor Phillip that she will do her best as Melinda in deliberately chosen language *adapted from* Farquhar's, not because she has become (or become like) her character, but to establish both her ability as an actor and her dignity as a human being. Liz's appropriation of Farquhar's language, it can be argued, marks the fulfillment of Governor Phillip's pet project, the redemption of the most hardened of the convicts.[23] But Liz's eloquence is nothing new. In an earlier scene, in the monologue beginning "Luck? Don't know the word. Shifts its bob when I comes near" (23), Liz, imprisoned on suspicion of theft, displays her mastery of thieves' cant. Her subsequent deployment of the elegant language of Farquhar demonstrates, not only her conformity to civil society, but more importantly her ability to choose among discourses, to match her verbal style to her audience, and thus to manipulate language as an instrument of self-empowerment.[24]

Liz's mastery of both thieves' cant and the language of Farquhar suggests also her aesthetic pleasure in both kinds of eloquence. Another convict who delights in words for their own sake and is eager to teach others is the would-be writer Wisehammer. The historical Wisehammer's name may have suggested to Wertenbaker an appropriate characterization based on the early twentieth-century American slang term *wisenheimer*, that is a person who is "ostentatiously and smugly knowing," a "smart aleck," from the German *wîse* and the German or Yiddish surname form *enheimer*; the term is at once comically inflated and possibly "tinged with anti-Semitism."[25] (Wisehammer is Jewish, and, therefore, according to Liz, not really English). Like Liz, Wisehammer has educated himself from a canonical text (in his case, Johnson's dictionary) both to appreciate words ("I like words" [17]) and to use them with force and precision. Wisehammer's sensitivity to the nuances of words, though occasionally expressed with comic pomposity, enables him to reflect more analytically than the other convicts both on the causes of his transportation ("Betrayal. Barbarous falsehood. Intimidation: injustice" [23]) and on the way language

itself can be manipulated so that the same words have different meanings for rich and poor, oppressors and oppressed: "Country can mean opposite things. It renews you with trees and grass, you go rest in the country, or it crushes you with power: you die for your country, your country doesn't want you, you're thrown out of your country" (17). The pleasure Wisehammer and Liz take in learning a language that is more refined and sophisticated than any they have known encourages them to use that language self-consciously and creatively. Thus aesthetic appreciation of the newly discovered language, in the first instance, empowers the speakers and enables critical thinking (rather than simple acceptance of the social order from which they have claimed the more refined discourse). For Liz and Wisehammer, in particular, language is, in Wertenbaker's words, "a potent manifestation of hope."

Where Liz gains primarily self-empowerment and hope for her own future from her appropriation of Farquhar's language and performance in his play, Dabby and Wisehammer of all the convict-actors use their participation in *The Recruiting Officer* to offer the most incisive commentaries on their real-life situation. Dabby acts on her pragmatic belief that plays should show "life as we know it" (31), that is, that they should address contemporary concerns. During the rehearsal of a scene between Silvia and Plume, which focuses on the sexual and legal meanings of the word *will*, Dabby takes the opportunity to point out that a woman, meaning specifically Mary, should always look out for herself and have a contract in any relationship with a man. And Wisehammer uses the same rehearsal to assert his equality with Ralph as Mary's suitor; as Captain Brazen he kisses Silvia-Mary, declaring, against Ralph's objection, that Plume and Brazen "are equal in this scene" (30).

Wisehammer, the best-educated of the convicts, expresses the most explicitly Brechtian view of drama. He believes in "Theatre for Instruction": "A play should make you understand something new. If it tells you what you already know, you leave it as ignorant as when you went in" (31). And when Dabby says that she would like to see a play set in the present, Wisehammer advocates instead alienation and historicization: "It doesn't matter when a play is set. It's better if it's set in the past, it's clearer. It's easier to understand Plume and Brazen than some of the officers we know

here" (31).[26] Wertenbaker's own Brechtian use of history endorses Wisehammer's position. She sets both *The Grace of Mary Traverse* and *Our Country's Good* in the eighteenth century "to highlight contemporary issues."[27] Like Brecht himself in adapting *The Beggar's Opera* as *The Threepenny Opera* and Wertenbaker in using the myth of Philomel to comment on the silencing of women in *The Love of the Nightingale*, Wisehammer makes the most radical use of the text of *The Recruiting Officer* by altering it. Explaining that the convict audience will not understand the classical allusions in the original prologue, he writes a new one that satirizes the transportation of convicts—"We left our country for our country's good" (38). Ralph, though sympathetic to Wisehammer's endeavor, will not allow the new prologue to be spoken for fear of offending the likes of Major Ross. Thus the convicts' triumphant performance of *The Recruiting Officer* requires the suppression of its most radical element. Still, the prologue has been written, Dabby acknowledges its truth, and Sideway says that it can be used in the theatre that he plans to establish (and historically did establish) upon his release from the penal colony.[28]

While firmly endorsing the power of theatre to liberate the human spirit, *Our Country's Good* remains mindful of the political constraints that may be inherent in or imposed upon theatrical activity. In the play's final scene, in the midst of the convicts' excited preparations for going onstage, Dabby declares that after the performance of *The Recruiting Officer* she intends to escape. When the other convicts object (Mary going so far as to threaten to inform Lieutenant Clark), Dabby reminds them that theatre is ephemeral and not the same as life—"Because the play's only for one night. I want to grow old in Devon" (36). Her fellow actors, caught up in the excitement of the theatrical moment and their dreams for the future, pay Dabby scant attention. The actual theatre audience, however, has been given the opportunity to hear a dissenting voice. Wertenbaker thus complicates our sympathetic response to the other convicts' joyful optimism.

By exposing in various ways the contradictions in Governor Phillip's idealistic enterprize, *Our Country's Good* protects itself from becoming merely a sentimental endorsement of theatre as an instrument of culture and renders more complex Wertenbaker's exploration of theatre's

possibilities. The critical voices of actors such as Dabby and Wisehammer, Liz's appropriation of Farquhar's language, and the inadvertently Brechtian elements in Ralph Clark's production of *The Recruiting Officer* demonstrate some of the most far-reaching of those possibilities.

Loyola University
Chicago

NOTES

[1]An earlier version of this essay was given at Text and Presentation Comparative Drama Conference XX at the University of Florida in March 1996.

[2]Keneally, who combines fact and fiction in his novel, chooses the historical Ralph Clarke to direct the play; it is not known who actually directed *The Recruiting Officer*. See *The Playmaker* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987); Max Stafford-Clark, *Letters to George* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1989) 51-55.

[3]Quoted in Hilary de Vries, "Of Convicts, Brutality and the Power of Theater," *The New York Times* (30 Sept. 1990).

[4]Christopher Edwards, Review of *Our Country's Good* at the Royal Court, *The Spectator* (24 Sept. 1988); in *London Theatre Record* (9-22 Sept. 1988) 1267.

[5]Susan Carlson notes this distinction between the responses of theatre critics and academic critics ("Issues of Identity, Nationality, and Performance: the Reception of Two Plays by Timberlake Wertenbaker," *New Theatre Quarterly* 9 [August 1993]:267-89). Compare theatre reviews of the Royal Court production (collected in the *London Theatre Record*, 9-22 Sept. 1988) and of the Hartford Stage Company production (collected in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews* 52 [1991] 297-303) with the essays by Ann Wilson and Esther Beth Sullivan: Wilson, "*Our Country's Good*: Theatre, Colony and Nation in Wertenbaker's Adaptation of *The Playmaker*," *Modern Drama* 34 (March 1991): 23-34, and Sullivan, "Hailing Ideology, Acting in the Horizon, and Reading between Plays by Timberlake Wertenbaker," *Theatre Journal* 45 (1993): 139-54. Wilson's essay helpfully compares Wertenbaker's play with Keneally's novel *The Playmaker*.

[6]Wilson 31.

[7]Carlson 275.

[8]Jim Davis, "A Play for England: The Royal Court adapts *The Playmaker*," in *Novel Images: Literature in Performance*, ed. Peter Reynolds (London: Routledge, 1993) 177. See Stafford-Clark's account of workshopping *Our Country's Good* in *Letters to George*. Davis suggests also that Max Stafford-Clark's "unironic direction of the play as a celebration of the theatre's potential to empower" (188) may have erased a degree of irony in Wertenbaker's presentation of the effects of theatre. The celebratory tone

is especially apparent in the Royal Court's use of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, which, Davis points out, is not referred to in the first edition of *Our Country's Good*, but which does figure in the second.

[9]Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968) viii.

[10]Quoted in Rosenthal and Jacobson 183.

[11]Quotations are taken from Timberlake Wertenbaker, *Our Country's Good* (London: Methuen, 1989).

[12]Leonie Kramer, ed., *The Oxford History of Australian Literature* (Melbourne: OUP, 1981) 176-77.

[13]D. L. Kirkpatrick, ed., *Contemporary Dramatists*, 4th ed. (Chicago: St. James Press, 1988) 554.

[14]I am indebted to Professor Inge Leimberg for her suggestion that I examine the associations of the names of the characters in *Our Country's Good* and for some of the specific associations. Her suggestion that Governor Phillip might evoke Sir Philip Sidney is reinforced by his connection with Sydney Cove.

[15]Bruce A. McConachie, "Using the Concept of Cultural Hegemony to Write Theatre History," *Interpreting the Theatrical Past*, ed. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1989) 39-40, 41.

[16]For "Jack Ketch" see Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, ed. Paul Beale, 8th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1984) 608.

[17]On "dab" see Partridge 285.

[18]Frank Rich, "Broadway Season's Last Drama Offers a Defense of Theater," *The New York Times* (30 April 1991); in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews* 302-03. Rich points to the influence on Wertenbaker of Caryl Churchill's *Cloud 9*, also a cross-cast comedy about colonialism directed by Max Stafford-Clark at the Royal Court. (The decision to have female actors playing male officers in Wertenbaker's play may have been more pragmatic than theoretical. See Stafford-Clark 182.)

[19]This opinion is based on a comparison of the two fine productions I have seen in Chicago. That in the more makeshift theatre obviated sentimentality by the dinginess of the surroundings and the dirt of the costumes. Carlson similarly points out that *Our Country's Good* was more successful at the Royal Court than at the plusher Garrick Theatre in the West End, to which the production subsequently moved (279).

[20]On "Lady Jane" see Partridge 661.

[21]Wilson 27.

[22]On "side" see Partridge 1087.

[23]See Davis 183.

[24]Anne Varty in her recent study of women's language in contemporary plays similarly points out that those female characters "who can switch linguistic codes according to context enjoy greater power whatever their status. Related to power generated by the switching of codes, is the ability to step in and out of both behavioural and linguistic stereotype" ("From Queens to Convicts: Status, Sex and Language in Contemporary British Women's Drama," *Feminist Linguistics in Literary Criticism*, ed. Katie Wales, *Essays and Studies* 47 [1994] 88).

[25]See Robert L. Chapman, ed. *New Dictionary of American Slang* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986) 470.

[26]Among Brecht's writings most pertinent to the views on theatre variously expressed by Wisehammer and Dabby are "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction" and "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting" (Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. and trans. John Willett [London: Methuen, 1978] 69-77, 91-99). Interestingly, Brecht's *Trumpets and Drums* is an adaptation of *TheRecruiting Officer*.

[27]Davis 177. Davis notes that the contemporary British issues addressed in *Our Country's Good* relate to rehabilitation versus punishment of prisoners, the purpose of education, and "the value of art and theatre in a community beleaguered by funding cuts" (178).

[28]Kramer 176.

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