

# Connotations

*A Journal for Critical Debate*



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## Editor's Note

I am delighted to welcome Professor Christiane Bimberg of Dortmund University as a new member of the Editorial Board. Though new in this capacity she is a friend of years' standing and not only gave a talk but was a great help in our last symposium on *Poetry as Procreation*, which will be represented (in random order, with the talks published as they are now submitted) in the first parts of this and the next issue. Reading the articles, you may perhaps regard them, apart from their intrinsic value, as an inducement to participate in the next *Connotations* symposium to be held in Münster at a convenient date early in August, 2001.

Inge Leimberg

# *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate*

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Each issue consists of articles and a forum for discussion. The forum presents, for instance, research in progress, critical hypotheses, responses to articles published in *Connotations* and elsewhere, as well as to recent books. Contributions will be published within five months after submission so that discussion can begin without delay.

Articles and responses should be forwarded to the editors. As a rule, articles should not exceed 12,000 words and follow the MLA Handbook. Responses should be limited to 4,000 words. If possible, all contributions should be submitted by e-mail or on diskette (preferably in WordPerfect or Word for DOS/Windows), accompanied by a hard copy; they should be in English and must be proofread before submission. Manuscripts and disks will not be returned.

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## Riddles of Procreation

ELEANOR COOK

"Of" in my title is meant in a double sense: riddles whose subject is procreation and the sense of a riddle in procreation itself. By "riddle," I mean not so much a folk-riddle as a literary riddle, but a literary riddle defined more widely than the great folklorist, Archer Taylor, defined it. "Literary riddles," he wrote, are "riddles composed by conscious literary artists."<sup>1</sup> I want to extend the term to include riddles embedded in literary works, as well as new troping on riddles. That is, I want to consider riddle (and enigma) as a literary critic, not as a folklorist. This means considering when and how riddles are poetry and their puzzles are tropes. In the matter of procreation, a further question arises: whether riddles themselves may be troped as procreation in the way that poetry is sometimes troped as procreation. This exploration of the relations among riddle (and enigma), procreation and poetry proceeds as follows.

First, some riddles on the subject of procreation are examined, including an old one whose answer is "writing." Most examples, however (and they go back centuries), involve procreation in both question and answer, and a surprising number turn on implications of unnatural birth. Incest riddles, like the well-known one in Shakespeare's *Pericles*, form a class by themselves. Questions of procreation lie behind the famous riddle of the Sphinx, memorably reread in a sonnet by Borges. The underlying question of how riddles are related to poetry is cogently addressed by the late Israeli poet, Dan Pagis, whose argument I would only modify by adding the term "enigma." Finally, it is worth noting how the riddle form itself tropes the birth process, and, for all that, something of the process of writing.

There are riddles whose question concerns procreation and whose answer is writing, and they go back over 2500 years. Sappho—or so Athenaeus records in his symposium, *Doctors at Dinner* (the *Δειπνοσοφισταί*

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For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debcook00803.htm>>.

[*Deipnosophistai*] or *The Learned Banquet*)—propounded the following riddle: “There is a feminine being which keeps its babes safe beneath its bosom; they, though voiceless, raise a cry sonorous over the waves of the sea and across all the dry land, reaching what mortals they desire, and they may hear even when they are not there; but their sense of hearing is dull.” One riddlee, a male, suggests that the answer is the state (as mother) and her politicians (as babes). Sappho tells him not to talk nonsense. “The feminine being,” she says, “is an epistle [the word ἐπιστολή is feminine in Greek], the babes within her are the letters it carries round; they, though voiceless, talk to whom they desire when far away; yet if another happen to be standing near when it is read, he will not hear.” If this is the earliest troping of poetry as procreation, then it first came from a female writer.<sup>2</sup> Goethe translated the version from the Greek Anthology in 1826:

Es gibt ein weiblich Wesen,  
Im Busen trägt es Kinder,  
Geboren stumm, doch schwatzhaft,  
Die über Erd’ und Meere  
Nach Lust sich unterhalten,  
Und aller Welt verständlich,  
Nur nicht dem nahen Hörer  
Im mindesten vernehmlich.<sup>3</sup>

Just here, parenthetically, we might ask the question whether the trope of poetry as procreation sounds the same from a male as from a female writer. Very occasionally, a female who has given birth finds herself bemused at figurative uses of a trope she has experienced literally.<sup>4</sup>

A similar riddle to Sappho’s is offered by John Smith in *The Mystery of Rhetoric Unveiled* (1657): “*Cadmus* his daughters fram’d *Nilotis* quill, Whilst *Sepia* doth from *Cnidian* knot distill.” This over-ingenious riddle, which is neater in Latin, translates as: “He writes love-letters in Greek.” (Cadmus is inventor of the alphabet, the pen comes from reeds of the Nile, and so on.)<sup>5</sup>

But this type of riddle—a riddle where the question involves procreation, and the answer is writing—is not at all widespread, whereas riddles whose question and answer both involve procreation are quite common.



The best-known example for over ten centuries must surely have been the riddle in the standard Latin primer by Donatus. *Enigma*, says Donatus in the section on tropes and schemes in his *Ars maior* or *secunda*, is one of the seven species of allegory.<sup>6</sup> He defines it as follows, and his example, which uses the trope of procreation, became standard:

Aenigma est obscura sententia per occultam similitudinem rerum, ut  
mater me genuit, eadem mox gignitur ex me.

He goes on to explain the little riddle:

cum significet aquam in glaciem concreescere et ex eadem rursus effluere.  
(*Enigma* is a statement that is obscure because of some hidden resemblance of things, for example, "My mother bore me, and soon was born of me," which means that water grows into ice, and then grows back out of it.)<sup>7</sup>

This illustrative example of the ice-water riddle was repeated and repeated in grammars, rhetorical handbooks, and elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> The Old English riddle poem whose answer is an iceberg includes a variation, spoken by the iceberg *in propria persona* from inside its own riddle:

The monster came sailing, wondrous along the wave; it called out in its comeliness to the land from the ship; loud was its din; its laughter was terrible, dreadful on earth; its edges were sharp. It was malignantly cruel, not easily brought to battle but fierce in the fighting; it stove in the ship's sides, relentless and ravaging. It bound it with a baleful charm; it spoke with cunning of its own nature: "My mother is of the dearest race of maidens, she is my daughter grown to greatness, as it is known to men, to people among the folk, that she shall stand with joy on the earth in all lands."<sup>9</sup>

George Puttenham also used it, some twelve hundred years after Donatus, in his 1589 *The Arte of English Poesie* (Book III, chap. xviii): "We dissemble againe under covert and darke speaches, when we speake by way of riddle (*Enigma*) of which the sence can hardly be picked out, but by the parties owne assoile, as he that said:

It is my mother well I wot,  
And yet the daughter that I begot.

Meaning by it the ise which is made of frozen water, the same being molten by the sunne or fire, makes water againe."<sup>10</sup> A riddle of procreation was thus part of the common learning among those who read Latin.

Readers of Puttenham, incidentally, would also associate tropes of procreation with "covert and dark intendments" or "covert and darke speaches," things that take place, so to speak, under the covers.<sup>11</sup> (The joke is well known from the sparring of Beatrice and Benedick in *Much Ado about Nothing*.) All the more so when Puttenham goes on to offer a riddle with a double sense, the more obvious answer being indecent.<sup>12</sup> "Some other naughtie body," says Puttenham with a straight face, "would peradventure have construed it not halfe so mannerly. The riddle is pretie but that it holdes too much of the Cachemphaton or foule speach and may be drawn to a reprobate sence." Henry Peacham, in his *Garden of Eloquence*, is more straightforward: "The Caution. In this figure regard ought to be had, that the similitudes be not unfit, strange, or unchast. If they be . . . unchast or uncleane, they make it odious, by leading of the minde to undecent things, of which sort there be many of our English riddles."<sup>13</sup> Rude riddles mostly have to do with sexual activity rather than procreation, though one example has as its two answers: a loaf of bread and a pregnant woman.<sup>14</sup> Folklorists are familiar with this favorite type,<sup>15</sup> whose focus and function are different from the transformations of the ice-water riddle. Double-answered rude riddles aim to make the riddlee blush.

Other riddles than the well-known ice-water riddle use tropes of procreation. Peacham offers this one: "I consume my mother that bare me I eat up my nurse that fed me, then I die leaving them all blind that saw me. Meant of the flame of a candle, which when it hath consumed both waxe and waeke [wick], goeth out, leaving them in the darke which saw by it" (*ibid.*). As with the ice-water riddle, a normal procreative process is made to sound unnatural, until a simple answer solves everything. These are all metamorphoses of common elements, water and fire, commonly observed. Yet, like human procreation, whose workings are also well known, some sense of enigma lingers about the water and fire riddles. It is curious, even mysterious, to watch these transformations of matter. One of the oldest Western riddles is of this type: "Who becomes pregnant without conceiving? Who becomes fat without eating?" Answer: clouds.

This is a semitic riddle recorded on a Babylonian tablet.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Athenaeus tropes on day and night as giving birth, one to another (*The Learned Banquet* x.451-52)—not a transformation of matter but mysterious enough for all its familiarity. Similarly the well-known riddle, “Un père a douze fils, chacun d’eux en a trente, moitié blancs, moitié noirs,” which has as an answer: the year, the months, the days, the nights.”<sup>17</sup>

Riddles have been connected with the production of harvest, hence with vegetable procreation, from the time of the Pentateuch. Peacham classifies under Enigma the Egyptian dream-riddles in Genesis, which makes Joseph one of the earliest riddle-masters, earlier even than the pre-eminent riddle-master of the Hebrew Scriptures, Solomon. “This figure although it be full of obscuritie, and darknesse yet it is found in the sacred Scriptures both in speech and in visions, the dreames of Pharaos chiefe Butler, and chiefe Baker, and also Pharaos owne dreames were Aenigmatical, whose significations Joseph expounded” (*The Garden of Eloquence*, s.v. Aenigma). Anthropologists record that riddles are sometimes asked at the time of harvest, to help ensure a bountiful crop.<sup>18</sup> Dan Pagis also records a riddle answered by Yehuda Halevi: “What dies, cast upon the earth, is buried naked among men, / Yet lives again from in its grave, bears children, all emerging clad?” The answer is a seed, a grain of wheat: “the seed revives, sprouts, even bears many like itself and only afterward is buried, or sown. Moreover, it is buried naked, unlike human burial practice, yet its offspring are born clothed (in chaff, within the new wheat)” (ibid.). Variations of the trope are common among the poets, and well known to us, for example, from Whitman, who also associates the trope with writing in the beautiful sixth section of “Song of Myself”:

A child said *What is the grass?* . . .  
 . . . I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation.  
 Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic. . . .  
 And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves. . . .  
 O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,  
 And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing.

Whitman’s troping is beneficent, but, as far as I can make out, most riddles about procreation turn on questions of unnatural procreation, whether

merely puzzling or ludicrously impossible or mildly spooky or monstrous and repugnant. The ice-water riddle and similar types set up a spectral possibility of procreation gone awry, and then dispel the mini-nightmare. Some biblical riddles are of this type, where the normal human procreative process is made to sound unnatural. "Who was born before his father and died before his mother?" Answer: Abel.<sup>19</sup> Similarly with the Alsatian riddle, "Wer gestorben und nit geboren sey?" Answer: Adam and Eve.

Sometimes the nightmare is not dispelled, as in the riddles whose answer is incest. One of the best known is the riddle from the romance of Apollonius of Tyre that Shakespeare uses in *Pericles*:

I am no viper, yet I feed  
On mother's flesh which did me breed.  
I sought a husband, in which labour  
I found that kindness in a father.  
He's father, son, and husband mild;  
I mother, wife—and yet his child.  
How may they be, and yet in two,  
As you will live, resolve it you. (*Pericles* I.i.64-71)

In Shakespeare's play, this is what folklorists call a neck-riddle, that is, a riddle in which the stake is your own life. Pericles answers it obliquely, thus saving his life and endangering it all at once. The riddle frame for this play (already framed by Gower) invites us to attend particularly to questions of sexual knowledge and procreation in the main plot. An illicit and murderous father-daughter relation frames a miraculously redemptive father-daughter plot. A sense of impossible riddle informs the moving recognition scene between Marina and Pericles, the scene that so affected T. S. Eliot. The whole matter of lawful and unlawful procreation, even more of natural and unnatural procreation, is implicit throughout Shakespeare's play.

The riddle form itself has been associated with incest. As the folklorist, Roger D. Abrahams, notes, "Many commentators have referred to the relationship of the context of riddles with the 'incest-motive.' This seems especially appropriate in an understanding of the boundary-breaking activity of riddling, for nothing could confuse cultural categories more than the licensing of incest . . ." He quotes Claude Lévi-Strauss: "like

the solved riddle, incest brings together terms meant to remain separate: the son is joined with the mother, the brother with the sister, in the same way as the answer succeeds, against all expectations, in rejoining the question.” But as Abrahams says, Lévi-Strauss is arguing “by analogy, not homology.”<sup>20</sup> Abrahams, incidentally, suggests a procreative theme for neck-riddles, which, he argues, may have a common ancestor: “Because . . . [several neck-riddle types] all involve animal sacrifice and an untimely ripping a living creature from the womb of the dead in a caesarian operation, it is tempting to relate the three to a common ancestor . . . . Perhaps ultimately all of the international neck-riddles are related through commonality of theme: self-sacrifice by a female loved one as a means of defeating the forces of death” (10).

If the ice-water riddle was for centuries the best-known teaching example of the trope of enigma, the most famous enigma in Western literature must be the Sphinx’s riddle as put to Oedipus. “What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening?” This is a riddle turning more on the philosophical problem of identity than on procreation. Yet questions of procreation lurk behind it, and not only in the story that will follow the first success of Oedipus as riddle-master.

For there is another possible answer to the sphinx’s riddle and that is: you yourself, Madam Sphinx. Certainly a hybrid of woman, lion and bird raises questions of legs. Natural creatures walk on four legs (a lion) or two legs (a bird or a woman). But what creature goes naturally on three legs? A three-legged creature, born as such, is a freak of nature or a monster, of the order of the sphinx, four-legged though she be. Like Antiochus in Shakespeare’s play, the sphinx poses a neck-riddle. Like Antiochus, she directs attention away from herself as a possible answer to the riddle. The standard answer to the sphinx’s riddle, “mankind,” works more neatly as answer. But the conjunction of four-footed and two-footed creatures needed to produce a sphinx gives pause. All the more so when the answer, “mankind,” is centred on the cycle of generation. It gives even more pause to compare the two answers, to inquire how much monster is included in humankind. Some such reflection lies behind Borges’ extraordinary sonnet, “Edipo y el Enigma”:

Cuadrúpedo en la aurora, alto en el día  
 Y con tres pies errando por el vano  
 Ámbito de la tarde, así veía  
 La eterna esfinge a su inconstante hermano,  
 El hombre, y con la tarde un hombre vino  
 Qué descifró aterrado en el espejo  
 De la monstruosa imagen, el reflejo  
 De su declinación y su destino.  
 Somos Edipo y de un eterno modo  
 La larga y triple bestia somos, todo  
 Lo que seremos y lo que hemos sido.  
 Nos aniquilaría ver la ingente  
 Forma de nuestro ser; piadosamente  
 Dios nos depara sucesión y olvido.<sup>21</sup>

"Sucesión y olvido": the contrast is sharp between emptiness, the void of *olvido*, and its contrary, issue or offspring. In Borges' uncanny retelling, the sphinx's enigma is not only of identity but also of procreation. Procreation has produced the enigma of ourselves and our mirror images. Procreation also answers the enigma both through birth (the birth of our children) and through death (our own). Yet the answer does not end the enigma: it starts the story all over again.

The association of riddle forms and procreation and also writing—God's writing this time—is caught by Anthony Hecht in his remarkable poem, "Riddles," which ends with an *avanti* against any riddle like the enigmatic writing on the wall in the Book of Daniel:

. . . "What do they portend?"  
 Other, please God, than those fiery words for coins  
 That signified to Balshazzar the end  
 Of all his hopes and the issue of his loins.<sup>22</sup>

As Borges reminds us, answers to the great enigmas may themselves be enigmatic. Sphinxes were commonly guardians of the graves of the dead, and their function in part apotropaic. Anthropologists record tribes where riddles are never asked except when there is a corpse in the village (among the Bolang Mongondo, Celebes), and others (in the Aru archipelago) where watchers by an uncoffined corpse expound riddles to each other (Kelso,

770). A remnant of this custom apparently survived in Brittany in the early part of this century. There, Kelso also records, "old men are accustomed to seat themselves on grave-stones and ask each other riddles after the friends of the deceased and the mourners have gone home" (ibid.). The great enigmas also often appear to have an apotropaic function, warding off death or monstrosity, including their threat to procreation.

On the matter of enigma and riddle, I want to note especially the argument made by the Israeli poet, Dan Pagis. Pagis says that what remains when the riddle has been answered is poetry. "Yet, while a riddle that has been solved ceases to be a riddle for the solver, it does continue to exist for him as another kind of poem. In fact, many riddles, especially those founded on paradoxical metaphors, become impressive poems when solved for the very reason that their metaphorical texture is now revealed."<sup>23</sup> He speaks of such processes as generic transformations. Of course, as he points out, many trivial riddles show no such transformation. They are nothing once they are solved, neither a riddle nor poetry. Hence the old Swedish riddle:

When one doesn't know what it is, then it is something;  
but when one knows what it is, then it is nothing.<sup>24</sup>

What is the answer? "A riddle." Hence also Dickinson's lines (#1222):

The Riddle we can guess  
We speedily despise—  
Not anything is stale so long  
As Yesterday's surprise—

Yet Pagis is right. The great uncanny riddles such as the sphinx's riddle do go on generating meaning, just like the tropes of true poetry. I would revise his formulation a little, though. I would say that what remains, when the riddle has been answered, is enigma. All the more so when we recall that enigma itself is a trope, or at least was known as such for centuries to every schoolboy learning his Latin out of Donatus. The terms "riddle" and "enigma" are commonly synonymous, but not always, and, I suggest, not in this context.

In Eliot's "Marina," a sense of enigma rather than riddle prevails, though the epigraph and opening lines cannot but recall riddles, including riddles of incest and death. How can they not, given Shakespeare's play?

What seas what shores what grey rocks and what islands  
 What water lapping the bow  
 And scent of pine and woodthrush singing through the fog  
 What images return  
 O my daughter.

Only with the fourth line do the questions so modulate that they cease calling for any answer beyond their own wonder and recognition. The riddle and the enigma of procreation meet here, and so do the riddle and enigma of writing.

I made this, I have forgotten  
 And remember. . . .  
 Made this unknowing, half conscious, unknown, my own. . . .

Here the immediate referent is a boat; a parallel if distant referent is a daughter; and another parallel is something made, "my speech" (as the unnamed speaker says), a poem (as we might say). The hovering relations between riddle, procreation and writing—and for all that, the dream-landscape, which is Eliot's New England and not Shakespeare's Mediterranean—these relations in the end move beyond even enigma and dissolve into mystery. This last is Eliot's move rather than Shakespeare's. Yet the potential is there in *Pericles*. It is as if Shakespeare had anticipated Dan Pagis and worked out the difference between riddle and enigma in his strange play. Or as if he were toying with an Oedipus plot, with a difference.

So far, I have chiefly been treating riddles on the theme of procreation, but there is another sense in which riddles may be procreative. In Northrop Frye's essay, "Charms and Riddles," as in Andrew Welsh's book, *The Roots of Lyric*, lyric poetry is said to be rooted in early, primitive forms of writing such as riddle or charm. In this sense, poetry itself may be troped as procreation, vegetable procreation. Both Frye and Welsh speak of roots, branches, seeds, etc.,<sup>25</sup> and such tropes are frequent in literary history.



Alastair Fowler, in his study of genres and modes, uses the trope of human procreation: "Poems are made in part from older poems: each is the child (to use Keats' metaphor) of an earlier representative of the genre and may yet be the mother of a subsequent representative."<sup>26</sup> He adds a useful caution. "We need to leave room for polygenesis . . . and for remote influences" (43). In all three critics, we are hearing of poetry itself as procreation. Here, the trope does not concern the travails of the individual writer, but rather the development of forms.

What kind of life do the forms themselves possess? We tend to use inorganic and passive tropes for them. My students automatically call any form "rigid," and I just as automatically forbid that adjective in class, because it smells of *rigor mortis*, whereas forms, like words, have a peculiar life of their own. In *Four Quartets*, Eliot speaks of words as living beings, with a life within the community of words ("where every word is at home, / Taking its place to support the others . . ." [*Little Gidding* V. 220]) So also we might speak of verbal forms as living, growing, dancing and also procreating. I want to argue that the riddle or enigma is one form with a peculiar affinity for the subject of procreation. Perhaps better than any other trope or genre, it can embody in its own workings the process of procreation. Rather than *describing* poetry as procreation, it mimes poetry as procreation. Its very form is poetry as procreation.

In the way riddle or enigma behaves, in the tropes we use of them, there is a likeness to the birth process. A question is answered (what is the child like? or as in a riddle poem, "What am I? Name me"<sup>27</sup>). Something obscure and in darkness is made clear and brought into the light. Something locked is opened, something hidden is revealed, and so on. These tropes are repeated and repeated in descriptions of how riddles work. Further, the process involves a certain breaking of boundaries, as Lévi-Strauss and Abrahams remark of the riddle form. Scholars who wish to be dramatic will even speak of violence in certain literary forms. Violence is part of childbirth, of course, including violent contrast of feeling, as all mothers know: great pain usually followed by great joy. A riddle is itself like procreation, then, and its answer is like the fruit of procreation. When the mother is delivered of the child, a riddle is solved, but what remains is enigma (or poetry), the human life of a true enigma and the enigma of a human life.

Riddles playing on transformations of matter and energy, and on human and animal procreation, also remind us of the enigma of writing. We may know all the available circumstances—all the scientific or quantifiable answers to riddles of transformation and metamorphosis, of procreation, and of writing. Yet after the answers, there still remains enigma. Freud in the end acknowledged that no analysis of the art of creating imaginative form “will ever make writers of us” (“Der Dichter und das Phantasieren,” 1908, my italics).<sup>28</sup> The power of writers to form fictions, “my *shaping* spirit of Imagination,” as Coleridge called it, remained a true enigma for Freud. When we bear children, even when all the scientific data are available, the shaping power of procreation remains an enigma.<sup>29</sup> So also when we write.

Something of the form of the riddle, whether as simple scheme or as rich enigmatic trope, catches a part of our existence in literary terms. Its own intrinsic metamorphoses, its own lingering mysteries: these trope our most riddling aspects of being, and not least enigmas of creation and of procreation.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Archer Taylor, “The Riddle,” *California Folklore Quarterly* 2 (1943): 143.

<sup>2</sup>Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists*, trans. Charles Burton Gulick (London: Heinemann, 1927-1941, Loeb ed.) x. 450-51. Athenaeus says he is following Antiphanes. One of the numerous rumours about Sappho says she bore a daughter, while another says she was childless. See *Sappho: A New Translation*, trans. Mary Barnard (Berkeley: U of California P, 1958) 96, whence also the English title, *Doctors at Dinner*.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Flodoard Freih. von Biedermann, *Goethe als Rätseldichter* (Berlin: H. Berthold A.G. Abt. Privatdrucke, 1924) 40.

<sup>4</sup>The chief difference is that publishing a book means the end of labour, and giving birth means the beginning of labour. It was Yeats who memorably connected the labour of childbirth and child-care, the labour of artistic endeavour, and the labour of religious devotion. It was also Yeats who envisioned a state where labour might blossom or dance. See his “Among School Children.”

<sup>5</sup>"*Cadmus* being the first finder out of divers of the Greek Letters, they are by a Metonymie of the Efficient called his Daughters: And *Cadmus* his daughters here by a Catachrestical Metaphor signifie the Greek Letters." *Nilotis* quill: reeds from the Nile. *Sepia*: ink (from a fish whose blood is black as ink). *Cnidus*: a city where Venus was worshipped. John Smith, *The Mystery of Rhetoric Unveiled* (1657), *English Linguistics 1500-1800* (a collection of facsimile reprints), ed. R. C. Alston, no. 205 (Menston: The Scholar Press, 1969) 84-85.

<sup>6</sup>Aristotle called enigma one kind of metaphor (e.g. *Rhetoric* III.ii.12-13), and allegory, as Renaissance specialists know well, is defined as a running metaphor. The association of enigma with metaphor comes over into Latin with Cicero and Quintilian.

<sup>7</sup>Aelius Donatus is said to be the most famous grammarian of the fourth century A.D. and the teacher of Jerome (A.D. 348-420). His *Ars minor* and *Ars maior* or *secunda* may be found in *Grammatici latini ex recensione Henrici Keilii*, ed. Henricus Keil, 8 vols. (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1857-80), repr. 1961 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms) 4: 355-66 and 367-402. See 402, on enigma.

<sup>8</sup>For references to the ice-water riddle, see Frederick Tupper, *The Riddles of the Exeter Book* (Boston: Ginn, 1910) 147-48.

<sup>9</sup>Quoted in Northrop Frye, "Charms and Riddles," *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth, and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1976) 146-47.

<sup>10</sup>George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1936) 188.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. "... what else is your ... allegorie but a duplicitie of meaning or dissimulation under covert and darke intendments: one while speaking obscurely and in riddle called Aenigma" (chap. vii, "Of Figures and figurative speeches").

<sup>12</sup>"My mother had an old woman in her nurserie, who in the winter nights would put us forth many prety ridles, whereof this is one: 'I have a thing and rough it is / And in the midst a hole Iwis: / There came a yong man with his ginne, / And he put it a handfull in.' The good old Gentlewoman would tell us that were children how it was meant by a furd gloove."

<sup>13</sup>Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence*, 2nd ed. 1593 (Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1954), s.v. Aenigma (27-29).

<sup>14</sup>See Richard Wilbur, "The Persistence of Riddles," *Yale Review* 78 (1989): 337.

<sup>15</sup>See the series encountered by the folklorist, Roger D. Abrahams, on the island of Nevis, as recounted in his *Between the Living and the Dead*, FF Communications 225 (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1980) 18-19.

<sup>16</sup>Quoted in James A. Kelso, "Riddles," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings, vol. 10 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1918) 765-70.

<sup>17</sup>Quoted in *Devinettes et énigmes populaires de la France*, ed. Eugène Rolland (Paris, 1877) 1.

<sup>18</sup>See Kelso 770, and Dan Pagis, "Toward a Theory of the Literary Riddle," *Untying the Knot: On Riddles and Other Enigmatic Modes*, ed. Galit Hasan-Rokem and David Shulman (New York: Oxford UP, 1996) 98.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Roger D. Abrahams and Alan Deinde, "Riddles," *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1972) 134.

<sup>20</sup>Abrahams, *Between the Living and the Dead*, 20-22. He cites Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology II*, trans. Monique Layton (New York: Basic Books, 1976) 22-24.

<sup>21</sup>"Edipo y el Enigma," *Jorge Luis Borges: Selected Poems 1923-1967*, ed. Norman Thomas di Giovanni (New York: Delacorte, 1972) 190. Translated by John Hollander as "Oedipus and the Enigma" (*ibid.*, 191):

At dawn four-footed, at midday erect,  
And wandering on three legs in the deserted  
Spaces of afternoon, thus the eternal  
Sphinx had envisioned her changing brother  
Man, and with afternoon there came a person  
Deciphering, appalled at the monstrous other  
Presence in the mirror, the reflection  
Of his decay and of his destiny.  
We are Oedipus; in some eternal way  
We are the long and threefold beast as well—  
All that we will be, all that we have been.  
It would annihilate us all to see  
The huge shape of our being; mercifully  
God offers us issue and oblivion.

<sup>22</sup>Anthony Hecht, "Riddles," *The Transparent Man* (New York: Knopf, 1990) 4.

<sup>23</sup>Pagis 98.

<sup>24</sup>Quoted by Wilbur, "The Persistence of Riddles," 333. Also in Archer Taylor, *The Literary Riddle before 1600* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1948) 4.

<sup>25</sup>Frye, "Charms and Riddles," and Andrew Welsh, *Roots of Lyric: Primitive Poetry and Modern Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978). Frye expands his "botanical analogy" for generic processes into roots (genres of imagery), stems and branches (genres of narrative), the leaf-flower-fruit cycle (genres of structure), and finally seeds or kernels, of which two are riddles and charms (123).

<sup>26</sup>Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982) 42.

<sup>27</sup>For examples of riddle poems, see the iceberg poem quoted earlier, or some of Dickinson's poems such as "A narrow Fellow in the Grass" (a snake) or "A Route of Evanescence" (a humming-bird).

<sup>28</sup>Sigmund Freud, "The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming," *On Creativity and the Unconscious: Papers on the Psychology of Art, Literature, Love, Religion*, selected by Benjamin Nelson from Freud's *Collected Papers*, vol. 4 (New York: Harper & Row, 1958) 44. The master enigma for Freud appears to have been the primal scene, i.e., origins.

<sup>29</sup>Vladimir Nabokov, recalling the wonder of his newborn son, remarked on "an infant's first journey into the next dimension, the newly established nexus between eye and reachable object, which the career boys in biometrics or in the rat-maze racket think they can explain. . . . the riddle of the initial blossoming of man's mind." From his *Speak Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: Knopf, 1999) 233.

## "The Poets Deliver": Procreation, Communication, and Incarnation in Sidney and Wordsworth

ÅKE BERGVALL

In this talk<sup>1</sup> I shall be discussing some central passages in Sir Philip Sidney's *The Defence of Poesie* and William Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* in terms of three concepts: procreation, communication, and incarnation. The general drift of my argument will be that, despite obvious differences in historical and cultural contexts, the two poets share some fundamental convictions that can be summed up in terms of the three concepts.

According to the OED, the word *procreate* can mean to "beget, engender, generate (offspring)" and, less commonly, it can be a synonym of the word *create*, "To bring into existence, produce; to give rise to." The two meanings provide a useful semantic spectrum when we apply the term *procreation* to the poetics of Sidney and Wordsworth. The first meaning, "begetting," speaks of a natural process, the offspring being similar in nature to the begetter, while a thing created may be essentially different from the creator, not limited by or to the creator's nature.<sup>2</sup> Studying the different synonyms used in the *Defence* for the poet as "maker" we find that Sidney negotiates the two meanings of procreation: creation and begetting (I have boldfaced the key expressions):

The Greeks called him a 'poet,' which name hath, as the most excellent, gone through other languages. It cometh of this word [*poiein*], which is, **to make**: . . . There is no art **delivered** to mankind that hath not the works of nature for his principal object, . . . Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth **grow** in effect into another nature, in **making** things either better than nature **bringeth forth**, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like: so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never **set forth** the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets

have done, neither with so pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely. Her world is brazen, the poets only **deliver** a golden.

. . . Neither let this be jestingly **conceived**, because the works of the one be essential, the other in imitation or fiction; for any understanding knoweth the skill of the artificer standeth in that *idea* or fore-conceit of the work, and not in the work itself. And that the poet hath that *idea* is manifest, by **delivering them forth** in such excellency as he hath imagined them. Which **delivering forth** also is not wholly imaginative, as we are wont to say by them that build castles in the air; but so far substantially it worketh, not only to **make** a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency as nature might have done, but to **bestow** a Cyrus upon the world, to **make** many Cyruses if they will learn aright why and how that **maker made** him.

Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man's wit with the efficacy of nature; but rather give right honour to the heavenly **Maker** of that **maker**, who having **made** man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature: which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he **bringeth things forth** surpassing her doings—with no small argument to the credulous of that first accursed fall of Adam, sith our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the boldfaced expressions, such as "grow," "bringeth forth," "deliver" or "delivering forth," not to speak of "conceived" and "conceit," clearly allude to the metaphor of giving birth, the poet and in particular nature bringing forth what is an extension of the parent's own nature. The poet's "making," however, is also likened to creation: "rather give right honour to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature: which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth surpassing her doings." There is a built-in tension between the two meanings of procreation: on the one hand, the poet is "not enclosed within the narrow warrant of [nature's] gifts," yet at the same time he or she is not allowed to "build castles in the air." The reason for this negotiation is theological and ethical: as a maker in the image of the heavenly Maker, the poet's wit should be used to recreate the "golden" world, "delivering" in the sense of liberating, both human and physical nature to its pre-lapsarian state. The poet therefore never truly creates *ex nihilo*, but attempts to re-create what the

divine Maker had originally intended.<sup>4</sup> This, of course, is an utopian project, which can never be fully implemented in a post-lapsarian world; Sidney and, as will be shown, Wordsworth, were well aware of this: "our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it."

Communication, to move on to our second concept, is essential to this project; poetry "works" through a process of "delivering" (here meaning both "uttering" and "handing over") an idea/ideal to the recipient, who, in turn, needs communicative competence in order to "learn aright why and how that maker made him [i.e., Cyrus]." The rhetorical structure of all of Sidney's fiction, as well as the *Defence* itself, presupposes a communicative process and assumes the possibility of reaching out to another human being through the medium of language. If, as Sidney claims, "the work itself" is not privileged then it is not only because the originating "idea or fore-conceit" (Ciceronic or Platonic) is favored, but also because the emphasis is on the efficacy of the communicative process. For an idea to be efficacious, it must be embodied in a text in order to be communicated and thereby incarnated in the "virtuous actions" of the reader (*Defence* 83).

This becomes clearer as Sidney moves from a Platonic to a more Aristotelian understanding of poetry as an art of imitation, "that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth—to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture—with this end, to teach and delight" (*Defence* 79-80).<sup>5</sup> Despite the apparent new perspective not much has changed. "Delightful teaching" describes the communicative thrust of the poet's activity, and *mimesis* does not mean a mirror to nature but a recreation of divine nature, since true poets "borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be; but range, only reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be, and should be" (*Defence* 81). One of the new expressions for the poetic process—"figuring forth"—adds to our understanding of the earlier expressions "delivering" and "bringing forth." As Sidney later explains, the philosopher's learned definitions "lie dark before the imaginative and judging power, if they be not illuminated or figured forth by the speaking picture of poesy" (*Defence* 86). One meaning of the "begetting" of poetry is that the word becomes flesh, becomes embodied,

that is, the transformation of abstractions into figures such as Cyrus, in order to communicate persuasively with the reader. This, as Sidney goes on to argue at length, is the "work" of poetry, what speech act theorists would call the perlocutionary act—to inculcate virtue: "with a tale forsooth [the poet] cometh to you, with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner. And, pretending no more, doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue" (*Defence* 92).

To bring in speech act theory here is a way to emphasize what is central to Sidney's poetics. J. L. Austin, in *How to Do Things With Words*, distinguishes between three kinds of linguistic acts: (1) the locutionary act: uttering words; (2) the illocutionary act: what we do in saying something (e.g., greeting, promising, commanding, etc.); (3) the perlocutionary act: what we bring about by saying something (e.g., persuading, surprising).<sup>6</sup> For all their carefully crafted rhetorical structures, the *Arcadia* or *Astrophil and Stella* are only the locutionary means for illocutionary and perlocutionary ends. Nor, despite the autobiographical presence in his works and his own *post-mortem* legendary status, is the poet as such interesting. It is communicative action that interests Sidney. A dialogue with a very real recipient, Queen Elizabeth, is integral to *The Lady of May*, while the *Arcadia* is designed to engage and train the reader's interpretative competence. The model proposed by speech act theory is so fundamental that Sidney can feel free to play illocutionary and perlocutionary games, as he does in sonnet 1 of *Astrophil and Stella*:

Loving in truth, and faine in verse my love to show,  
 That the deare She might take some pleasure of my paine:  
 Pleasure might cause her reade, reading might make her know,  
 Knowledge might pitie winne, and pitie grace obtaine,  
 I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,  
 Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertaine:  
 Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow  
 Some fresh and fruitfull showers upon my sunne-burn'd braine.  
 But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay,  
 Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Studie's blowes,  
 And others' feete still seem'd but strangers in my way.  
 Thus great with child to speake, and helplesse in my throwes,  
 Biting my trewand pen, beating my selfe for spite,  
 'Foole,' said my Muse to me, 'looke in thy heart and write.'<sup>7</sup>



One can also note how closely connected in Sidney's mind the communicative process is to procreation, the poet being in the throws of labor to beget an offspring that is both his poem and, his communion wishfully consummated, a child of flesh and blood.

In his faith in communication Sidney is well within a Christian rhetorical tradition, a tradition that is at odds with much contemporary critical thought. If the death of the author, the indeterminacy of the text, and the existential loneliness of the subject are the results of the supposed death of God, then Sidney's poetics is anchored in a God that speaks, and thereby validates communication and community. The theologian Kevin Vanhoozer has recently proposed an Augustinian interpretative trinitarianism which, I believe, captures well the Christian assumptions behind Sidney's poetics:

Christian orthodoxy believes that God is essentially the one who communicates himself to others in trinitarian fashion. A trinitarian theology of the Word of God conceives God as the author, as message, and as power of reception: 'In the beginning was the communicative act.' The God of Jesus Christ is the self-interpreting God. The Incarnation, wherein God goes out of himself for the sake of communicating himself to another, grounds the possibility of human communication by demonstrating that it is indeed possible to enter into the life of another so as to achieve understanding.<sup>8</sup>

The basis for this model, Vanhoozer argues, is that "Jesus . . . is both signifier and signified; he does not only represent God but is himself God's presence."<sup>9</sup> Brian Stock, in *Augustine the Reader*, proposes a similar model: "The theological model for mediation between the temporal and nontemporal elements is Christ, whose incarnation is the basis for the concept of the sacred sign."<sup>10</sup>

Augustine himself expressed the same ideas in the following terms:

In what way did He come but this, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us [John 1]"? Just as when we speak, in order that what we have in our minds may enter through the ear into the mind of the hearer, the word which we have in our hearts becomes an outward sound and is called speech; and yet our thought does not lose itself in the sound, but remains complete in itself, and takes the form of speech without being modified in its own nature by the change: so the Divine Word, though suffering no change of nature, yet became flesh, that he might dwell among us.<sup>11</sup>

To repeat what I have stated before: if God the Father is the transcendental signified, the divine *res*, then Christ is the transcendental *signifier*, the *verbum* which translates God's unspeakable essence into human speech (and action). Through the Incarnation, God has privileged not only the human body, but also human language (through the *uttered* word of Christ, and the *written* word of Scripture). It is the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity, that communicates this Sign to humankind, both through the general illumination of the human mind and, as a special instance of this illumination, through the written Word.<sup>12</sup>

As we now turn to the critical manifestoes of a much later poet, William Wordsworth, we shall find basic similarities with Sidney's poetics in the three areas under investigation: procreation, communication and incarnation. This time I shall start with the incarnation and work my way back to procreation. My stress on congruence goes against the grain of much recent criticism; we have been told that between the two poets lies an epistemological and existential chasm, sometimes described as that between mirror and lamp,<sup>13</sup> sometimes between classicism and modernism. Harold Bloom, for example, claims that "Modern poetry, in English, is the invention of Blake and of Wordsworth. . . . Wordsworth's greatness is that his uncanny originality, still the most astonishing break with tradition in the language, has been so influential that we have lost sight of its audacity and its arbitrariness."<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, if we are to believe poststructuralists like Paul de Man, Wordsworth pointed the solipsistic way towards Derrida.<sup>15</sup> From these critics we can easily get the impression that Sidney and Wordsworth have virtually nothing in common, except being English poets. While not propagating the untenable position that the two held identical views, I do believe that their basic agreements overshadow differences in opinion or emphasis.

Before studying a longer passage from the 1800 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, we shall look at some lines from the Essay Supplementary to the Preface of 1815 in which Wordsworth, like Augustine in *De doctrina christiana* and Sidney in the *Defence*, compares the communication of mankind with that of the heavenly Maker:

The commerce between Man and his Maker cannot be carried out but by a process where much is represented in little, and the Infinite Being accommodates himself to a finite capacity. In all this may be perceived the affinity between religion and poetry; between religion—making up the deficiencies of reason by faith; and poetry—passionate for the instruction of reason; between religion—whose element is infinitude, and whose ultimate trust is the supreme of things, submitting herself to circumscription, and reconciled to substitutions; and poetry—ethereal and transcendent, yet incapable to sustain her existence without sensuous incarnation.<sup>16</sup>

That last line reminds us of Sidney's "figuring forth by the speaking picture of poesy," but more than that it reveals that the Romantic poet too subscribes to a Christian epistemology (he elsewhere echoes Augustine by describing language as "an incarnation of the thought").<sup>17</sup> The breaches between heaven and earth, God and man, spirit and body, thought and language, words and the things they designate, are bridged by acts of incarnation. Without incarnation there can be no communication.<sup>18</sup>

That poetry is "passionate for the instruction of reason" highlights another basic similarity between the poets: both passionately believe in the need for and possibility of human growth through poetry. This is because Wordsworth no less than Sidney, despite everything that has been written on Romantic poetic solipsism, is committed to communicative action. As he sums it up in the 1802 revision of the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*: "What is a Poet? . . . He is a man speaking to men."<sup>19</sup> Communication after all is a basic precondition for communion and community, central Romantic concepts. All of Wordsworth's poetry deal in one way or another with the communion between man and man, man and nature, and man and God. Not that communion and communication on these interrelated levels is uncomplicated or unproblematic. Like Sidney in his way, Wordsworth was painfully aware of "the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world,"<sup>20</sup> yet that is exactly why the poet has a job to do.

The communicative thrust comes out clearly in the long initial section of the Preface dealing with the "purpose" of poetry (corresponding to Sidney's section on the "work" of poetry). By "the act of writing in verse," Wordsworth begins his discussion, "an Author makes a formal engagement" with the reader that is "voluntarily contracted,"<sup>21</sup> that is, there is an agreement about the purpose of the communicative act:

For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; but though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached, were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so by the repetition and continuance of this act feelings connected with important subjects will be nourished, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much organic sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced that by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits we shall describe objects and utter sentiments of such a nature and in such a connection with each other, that the understanding of the being to whom we address ourselves, if he be in a healthful state of association, must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, his taste exalted, and his affections ameliorated.

I have said that each of these poems has a purpose. I have also informed my Reader what this purpose will be found principally to be: namely to illustrate the manner in which our feelings and ideas are associated in a state of excitement.

To describe the purpose in terms of speech act theory, we could say that the locutionary act (uttering words) of the *Lyrical Ballads* consists of the selection and arrangement of words into poetry, the illocutionary act (what the author does) consists of illustrating the manner in which feelings and ideas are associated in a state of excitement, while the perlocutionary aim (what the author wants to bring about) is to strengthen the understanding, taste and affections of the reader.

In his critical writings Wordsworth has as much to say about the reader as about the poet, and he is always assuming the interaction between the two. More than once he elaborates on the interpretative virtues needed for successful reading, often in terms of "taste":

If a man attaches much interest to the faculty of taste as it exists in himself . . . certain it is his moral notions and dispositions must either be purified and strengthened or corrupted and impaired. How can it be otherwise, when his ability to enter into the spirit of works in literature must depend on his feelings, his imagination and his understanding, that is upon his recipient, upon his creative or active and upon his judging powers, and upon the accuracy and compass of his knowledge, in fine upon all that makes up the moral and intellectual man.<sup>22</sup>

As with Sidney—who saw poetry as part of a humanistic project leading to the "purifying of wit, enriching of memory, enabling of judgement, and enlarging of conceit" (as he puts it in the *Defence* 82)<sup>23</sup>—Wordsworth believes the poet should do more than simply *reflect* human nature as he finds it: "But a Poet ought . . . to a certain degree, to rectify men's feelings, to give them new compositions of feelings, to render their feelings more sane, pure, and permanent, in short, more consonant to nature, that is, to eternal nature, and the great moving spirit of things."<sup>24</sup>

That last expression—"more consonant to nature, that is, to eternal nature"<sup>25</sup>—pinpoints a final similarity between our two poets, which also brings us back to the starting point: procreation as begetting or creation.<sup>26</sup> Like Sidney, Wordsworth is not content to simply copy nature, yet that does not give him any more than his Elizabethan counterpart the right to build castles in the air. His celebrated praise of the imagination, which "has no reference to images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent external objects; but is a word of higher import, denoting operations of the mind upon those objects, and processes of creation or of composition, governed by certain fixed laws,"<sup>27</sup> is not different in kind from Sidney's "idea or fore-conceit" that the poet delivers forth "in such excellency as he hath imagined them" (222). Of course there are differences: where Sidney's interest in human nature centers on virtuous action, Wordsworth believes the feelings are most in need of restitution. And where the Elizabethan wants to improve brazen nature, the Romantic poet is more concerned to take away the "film of familiarity" so the readers can see the beauty and sublimity of nature with unpolluted eyes. Yet for neither is it a matter of the poet shining his own idiosyncratic light: both aim at "delivering" (in all its senses) a pre-lapsarian standard in a post-lapsarian world. Let me end with Wordsworth's own words:

It is not enough for me as a Poet, to delineate merely such feelings as all men *do* sympathise with; but it is also highly desirable to add to these others, such as all men *may* sympathise with, and such as there is reason to believe they would be better and more moral beings if they did sympathise with.<sup>28</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>My talk at the *Connotations* symposium on "Poetry as Procreation" (Halberstadt, 4-8 August 1999) is part of a continuing exploration of Wordsworth's relation to earlier traditions, begun with a paper given at Uppsala University in 1996 (published as "Of Mountains and Men: Vision and Memory in Wordsworth and Petrarch," *Connotations* 7.1 [1997/98]: 44-57) and continued at Leiden University in 1998 ("Tradition and Individual Talent in *Lyrical Ballads*," not yet published).

<sup>2</sup>There are important theological aspects to both these metaphors, since God *created* the universe but *begot* his only Son. While the Son, according to the creeds, is of the same substance as the Father, humankind, although created in the likeness of God, is essentially different in nature. On the human level, for the poet to beget his work is theologically uncontroversial, but the Christian tradition has always been uneasy about the proposition that the poet creates, since this activity can be seen as encroaching on God's prerogatives. Yet as we shall see, Sidney and Wordsworth do not go that far since neither is free to leave nature behind; there are always traces of begetting in their poetic creation.

<sup>3</sup>*Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973) 77-79.

<sup>4</sup>The one passage in my quotation from the *Defence* that appears to gainsay this theological interpretation is when Sidney wants the poet to bring forth "quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like," none of which can be said to be particularly prelapsarian in origin or function. While Sidney elsewhere is quite successful in integrating the Classical tradition into a Christian context, in this one instance it seems the weight of his scholarly sources gets the better of his overall argument.

<sup>5</sup>For a discussion of this passage, and its communicative thrust, see Lothar Černý, *Beautie and the Use Thereof: Eine Interpretation von Sir Philip Sidneys Arcadia* (Köln: Böhlau, 1984) esp. 1-74.

<sup>6</sup>J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa, 2nd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 1976).

<sup>7</sup>*The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. William A. Ringler (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962) 165.

<sup>8</sup>Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) 161.

<sup>9</sup>Vanhoozer 86.

<sup>10</sup>Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1996) 7-8.

<sup>11</sup>Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* 1.13, trans. J. F. Shaw, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 2 (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

<sup>12</sup>See my "Formal and Verbal Logocentrism in Augustine and Spenser," *Studies in Philology* 93.3 (1996): 260.

<sup>13</sup>Famously proposed by H. M. Abrams in his influential study *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford UP, 1953). For a questioning of this dichotomy, see my "Of Mountains and Men."

<sup>14</sup>"The Internalization of Quest-Romance," *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Norton, 1970) 6-7.

<sup>15</sup>Paul de Man's poststructuralist essays on Wordsworth have been collected in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984).

<sup>16</sup>William Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary to the Preface of 1815," *English Romantic Writers*, ed. David Perkins (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967) 337.

<sup>17</sup>As cited in W. J. B. Owen, *Wordsworth as Critic* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1969) 44.

<sup>18</sup>Leona Toker and others, in the discussion following my talk, pointed out the metaphorical use of the term "incarnation," as against the historical event recorded in the Bible. I would argue with Augustine that God's speech, whether the word that became flesh within the time-space continuum or the perlocutionary word of Genesis 1 that brought the universe into existence, forms the basis without which no human communication is possible. To bridge, however, is not the same as to equate, and the difference between Creator and creature ensures that human speech must remain metaphorical. That indeed is one aspect of being created in God's likeness.

<sup>19</sup>Wordsworth, Preface, in Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. W. J. B. Owens, 2nd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 1996) 165.

<sup>20</sup>"Tintern Abbey," *Lyrical Ballads* 113.

<sup>21</sup>Wordsworth, Preface 155.

<sup>22</sup>Wordsworth, "Essay Upon Epitaphs," *Literary Criticism of William Wordsworth*, ed. Paul M. Zall (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1966) 114. A similar discussion can be found right after the passage quoted above about the affinities between religion and poetry (see "Essay Supplementary" 337).

<sup>23</sup>See my *The "Enabling of Judgement": Sir Philip Sidney and the Education of the Reader* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989).

<sup>24</sup>Wordsworth, Letter to John Wilson written June 1802, Perkins 351.

<sup>25</sup>There followed an animated discussion at the symposium about what Wordsworth meant by "eternal nature," and if the expression was blasphemous or not. The issue centres on whether Wordsworth elevates nature to divine status. While Thomas Kullmann proposed that Wordsworth's use of the expression may not be Christian, others suggested that the poet was alluding to the traditional Christian view of the Book of Nature, analogous to the Book of Scripture, as a means of approaching the divine. My own interpretation is that Wordsworth is not talking about physical nature at all, which he rather distinguishes it from, but like Sidney is thinking in terms of a Platonic ideal nature, or in Christian terms, nature before the fall. In my reading the term "eternal nature" is therefore not a synonym to, but rather an effect of "the great moving spirit of things."

<sup>26</sup>While the symposium noted that the procreative metaphors were not as evident in Wordsworth's Preface as they had been in Sidney's *Defence*, John Russell Brown produced a climactic reading that brought out its procreative juices.

<sup>27</sup>Wordsworth, Preface to the Edition of 1815, Perkins 333.

<sup>28</sup>Wordsworth, Letter to John Wilson, Perkins 352.

## Reproducing Living Organisms: Ben Jonson's Dramaturgy of Procreation

YUMIKO YAMADA

### I

In his *Tusculan Disputations* Cicero compares various kinds of human activities in relation to the future after death to the act of procreation, as something that compensates for man's mortality:

"Trees does he sow to be of service to the coming age," as Statius says in the *Synephebi*, and what notion is in his mind except that even succeeding ages are his concern? Shall then a farmer industriously sow trees, no berry of which his eyes will ever see, and a great man not sow the seed of laws, regulations and public policy? The begetting of children, the prolongation of a name, the adoption of sons, the careful preparation of wills, the very burial monuments, the epitaphs—what meaning have they except that we are thinking of the future as well as the present? (1.14.31)<sup>1</sup>

In this sense Ben Jonson has a good claim to be included among the most consciously "procreative" of poets. First, he was highly concerned with producing his literary offspring, by instructing young followers who are aptly called "the Sons of Ben," or the "Tribe of Ben." The "legitimate" ones numbered nearly twenty, most of whom were at one with Thomas Randolph in declaring:

And to say truth, that which is best in me  
May call you father; 'twas begot by thee.<sup>2</sup>

Besides forming a patriarchal tribe, Jonson was very keen to write and edit his own fruit of "labour" to hand it down to posterity,<sup>3</sup> on account of which he was to be immortalized as a patron saint of poets:



When I a Verse shall make,  
 Know I have praid thee,  
 For old *Religions* sake,  
 Saint *Ben* to aide me.<sup>4</sup>

The idea of fostering one's own successors or the attempt to immortalize one's own work may not be unique or innovative. Yet what characterizes Jonson is that he understood his act of literary "procreation" in terms of biology.

Apart from his paternal personality, Jonson's charisma as father chiefly consisted in his classical learning. As "the only competent critic of the early 17th century" (Thomas Rymer 'Preface to Rapin'), he impressed at least three succeeding generations of playwrights and critics.<sup>5</sup> And what attracts our attention here is that his strong desire to establish paternity is closely linked with his battle to lay down classical laws for the English stage that would compare with those of the Continent.

## II

Like many other Renaissance humanists, Jonson derived the "rules" of the poet's, and especially the playwright's art from Aristotle and Horace:

Hee [who wishes to be a poet] must read many; but, ever the best, and choisest: those, that can teach him any thing, hee must ever account his masters, and reverence: among whom *Horace*, and (hee that taught him) *Aristotle*, deserve to bee the first in estimation. *Aristotle* was the first accurate *Criticke*, and truest Judge; nay, the greatest *Philosopher*, the world ever had. . . . (*Discoveries* 2507-13)

Here we may wonder what Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars poetica* have to do with paternal affection or desire for procreation. Today these treatises are sometimes regarded as killing rather than fostering creativity. But this offers only a limited view of their vision of poetry, which was esteemed as "Queen of Arts" (*Discoveries* 2382), able to subjugate and authorize all other sciences and arts. According to Elder Olson, separating the study of poetry and other sciences is a recent phenomenon; no sooner had the *Poetics* been regarded as a separate Aristotelean treatise, than works of

literature began to be appreciated as self-contained artifacts (introduction x-xvii).<sup>6</sup> Around 1600, the *Poetics* was regarded as an integral part of the corpus of Aristotelian philosophy.

Among many annotators of the *Poetics*, Jonson specially trusted the Dutch scholar Heinsius, prior to the French classicists in the seventeenth century.<sup>7</sup> His *De tragoediae constitutione* [*On Plot in Tragedy*] (1611) was hailed as “the quintessence of Aristotle’s *Poetics*”; it was remarkable for its interpretation of the treatise in the light of Aristotelian philosophy as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

It is noteworthy in this context that Aristotle was essentially a natural philosopher, particularly a biologist—his treatises on animals comprise a significant 20 per cent of his extant works. The famous metaphor of “the beginning, the middle and the end” (*Poetics* ch. 7; *Discoveries* 2706-07) which makes the core of his concept of “imitation/*mimêsis*” has strongly biological associations, in comparing a poetical work to a living organism with its head, body and limbs in accordance to its proper magnitude.

Jonson was well aware of this in citing Heinsius:

The Fable [plot] is call’d the Imitation of one and intire, and perfect Action; whose parts are so joined, and knitt together as nothing in the structure can be chang’d or taken away without imparing, or troubling the whole; of which there is a proportionable magnitude in the members. . . . Whole, we call that, and perfect, which hath a beginning, a mid’st, and an end. . . . (*Discoveries* 2681-86; 2706-07)<sup>9</sup>

Nor was Horace indifferent to biological connotations in his *Ars poetica*; he adopts the notion of “the beginning, the middle and the end” (*Ars poetica* 151-52), and his metaphor of “Chimeraes or monsters” at the beginning of the treatise refers to the lack of proportion between the whole and each part criticized by Aristotle (*Poetics* ch. 23).<sup>10</sup>

Strangely enough, when Jonson declares that poetry is “an Art of imitation” which expresses “the life of man in fit measure, numbers, and harmony” (*Discoveries* 2347 ff.; *Poetics* ch. 2), his primary concern seems to be for faithful sketches of men, with appropriate magnitude and proportion, rather than for the whole scheme of the play.

The title page of *Sejanus* (1605 Q) focuses on presenting true likenesses of men:

Non hîc Centauros, non Gorgonas, Harpyasque Invenies: Hominem pagina nostra  
Sapit.

[Not here will you find Centaurs, not Gorgons and Harpies: 'tis of man my page  
smacks.]

And the prologue to *Every Man in His Humour* (1616 F) promises to deal with “men,” not “monsters”:

... deedes, and language, such as men doe vse:  
And persons, such as *Comædie* would chuse,  
When she would shew an Image of the times,  
And sport with human follies, not with crimes. (21-24)

Giving priority to the characters over the plot, Jonson may seem at odds with Aristotle, who preferred the plot above all other components (*Poetics* ch. 6). Yet this is in fact due to Aristotelian philosophy being deeply rooted in biology. Aristotle positively insists that the state of individuation, rather than an integrated state as part of a species, is the “true” form of living, because the individual is more operative than class in generation or procreation (*Generation of Animals* 4:3).

This belief is reflected in the following passage of the *Ars poetica*, where Horace applies the idea of a proportionate organism to each individual character:

He [the poet] can,  
Indeed, give fitting dues to every man.  
And I still bid the learned Maker looke  
On life, and manners, and make those his booke,  
Thence draw forth true expressions.

(Jonson's translation of *Ars poetica* 451-55; Horace's original 315-18)

This rule is followed closely by Jonson who not only aimed at an accurate portrait of each character, but tried to provide a “varietie of speakers”:

... and is it not an object of more state, to behold the *Scene* full, and relieu'd with  
varietie of speakers to the end, then to see a vast emptie stage . . . ?

(*Every Man out of His Humour* 2.3.297-301)

So Thomas Shadwell, his ardent disciple, proclaimed Jonson the only person who was able to give perfect representations of human life by representing a variety of humour characters.<sup>11</sup>

No doubt this attitude is based on Heinsius, who asserts that Aristotle's position is that "as many persons of the best moral character as the design permits should be introduced into one and the same play" (ch.14). And their belief "the more the better" originates ultimately in the Aristotelian view of procreation:

. . . the most natural act is the production of another like itself, an animal producing an animal, a plant a plant, in order that, as far as its nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. That is the goal for the sake of which all things strive, that for the sake of which they do whatsoever their nature renders possible. (*On the Soul* 2:4)

Here a problem may arise as to whether Jonson regarded the variety of humorous characters of his own creation as his own likeness. For the most part Jonson's [humour] characters are nearer to "monsters" than "men," and they are frequently presented as a butt for satire. How could he take pride in "begetting" them when he seems to lack fatherly affection towards them? And if he could, how could it be related to his grand project of acquiring "immortality" by handing them down to posterity?

### III

The first thing to be noted with Jonson is that he did not interpret life idealistically. By poetry he meant primarily drama, and by drama he meant primarily comedy,<sup>12</sup> and his notion of comedy is "Imitatio vitæ, Speculum consuetudinis, Imago veritatis" (*Every Man out of His Humour* 3 Grex, 202-12). Aristotle, Jonson's "first accurate Criticke, and truest Judge," is more ruthless in depriving us of our illusion that this "image of truth" or reality of life is beautiful:

Comedy is, as we have said, an imitation of characters of a lower type—not, however, in the full sense of the word bad, the ludicrous being merely a subdivision of the ugly. (*Poetics* ch. 5)

As an innate biologist, Aristotle knew too well that "the life of man" is not altogether different from that of the lower animals, both in the shape and way of generation:

Men, and Birds, and Quadrupeds, viviparous and oviparous alike, have their eyes protected by lids. (*Parts of Animals* 2:13)

All animals whatsoever, whether they fly or swim or walk upon dry land, whether they bring forth their young alive or in the egg, develop in the same way. . . .  
(*History of Animals* 7.7)

Far from being "the paragon of animals," man participates in what is described as "ugly" in his definition of comedy in the *Poetics*. In the *Parts of Animals* Aristotle declares that he will treat all animals alike including man, "without omitting, to the best of our ability, any member of the kingdom, however ignoble," and warns us not to "recoil with childish aversion from the examination of the humbler animals," for "if any person thinks the examination of the rest of the animal kingdom an unworthy task, he must hold in like disesteem the study of man":

. . . so we should venture on the study of every kind of animal without distaste; for each and all will reveal to us something natural and something beautiful. Absence of haphazard and conduciveness of everything to an end are to be found in Nature's works in the highest degree, and the resultant end of her generations and combinations is a form of the beautiful. (*Parts of Animals* 1.5)

It may be assumed that Aristotle's attempt to give "an equal value" to man and lower animals as living creatures is closely related to his concept of imitation in the *Poetics*. After pointing out that man is the most imitative of living creatures, Aristotle mentions the most ignoble animals and dead bodies as possible objects of imitation:

Objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity: such as the forms of the most ignoble animals and dead bodies. The cause of this again is, that to learn gives the liveliest pleasure, not only to philosophers but to men in general; whose capacity, however, of learning is more limited. Thus the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is, that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, "Ah, that is he." (*Poetics* ch. 4)

In the *Topics* (1.7) Aristotle defines man as “an animal that walks on two feet,” and Horace describes his vulgar style which reflects the daily life of ordinary people as “‘chats’ that crawl along the ground” (*sermones . . . repentis per humum*; *Epistles* 2.1.250-51) in association with four-footed beasts. Far from seeing man as the lord of creation, both authors adopt a surprisingly homological attitude, attempting to seek constitutional and functional analogies between man and the animals.

The attitude of giving an equal value to man and “lower” animals was inherited by Juan Huarte de San Juan, a Spanish physician, whose *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* [*The Examination of Mens Wits*] (1575) became a bestseller throughout Europe:

. . . the difference which is found between man and brute beast, is the selfe same which is found betweene a foole and a wise man; which is nought else than in respect of the more or lesse. (ch. 3)

If there is little difference between man and animals, then there would be still less among men:

By this reckoning it appeareth, that nature cannot fashion such a man as may be perfect in all his powers, nor produce him inclined to vertue. How repugnant it is vnto the nature of man, that he become inclined to vertue, is easily prooued, considering the composition of the first man [Adam] . . . by the hand of so great an artificer [God]. . . . (ch. 14)

Since there is ample evidence Jonson read the book in Thomas Carew’s English translation (1594),<sup>13</sup> it may help to elucidate the meaning of the title *Every Man in His Humour*—no one is free from faults and defects inherent in flesh and blood, and a poet should describe men as such.

“O, manners! that Nature should bee at leisure to make ‘hem!’”—exclaims the young Edward Knowell, enjoying and admiring the variety of other men’s humours (*Every Man in His Humour* [1616 F] 4.7.146-47), yet the fact is that this cool observer also is “in his humour” since he himself is “like to be wrought / To every vice, as hardly to be brought / To endure counsell” (Jonson’s translation of the *Ars Poetica* 231-33; Horace’s original, 162-63).

Most properly Jonson concludes his prologue to the same comedy:

... you'll all confesse  
 By laughing at them, they deserue no lesse:  
 Which when you heartily doe, there's hope left, then,  
 You, that haue so grac'd monsters, may like men. (27-30)

## IV

Nearly two centuries ago Gifford ascribed Jonson's relative "unpopularity" (when compared with Shakespeare) to his lack of what he calls "just discrimination":

There is yet another obstacle to the poet's [Jonson's] popularity, besides the unamiable and uninteresting nature of some of his characters, namely a want of just discrimination. He seems to have been deficient in that true tact of feeling of propriety which Shakespeare possessed in full excellence. He appears to have had *an equal value for all his characters, and he labours upon the most unimportant, and even disagreeable of them with the same fond and paternal assiduity* which accompanies his happiest efforts. (my italics)<sup>14</sup>

Whether Gifford's criticism is right or not, what he regards as Jonson's "defect"—"the same fond and paternal assiduity"—strongly points to him as a poet of procreation. Gifford says "the most unimportant, and even disagreeable of them," yet we should rather think that Jonson regarded none of his characters as "unimportant" or "disagreeable."

According to Aristotle, what seems "ugly" at first sight, may strike us with a "beauty" of its own the moment we discover the "absence of haphazard and conduciveness of everything to an end" in "Nature's works." Equally, we are expected to regard whoever makes most of his or her natural faculties as "agreeable."

Jonson shows no less magnanimity than Volpone, who is praised for knowing

the vse of riches, and dare giue, now,  
 From that bright heape, to me [Mosca], your poore obseruer,  
 Or to your dwarfe, or your *hermaphrodite*,  
 Your *eunuch*, or what other household-trifle  
 Your [Volpone's] pleasure allowes maint'nance. (*Volpone* 1.1.62-66)

Brainworm, the "base" servant, and Mosca, the "contemptible" parasite, frankly admire themselves, when each finds himself "translated thus, from a poore creature to a creator," by developing their inborn talents to the full.<sup>15</sup> Even the "deformed" trio—Nano, the dwarf, Castrone, the eunuch, and Androgyno, the hermaphrodite—who are said to be Volpone's "bastards," or the inhabitants of Bartholomew Fair, who are put beyond protection of the law, win our admiration by their ability to pursue and enjoy their own happiness under a serious physical or social handicap.

It is true that Jonson sometimes fell into satirical rage with some of his characters, but this happens only when they act contrary to their own nature. Fielding, Jonson's ardent admirer in the eighteenth century, aptly points out that the true object of derision or satire is neither ugliness, infirmity, poverty or other misfortunes or calamities;<sup>16</sup> it is affectation—being "in travaile with expressions of another," utterly "forgetfull of himselfe" (*Discoveries* 1093-99).

While carrying out the parental responsibility by giving life to each single product of his literary activity, Jonson frequently wished he could "loose all father" or shuffle off all paternal affection (*Epigrams* 45.5). Even when he "punishes" those who deserve it, he does "begin to pittie 'hem" immediately after that, filled with remorse "To thinke they haue a being" (*Every Man out of His Humour* 5.11.61-63). No doubt it was this all-embracing paternal attitude that attracted so many sons around him.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The quotation is taken from *Cicero XVIII: Tusculan Disputations*, ed. and trans. J. E. King (1927; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1971).

<sup>2</sup>"A gratulatory to Mr Ben. Iohnson for his adopting of him to be his Son" 31-32, *Poems with the Muses Looking Glasse: and Amyntas* (1638) 22-23, quoted in *Ben Jonson*, eds. C. H. Herford, and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1925-52) 11: 390-91. All quotations from Jonson refer to this edition, abbreviated as "H&S."



<sup>3</sup>Ben Jonson, eds. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979) 204.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Herrick, "His Prayer to Ben. Johnson" 1-4, *Hesperides* (1648) 267, quoted in H&S 11: 415.

<sup>5</sup>See Marvin Theodore Herrick, *The Poetics of Aristotle in England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1930) 43, 36.

<sup>6</sup>Aristotle's "Poetics" and *English Literature: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Elder Olson (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1965) introduction x-xvii.

<sup>7</sup>M. T. Herrick 37-38, 45. Jonson quotes Heinsius at length in the *Discoveries*.

<sup>8</sup>Paul R. Sellin and John McManmon, *On Plot in Tragedy*, trans. Daniel Heinsius (Northridge, Calif.: San Fernando Valley State College, 1971) introduction xvi.

<sup>9</sup>Heinsius, *De tragoediae constitutione* ch. 4. Cf. the *Poetics* ch. 6: "Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and a certain magnitude . . . in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions." English translations of Aristotle's works are from *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), except for that of the *Poetics*, which comes from *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art with a Critical Text and Translation of the Poetics*, ed. and trans. S. H. Butcher (1895; London: Macmillan, 1923).

<sup>10</sup>Nevertheless, it would be hasty to conclude that by "a living organism of the proper magnitude" they meant the anthropomorphic cosmology of the world of the play, whose inhabitants are influenced by some transcendent will of the macrocosm. It seems more reasonable to interpret that "the magnitude" refers to that of the action comprehensible within our memory (*Discoveries* 2704-2815), and "proportion" to causality of incidents with "necessity" and "probability," without any intervention of supernatural factors. For a detailed discussion of Aristotle's influence on Horace, see Yumiko Yamada, *Ben Jonson and Cervantes: Tilting against Chivalric Romances* (Tokyo: Maruzen, 2000) 25, 159-62.

<sup>11</sup>Thomas Shadwell, preface to *The Sullen Lovers* (1668), quoted in Craig 263.

<sup>12</sup>See M. T. Herrick 41-43.

<sup>13</sup>See *Veins of Humor*, ed. Harry Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1972) introduction 7-8; Adrienne Laskier Martín, *Cervantes and the Burlesque Sonnet* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991) 66-70. English translations of the *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* are from *The Examination of Mens Wits*, trans. Richard Carew (1594; New York: Da Capo P, 1969).

<sup>14</sup>William Gifford (1816) 1: ccxvii-ccxix, quoted in Frances Teague, *The Curious History of Bartholomew Fair* (Cranbury, NJ: Associate UP, 1985) 101.

<sup>15</sup>See *Every Man in His Humour* (1616 F) 2.4.1-2; *Volpone* 3.1.1-33.

<sup>16</sup>Fielding, preface to *Joseph Andrews*, quoted in M. T. Herrick 115.

# Poetry as Procreation: John Dryden's Creative Concept of Poetry and Imitation<sup>1</sup>

CHRISTIANE BIMBERG

## 1. Introduction

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* 'to procreate' means "to bring forth or beget, produce, cause" or "to beget, engender, generate (offspring)." 'Procreation' is defined as "the action of procreating or begetting; generation, propagation of species; the fact of being begotten" or "That which is procreated; offspring, progeny" (554). Poetry as procreation thus touches the nature of how poetry comes into existence. In the course of literary and cultural history the production of poetry has been explained in diverse ways. To give just two especially striking examples: Plato doubted the ability of poetry to reflect reality objectively. He saw one of the reasons for its deficiency in imitating historical or empirical truth in the irrational way of its production by poets. At, nearly, the other end of the historical scale, the 20th century, Freud, in his psychoanalytic approach, explained the products of art as the result of the subconscious mind which meant, finally, in terms of mental illness or neurosis.

For Shakespeare poetry was indeed procreation. He often realized the idea in his sonnets, comparing the biological process of reproduction to the creative process of writing. But, whereas biological reproduction was to ensure the survival of the family, creating a sonnet or any other form of lyric poetry implied the possibility of passing the memory of persons and events on to posterity, i.e. of 'eternalizing' the poet's art and reputation.

It is this latter aspect which came to be heavily employed by Dryden in his views on patronage as expressed in the numerous dedications of

his own works to various patrons and patronesses. In a similar way Sir Philip Sidney, at the end of his *The Defence of Poesy*, had already threatened the detractors of poetry with warning that

[you] never get favour for lacking skill of a sonnet; and, when you die, your memory die from the earth for want of an epitaph. (250)

Dryden was the most prominent Restoration playwright, poet, translator, adaptor and also the first professional theatre critic. He was deeply concerned with the process of creating poetry and scrutinized the making of diverse 'kinds' of poetry, i.e. poetic genres. References to poetry as procreation are numerous in his works. Above all he adopts the central idea embodied in the metaphor in order to describe not only the creative process of producing poetry (including drama according to the poetics of the time), but also to point out his own creative concept of imitation, which is at the heart of his aesthetics.

The metaphors often appear in the dedications, prefaces, prologues and epilogues attached to his own plays and have to be read in the context of the subjects dealt with in those texts or in the more fundamental discussions of poetics, adaptation, translation, criticism, and patronage. Consequently, literary-historical, literary-aesthetic, cultural and other forms of contextualization will be employed here. Taken together, the metaphors represent a climatical chain of associations that reaches from seeing poetry (1) as an act of procreation/creation to (2) poetry as giving birth, (3) poetry as a process of growing, and (4) poetry as child(hood)/kinship/genealogy.

## 2. Poetry as procreation

### 2.1. Poetry as creation/reproduction

(1) In the Dedication of *The Rival Ladies* (to the Earl of Orrery) Dryden describes the creation of the play, as to its details such as thoughts, characters, humours, plot etc., as a process resembling God's creation of mankind.<sup>2</sup> He depicts in vivid terms from what chaos he started to mould his play:

My LORD, THIS worthless Present was design'd you, long before it was a Play;  
 When it was only a confus'd Mass of Thoughts, tumbling over one another in  
 the Dark: When the Fancy was yet in its first Work, moving the Sleeping Images  
 of Things towards the Light, there to be Distinguish'd, and then either chosen  
 or rejected by the Judgment: . . . And, I confess, in that first Tumult of my  
 Thoughts, there appear'd a disorderly kind of Beauty in some of them . . . (8:  
 95)<sup>3</sup>

The implied topical comparisons of divine and artistic creation carries with it a touch of Freud's description of the subconscious qualities of the creative process. Dryden refers to it again when he praises the poetic achievements of his patron and, with a characteristic touch of irreverence and humour, does not hesitate to include free will and divine providence in the discussion:

Here is no chance which you have not fore-seen; all your Heroes are more than  
 your Subjects; they are your Creatures. And though they seem to move freely,  
 in all the Sallies of their Passions, yet you make Destinies for them which they  
 cannot shun. They are mov'd (if I may dare to say so) like the Rational Creatures  
 of the Almighty Poet, who walk at Liberty, in their own Opinions, because their  
 Fetters are Invisible; when indeed the Prison of their Will, is the more sure for  
 being large: and instead of an absolute Power over their Actions, they have only  
 a wretched Desire of doing that, which they cannot choose but do. (5: 97)

The passage occurs in a discussion about the use of rhyme in dramatic writing, and, what is more important, about the correlation of life and literature or, in other words, about the question whether a regular play can imitate life or reality.

Thus Dryden's depiction of creating poetry out of chaos points to his concept of a well-designed play which is consistently produced by the playwright in his full awareness of and superior control over the dramatic effects on the audience. He emphasizes aspects such as the consistency between the main action and the sub-plot, a focus on the main characters and incidents, and an internal logic and consistency, not least in the characterization of the *dramatis personae*. Dryden also places emphasis on a causal relationship between the incidents in agreement with the passions to be developed in the characters and the responses of the audiences, and, last but not least, he stresses the probability of representation (without the necessity of observing the dramatic unities).

(2) In a totally contrasting way to the noble metaphor of divine creation, Dryden, in the Prologue to *An Evening's Love*, depicts the creation of a poem or play very literally as the biological reproduction or propagation in the wedding-night of a young poet, who becomes a drudging husband later, when he has to work hard in order to please his audiences. This complaint has a strongly autobiographical touch since Dryden, at the time of the first performance of the play, had just become resident playwright of the King's Theatre. By contract he was obliged to do three scripts a year.<sup>4</sup>

WHEN first our poet set himself to write,  
 Like a young Bridegroom on his Wedding-night  
 He layd about him, and did so bestir him,  
 His Muse could never lye in quiet for him:  
 But now his Honey-moon is gone and past,  
 Yet the ungrateful drudgery must last:  
 And he is bound, as civil Husbands do,  
 To strain himself, in complaisance to you:  
 To write in pain, and counterfeit a bliss,  
 like the faint smackings of an after-kiss. (10: 214)

As it seems, the erotic, slightly bawdy language helped the prologue summon Restoration audiences to a play and secure their attention for the performance. The verse prologue is in fact a humorous discussion of the relationship between the playwright and his audiences in a nutshell.<sup>5</sup> Dryden's relationship with his audiences, critics, patron-poets and patron-critics was a precarious one. His prologues and epilogues contribute to a social history of the Restoration theatre, illustrating characteristic modes of behaviour of diverse social groups of theatre-goers, be it in front or behind the stage. Dryden was in fact torn between his readiness to give in to contemporary tastes (for economic reasons) on the one hand and pungent mockery about certain audiences' lack of taste, being well aware of his own superiority as a person as well as an artist, and being, moreover, passionately keen on promoting the excellence of poetry and drama.

## 2.2. Poetry as giving birth

(3) In the Preface to *The State of Innocence* (The Authors Apology for Heroique Poetry; and Poetique Licence) Dryden defines the nature of poetic licence as

... the Liberty, which Poets have assum'd to themselves in all ages, of speaking things in Verse, which are beyond the severity of Prose. 'tis that particular character, which distinguishes and sets the bounds betwixt *Oratio soluta*, and *Poetry*. . . . (12: 96).

He calls it

... that Birthright which is deriv'd to us from our great Forefathers, even from *Homer* down to *Ben*. And they who would deny it to us, have, in plain terms, the Foxes quarrel to the Grapes; they cannot reach it. (12: 96)

Dryden here expressly acknowledges the right of each poet and nation to develop their own poetry according to contemporary and national standards. Not only was each poet free to adapt works of his poetic and dramatic predecessors, but the whole nation should have its own poetry according to national quality criteria for poetry and national standards of criticism. Dryden always favoured a creative concept of imitation instead of a servile imitation of nature, imitation of nature meaning, in the Aristotelian sense of the term, a representation of reality without empirical or historical limitations. It was precisely the amount of invention in the process of imitation which for Dryden made all the difference between a servile copy and a creative new product and only legitimized the latter (Bimberg 1990: 19-22, 41, 115; Bimberg 1995: 17-18). Imitation of nature per se (or, according to M. H. Abrams, the mimetic concept of literature) was important for Dryden because he was convinced that only a perfect relationship between literary subjects, artistic means and writing strategies in literature could bring about the adequate representation of reality in poetry and ensure the intended impact on the audiences. (4) In the Prologue to *Troilus and Cressida*, Spoken by Mr. *Betterton*, Representing the Ghost of *Shakespear*, Shakespeare's ghost asks the audience where his dramatic successors are and criticizes the poor qualities of their plays,

which are almost too bad to live up to their christening (their staging), after their birth (their composition). The passage has a humorously religious touch:

...  
 Now, where are the Successours to my name?  
 What bring they to fill out a Poet's Fame?  
 Weak, short-liv'd issues of a feeble Age;  
 Scarce living to be Christen'd on the Stage!  
 For Humour farce, for love they rhyme dispence,  
 That tolls the knell, for their departed sence. (13: 249)

Dryden's sarcastic prologue touches the debate of ancient-vs-modern. In his famous *An Essay of Dramatick Poesie* of 1668 he displays his views through the opinions of Neander who preferred the contemporary English drama to the Elizabethan-Jacobean, the contemporary French and the ancient Greek drama. Scattered over his substantial oeuvre, however, are quite contradictory remarks on the superiority of either the Restoration or the Elizabethan drama. Dryden admired Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, and Jonson though according to him they lived in a less refined age.

(5) In the Epilogue to *Circe*, (In the Scott-Saintsbury Edition the Prologue to *Circe*, as corrected by Dryden, 10: 331) Dryden allows for a maturing process in young poets giving Shakespeare's *Pericles* as an example. Shakespeare, he says, must have given birth to it before he produced *Othello*:

*Shakespeare's* own Muse her *Pericles* first bore,  
 The Prince of Tyre was elder than the *Moore*:  
 'Tis miracle to see a first good Play,  
 All Hawthorns do not bloom on *Christmas-day*.  
 A slender Poet must have time to grow,  
 And spread and burnish as his Brothers do.  
 Who still looks lean, sure with some Pox is curst,  
 But no Man can be *Falstaff* fat at first. . . . (1: 158)<sup>6</sup>

### 2.3. Poetry as a process of growing

(6) In the Prologue to *The Wild Gallant*, as it was first Acted, two astrologers are to decide upon the fate, i.e. the theatrical success, of the play due to the stellar constellation. The second astrologer assures the audience:

*This Play is English, and the growth your own;  
As such it yields to English Plays alone.* (8: 5)

Dryden thus affirms in a mocking way that as the play was produced in England it could only be judged according to English standards of criticism. The passage refers to the theatrical means employed in contemporary plays (among them devices 'borrowed' or taken from foreign plays) to satisfy audiences. It highlights, moreover, Fletcher's and Jonson's importance as models of wit. The greater significance of these statements, however, implies the relationship between writing and evaluating poetry. Dryden was deeply concerned with standards of judging contemporary poetry and drama in England (cf. comment on example 3 on poetic licence). This meant, first, no other criteria of judgment on poetry and drama should be applied than those valid at the time of the work's production. Second, these critical standards should have been observed by the authors.<sup>7</sup>

(7) In the Prologue to the *Tempest*, or the *Enchanted Island*, Dryden describes his adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in terms of new branches spreading from an ancient root:

*As when a Tree's cut down the secret root  
Lives under Ground, and thence new Branches shoot;  
So, from old Shakespear's honour'd dust, this day  
Springs up and buds a new reviving Play: . . .* (10: 6)

This simile goes together with reflections on Shakespeare's, Fletcher's, and Jonson's treatment of the subject. Needless to say, Shakespeare's magic is acknowledged by Dryden as superior to the other dramatic models and adaptations. According to Dryden's theory of dramatic adaptation, revising



and brushing up older dramatic models was an integral part of the imitation of nature, which implied the imitation of material and spiritual reality including other poets' works. In the Preface to *An Evening's Love* Dryden expressly compares the poet/playwright to a gunsmith or watchmaker: The particular value of a piece of poetry does not consist in the subject-matter or poetic material, but in the craftsman's skill (10: 212).<sup>8</sup>

For Dryden the most important aspect in adapting plays was his communication with the audience. The need to adapt Shakespeare, for instance, arose out of the changes in language, tastes, expectations, politics, the theatrical scene (e.g. the appearance of actresses), the building of the theatres, the performance practice, the special structure and status of the audience etc.. Shakespeare was regarded as not being modern and racy enough. He did not seem to fit the Restoration age any more, had become 'incompatible' and needed 'reconstruction.' The 'New reviving play' exactly expresses what Dryden's Shakespeare adaptations were seen to be by Dryden himself and in fact are: a revived Shakespeare, yet at the same time new plays of Dryden's own. For centuries, however, Dryden's Shakespeare adaptations have proved a touchstone for scholars. Today's evaluation depends on the perspective taken. When drama is regarded not just as text but as a complex, historically defined, and multimedial art form, Dryden's Shakespeare adaptations may be appreciated for their efficacy on the Restoration stage. Unqualified allegiance to the letter of Shakespeare's text, on the other hand, may lead to rejecting these adaptations as distortions of the original.

(8) In the *Epistle to the Earl of Roscomon, on his Excellent Essay on Translated Verse*, the speaker of the poem expresses the opinion that whereas the seeds of the arts and early sciences may have been borne on the Nile or the Tyrian shore, poetic translation as a noble plant first grew in Greek gardens:

WHETHER the fruitful Nile, or Tyrian Shore,  
The seeds of Arts and Infant Science bore,  
'Tis sure the noble Plant, translated first,  
Advanc'd its head in Grecian Gardens nurst. (2: 172)

Dryden's conviction that Britain surpassed Greece, Rome, the 'barbarous nations,' Italy, and France, particularly in Charles II's reign, led, together with his creative concept of imitation, to his concept of creative verse translation. Imitation of nature in this context means an imitation of the mental product of another author, of mental reality, by translating another poet's poem. Dryden considered a verse translator to be a creative poet who transferred the old or foreign author into his own time and language, i.e. helped to 'naturalize' him as a contemporary in his own country and assimilated him to his own culture, in other words appropriated him in a similar way that a dramatic adaptor appropriated an already existent play.

Dryden differentiated between three kinds of poetic translation (metaphrase or literal translation, paraphrase or translation with a latitude; imitation or a free dealing with contents and meaning). Finally he regarded the middle way as the most adequate one. This is where poetic licence comes in. Some poetic freedom was required for the translator in order to convey the original language/contents/meaning into a different language and culture. For Dryden bridging the gap between his own time and the classics from Virgil to Milton was more important than a literal translation.

Moreover, during the process of studying and translating these authors he started to reflect on such important issues as the relationship between foreign and mother tongue. He closely studied the languages' semantic, syntactic and phonetic characteristics, the history of each language, as well as the different 'laws' of prosody and versification. Last but not least he arrived at important insights into the correlation of language and thinking, sound and meaning in verse and even came to formulate certain principles or guidelines for verse translations.

#### 2.4. Poetry as child(hood)/offspring/kinship/genealogy

These metaphors rather tend to put emphasis on the result or product of procreation.

(9) In the *Epistle To My Honored Friend, Sir Robert Howard* Dryden praises the verse of Sir Robert Howard, his brother-in-law, that creates the impression of effortless harmony, whereas the poetic labour remains hidden for the recipient.<sup>9</sup> Dryden searches for the hidden intricacies of Howard's composition and is sure that Howard's poetic product is the 'child' of craftsmanship rather than chance:

Sure that's not all; this is a piece too fair  
To be the child of Chance, and not of Care.  
No Atoms casually together hurl'd  
Could e're produce so beautifull a world.  
Nor dare I such a doctrine here admit,  
As would destroy the providence of wit. (1: 17-18)

In the context of this passage Dryden refers to Howard's genius as being responsible for the achievement, which is not chaotic arbitrariness, and to the former status of poetry as a queen of moral knowledge which, in a way, foreshadows our 'normative functions.'

Dryden was a systematic writer whose literary work closely interrelated with his critical views. From his creative work he deduced recommendations for the process of composition in diverse poetic genres. His views on good and meaningful poetry are based on the right relationship between reality and literary representation, or, in other words, reason and imagination. His ideal poet would be fully aware of the effects of his writing strategies and deliberately employing his genre-, aim-, and effect-oriented artistic means and rhetorical devices in order to fulfill the poet's office of instructing in a delightful manner. Consequently, Dryden heavily criticized meaningless poetry based on bombastic sound and rhyming without substance and meaning. He made a plea for a poetry rich in substance and faultless in form (structure, language, metre, wording, syntax, style, sound) and based on an adequate relationship between meaning, sound, and metre. Wit actually becomes the most important category in Dryden's poetics, implying the desired correlation between language and thinking. Good sense and good nature are other modifying aspects worked out by him define exemplary poetry.<sup>10</sup>

(10) In the Preface prefixed to the fables Milton is called "the poetic son" of Spenser, and Waller that of Fairfax (Scott, 11: 209-10).

... for we have our lineal descents and clans as well as other families. Spenser more than once insinuates, that the soul of Chaucer was transfused into his body; and that he was begotten by him two hundred years after his decease. ... (Scott, 11: 210)

Dryden constructs a poetic genealogy in poetry and versification, a Chaucer-Spenser-Milton-branch and a Fairfax-Waller-branch. The context is the same as can be found in example 8 of section 2.3., i.e. a creative concept of verse translation.

(11) In another passage from the Preface prefixed to the fables, Dryden elaborates on Chaucer's wrong, i.e. supposedly irregular metres and explains this with the fact that Chaucer

lived in the infancy of our poetry, and that nothing is brought to perfection at the first. (Scott, 11: 225-26)

The statement employs a conventional comparison of historical periods to stages in men's lives. It shows Dryden's air of superiority towards the medieval age. Chaucer's numbers sounded wrong to Restoration poets because of the changes in pronunciation and stress pattern that had occurred since Chaucer's time. Dryden's regarding Chaucer's age as culturally inferior sounds arrogant and seems to anticipate Pope's and Johnson's eager efforts to excuse Shakespeare's "defects" by references to the "barbarous" age in which he lived.

Sometimes the procreation metaphor is modified in the sense that Dryden interprets his own plays or poems as family members of offspring. Particularly in the dedications his works are often associated with delicate matters of patronage.

(12) In the Dedication of *The Indian Emperor* (to the Duchess of Monmouth) Dryden regards the dedication of his play to the patroness not as a present, but as a favour to the poor and compares this to the guardianship or adoption of a child from a poor background by a wealthy person:

For in this address I have already quitted the character of a modest Man, by presenting you this Poem as an acknowledgment, which stands in need of your protection; and which ought no more to be esteem'd a Present, then it is accounted bounty in the Poor, when they bestow a Child on some wealthy Friend, who can give it better Education. (9: 25)

(Dryden's) plays are expressly called 'offspring' and treated affectionately:

Offsprings of this Nature are like to be numerous with me, that I must be forc'd to send some of them abroad; only this is like to be more fortunate then his Brothers, because I have landed him on a Hospitable shore.

(13) In the Dedication of *The Kind Keeper* (to John Lord Vaughan) the political events surrounding The Popish plot of 1678 are compared to events on the stage and plays are termed 'brothers':

*My Lord, I CANNOT* easily excuse the printing of a Play at so unseasonable a time, when the great Plot of the Nation, like one of *Pharaoh's* lean Kine, has devour'd its younger Brethren of the Stage: . . . (14: 3)

(14) In the Dedication of *Marriage A-la-Mode* (To the Earl of Rochester) the offspring metaphor is coupled with the topical offering of the first fruits:

In this Dedication therefore, I may seem to imitate a Custom of the Ancients, who offer'd to their Gods the Firstlings of the Flock, which I think they call'd *Ver Sacrum*, because they help'd 'em to increase. (11: 221; cf. Patronage, example 12 in 2.4.)

Creating poetry and imitating nature to Dryden is procreation. In this, he follows both (neo)classical and metaphysical traditions, being constantly aware of the public he was addressing in his prefaces, dedications, prologues and epilogues. Moreover, he did so at a time when, for example, drama underwent certain socio-economic changes such as the commercial publication of plays. Other factors were the birth of the professional bourgeois writer and critic, and the dwindling importance of royal or noble patronage, which, together with criticism, influenced Dryden considerably. At a closer look his procreation metaphors turn out to be a short-hand for his more fundamental views on poetics, dramatic adaptation, poetic translation, criticism, patronage, and literary history. They reveal his

attitudes towards his audiences, critics, patrons, and also the state of the art of poetry and drama in his time.

Though still frequently presented in literary history as an old-fashioned, dull and rigid neoclassicist, Dryden in fact tried to dissuade his fellow-poets and playwrights from rigidly following the neoclassicist rules. Paradoxically, his conservative political views go along with a refreshingly modern aesthetics of poetry and drama which emphasizes literary and theatrical communication. Dryden did not emancipate himself from the Aristotelian rules (cf. Preface to *Troilus*, 6: 283; *Heads of an answer to Rymer* 17: 191), nor did he submit to any other critical authority. Yet he followed Aristotle closely as to his creative concept of imitation that found expression in the metaphor of poetry as procreation.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>This article is a revised version of a paper given on August 6, 1999 on the occasion of the 5th *Connotations* Symposium "Poetry as Procreation" held at Halberstadt, 4-8 August 1999. For more details on discussions of poetics in Dryden, please see the references to Bimberg in the section "Works Cited".

<sup>2</sup>I am very grateful to Professor Ursula Brumm from Freie Universität Berlin for making the point in one of the discussions during the symposium that creating characters was regarded as blasphemy in puritan tracts. Blasphemy on stage could be punished with a fine of £10 (cf. Shepherd/Womack 147).

<sup>3</sup>Quotations are from the California Edition of Dryden's works. The few quotations from the Scott-Saintsbury Edition are especially indicated.

<sup>4</sup>See Shepherd/Womack 134.

<sup>5</sup>Please see Shepherd's and Womack's interpretation of Dryden's gendered presentation of the playwright-audience-relationship in the prologue, which regards the humiliation of the poet as subversive of a norm (136).

<sup>6</sup>The speech demonstrates Dryden's perfect sense of establishing contact and communication with theatre-goers and his capability of 'negotiating' success. The play at issue was an opera on Iphigenia in Tauris (cf. Hume 314 and also Loftis 290). It was written by Dr. Charles Davenant, one of the many children of Sir William Davenant's three marriages. He was a political economist (Nethercot 737). The original prologue stemmed from 1675.

<sup>7</sup>As to the particular success of *The Wild Gallant*, Dryden's first play and a sex comedy with respect to genre, it failed in 1663, was revised for a production in 1667, which failed as well, due to the competition with Tuke, and only printed in 1669 (cf. Loftis 174 and also Hume 243).

<sup>8</sup>This is a very appropriate statement in the light of the fact that, as in Shakespeare's time, the author's copyright was no issue yet though commercial publishing was developing rapidly.

<sup>9</sup>This effortlessness of the poetic creation comes in fact close to what Baldesar Castiglione has to say about nonchalance as a desirable quality in the courtier. It conceals all artistry and gives the impression of uncontrived simplicity (Castiglione 67ff., 86).

<sup>10</sup>In the Preface to *Secret Love* the ornament or writing (in poetry) is called the 'child of fancy,' fancy being a quality which, according to Dryden, is difficult to be judged upon by the poet himself when it occurs in his own works.

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## Byron's Procreative Poetry

JAMES SODERHOLM

To withdraw myself from myself (oh that cursed  
Selfishness) has ever been my sole, my entire, my  
sincere motive in scribbling.

Lord Byron

In the first canto of "Don Juan," Byron almost reluctantly records the amorous pull that has brought together Juan and his first beloved, the young, beautiful, and married Donna Julia.

The hand which still held Juan's, by degrees  
Gently, but palpably confirm'd its grasp,  
As if it said, 'detain me, if you please';  
Yet there's no doubt she only meant to clasp  
His fingers with a pure Platonic squeeze;  
She would have shrunk as from a toad, or asp,  
Had she imagined such a thing could rouse  
A feeling dangerous to a prudent spouse. (DJ 1: 111)<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult not to advance to the next stage once one has been so palpably detained by erotic interest. The problem appears in the oxymoronic phrase "a pure Platonic squeeze." "Pure" and "Platonic" are nearly synonymous, both suggesting a kind of asceticism or at least chastity. But those two adjectives are, so to speak, held in the grasp or clasp of the verbal noun "squeeze." Thus does Byron "squeeze" Platonic love for its contradictions and tensions. A few stanzas later, as Juan and Julia are about to succumb to their passion, Byron allows himself an editorial flourish.

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For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at  
<<http://www.connotations.de/debsoderholm00803.htm>>.

Oh Plato! Plato! you have paved the way,  
 With your confounded fantasies, to more  
 Immoral conduct by the fancied sway  
 Your system feigns o'er the controlless core  
 Of human hearts, than all the long array  
 Of poets and romancers:—You're a bore,  
 A charlatan, a coxcomb—and have been,  
 At best, no better than a go-between. (DJ 1: 116)

Has Plato ever been upbraided in such terms? Byron sees Platonic love—at least in the passionate circumstances of Juan and Julia—as less a repression than a *via erotica* far more compelling than the romantic road paved by more obvious poets and romancers.

The “confounded fantasy” of purely Platonic love has been squeezed until a paradox emerges: physical attraction leads resistlessly to physical procreation, not intellectual procreation, and in fact the hope that desire will remain chaste serves only to demolish that hope and hasten a very palpable consummation. On the cusp of consummation in one of his own affairs, Byron would write to his confidante, Lady Melbourne, that “Platonism is in some peril” (BLJ 3: 136).<sup>2</sup>

“[T]he controlless core / Of human hearts” may perhaps be interpreted as an encouragement to forget past loves in order to adore the next creature who happens into view. Defending this serial form of desire—traditionally misprised as “Don Juanism”—Byron offers a justification for inconstancy.

But to return: that which  
 Men call inconstancy is nothing more  
 Than admiration due where nature's rich  
 Profusion with young beauty cover o'er  
 Some favor'd object; and as in the niche  
 A lovely statue we almost adore,  
 This sort of admiration of the real  
 Is but a heightening of the 'beau ideal.'

'Tis the perception of the beautiful,  
 A fine extension of the faculties,  
 Platonic, universal, wonderful,  
 Drawn from the stars, and filter'd through the skies,  
 Without which life would be extremely dull;  
 In short, it is the use of our own eyes,  
 With one or two small senses added, just  
 To hint that flesh is form'd of fiery dust. (DJ 2: 211-12)

These "one or two small senses" added are precisely what keep Byron from becoming, as his friend and fellow poet Percy Shelley might say, "pinnacled dim in the intense inane." Byron's "fiery dust" also seems to echo Hamlet's wistful summation of man as "this quintessence of dust." Implicitly Byron considers a merely idealist position a dull, one-sided affair that also forgets the beautiful particulars our own eyes reveal to us every time "[s]ome favored object" materializes, teasing us into adoration. A winged creature, Eros is flighty.<sup>3</sup>

Richly profuse with eros, poems themselves may become favored objects leading to physical mischief for receptive readers. A love-poet from his earliest days, Byron appreciates how the relatively chaste act of writing poetry may have unchaste results.

When amatory poets sing their loves  
 In liquid lines mellifluously bland,  
 And pair their rhymes as Venus does her doves,  
 They little think what mischief is in hand;  
 The greater their success the worse it proves,  
 As Ovid's verse may give to understand;  
 Even Petrarch's self, if judged with due severity,  
 Is the Platonic pimp of all posterity. (DJ 5: 1)

This is indeed a severe reading of Petrarch, whose lyrical chastity was, like his ego, an event in European history, but the example serves to recall the seductive nature of certain poems and the consequences of letting oneself get swept from textuality to sexuality. Recall both St. Augustine and Paolo and Francesca in Dante's *Inferno*. Pimping poetry leads us straight into temptation from which we may be delivered by chaste, chastening texts, such as the one that called out to St. Augustine just in time to save his swooning soul. Or, one day we may put down the book, read no more, and fall into an "admiration of the real."

To be receptive to all forms of seduction, either actual or textual, brings to mind a psychological capability Byron called *mobilité*, which he poetically glossed as

A thing of temperament and not of art,  
 Though seeming so, from its supposed facility;  
 And false—though true; for surely they're sincerest,  
 Who are strongly acted on by what it nearest. (DJ 16: 97)

There is an odd affinity between inconstancy and *mobilité*. Both are at once cause and effect of “that vivacious versatility, / Which many people take for want of heart.” Both also account for Byron’s narrative agility and improvisational facility in composing *Don Juan*. One is reminded of Kierkegaard’s spirited reading of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* in Part One of *Either/Or*. There, in the persona of the aesthetically-motivated young man, Kierkegaard presents the idea that *Don Giovanni* is not much as an individual but as an erotic force, a force or energy Mozart perfectly captured in his music.<sup>4</sup> And indeed Byron’s narrator of mock-epic, fully mobilized by his susceptibilities and impressions, presents a form of Romantic sincerity to challenge Wordsworth’s, a spontaneous overflow that is not the result of emotion recollected in tranquility, but rather of emotion immediately transmuted into the quicksilver of poetry. The additive quality of Byron’s epic, what one recent critic calls “the aesthetic of parataxis,”<sup>5</sup> is what I am calling procreative poetry, a mode of production that would seem to parallel the poet’s mode of reproduction.

In an often quoted (but rarely fully-quoted) letter to a friend about the meaning and composition of his mock-epic, Byron reflects on the offense his opening cantos gave his English readers, and defends his work in a way that ties together the terms and categories I have been discussing.

I feel lazy—I have thought of this for some time—but alas! the air this cursed Italy enervates—and disfranchizes the thoughts of man after near four years of respiration,—to say nothing of emission.—As to “*Don Juan*”—confess—you dog—and be candid—that it is the sublime of *that there* sort of writing—it may be bawdy—but is it not good English?—it may be profligate—but is it not *life*, is it not the *thing*?—could any man have written it—who has not lived in the world?—and toolled in a post-chaise?—in a hackney coach?—in a gondola?—against a wall?—in a court carriage?—in a vis a vis?—on a table—and under it— (BLJ 6: 232, italics Byron’s)

For Byron, life and poetry interpenetrated, and the justification for his epic poem was nothing more or less than his own life, including his sexual experience. The poetic vehicle for this is his characteristic usage of ottava rima—the bouncy, rollicking stanzaic form that swept Byron and his libertine hero along for sixteen cantos. To put it more simply, Byron writes about what he knows, and he has found an answering form.

But there is an even more intimate relation between Byron's vitality, mobility, and his procreative poetry. In a letter to his friend and fellow poet, Thomas Moore, Byron writes:

I feel exactly as you do about our "art," but it comes over me in a kind of rage every now and then, like \*\*\*\*, and then, if I don't write to empty my mind, I go mad. As to that regular, uninterrupted love of writing which you describe in your friend, I do not understand it. I feel it as a torture, which I must get rid of, but never as a pleasure. On the contrary, I think composition a great pain. (BLJ 8: 55)

A short queue of asterisks is a diacritical blush—one of the few times Byron ever blushes about anything—and we are left to fill in the meaning. Most readers assume Byron is describing a concentration of lust that eventually explodes into poetry, which Byron elsewhere defines as "the lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake" (BLJ 3: 179). Until he can get the poetry outside of himself, he cannot achieve the literal sense of "ecstasy," which refers to getting outside oneself, to withdrawing oneself from oneself, as my opening citation from Byron suggests.

Let me conclude with another, more sentimental version of this oddly painful version of poetic procreation. In the second canto of Byron's epic, Juan washes up on the shore of a Greek island to find—what else?—a ravishing Greek girl waiting to nurse him back to health and fall helplessly in love with him.<sup>6</sup> Her name is Haidee. Juan and Haidee's ability to think a language reminds us of the erotic pleasures of dialogue, including Platonic dialogue. But, we might say, that Juan and Haidee procreate the Beautiful without resorting to any philosophical sublimation, and that Byron echoes their rhythms by setting their passion to the music of ottava rima.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Lord Byron, *Don Juan, Complete Poetical Works*, vol. 5, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), Canto 1, stanza 111). Subsequent citations will quote from

this text and will parenthetically supply canto and stanza in the following abbreviated fashion: (DJ 1: 111).

<sup>2</sup>*Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A Marchand (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974). Subsequent citations will quote from this text and will parenthetically supply volume number and page number in the following abbreviated fashion (BLJ 3: 136).

<sup>3</sup>For a discussion of the Greek play on words involving "eros" and "pteros" (wing) see Anne Carson, *Eros, the bittersweet* (Princeton, N. J.: PrincetonUP, 1986) 159-64.

<sup>4</sup>In "The Immediate Stages of the Erotic" in Part One of *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard regards Byron's *Don Juan* as a failure, interesting enough, precisely because the poet supplies us with too many biographical details about Juan, a more or less novelistic tactic that individualizes Juan and thereby reduces what Kierkegaard calls his "ideality," a force or an energy best and most immediately captured in opera.

<sup>5</sup>The phrase belongs to Charles Eric Reeves in his "Continual Seduction: The reading of Don Juan," *Studies in Romanticism* 17.4 (1978): 459.

<sup>6</sup>Byron's Greek island idyll has been discussed by major critics of the "Don Juan," many of them treating this episode as an oasis of non-ironic romance in an epic saturated by bathos and the systematic puncturing of matters sentimental. An important exception to such interpretations appears in Peter Manning, *Byron and His Fictions* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1978), where the author folds the episode into a full-scale, psychoanalytic discussion of Byron's major works. Haidee becomes another example of a potentially threatening, enveloping woman whom the narrator must dispatch—along with her unborn child—to hasten Juan on his way to his next 'conquest.'

## Faulkner and the Problematics of Procreation

ARTHUR F. KINNEY

No black character in all of Faulkner's crowded Yoknapatawpha saga receives more sustained attention than Lucas Beauchamp: his willful sense of self-esteem in a predominantly white world arouses and teaches the superficially liberal lawyer Gavin Stevens and his impressionable nephew Chick Mallison in *Intruder in the Dust*. Popularized by the Hollywood film of the novel filmed in Faulkner's hometown of Oxford, on which the fictional Jefferson is based, and along the country roads of Lafayette County that first inspired Yoknapatawpha, *Intruder in the Dust* was, Faulkner admitted, his "civil rights" novel, written in 1948. It tells the story of a white mob's impassioned attempt to lynch a black man and the black man's calm insistence on his innocence and his wily way of proving his innocence by directing his defense from his cell inside the Yoknapatawpha county jail. By turns suspenseful and sentimental, *Intruder in the Dust* is the sort of work that would attract Hollywood but won little critical admiration and perhaps even less attention from Faulkner himself.

Doubtless this is because Lucas Beauchamp had already made stunning and memorable appearances in Faulkner's most ambitious and honestly searching novel about race in the South he knew, *Go Down, Moses*, published in 1942. The book is named for a gospel song that haunts nearly every page of the novel:

When Israel was in Egypt's land,  
Let my people go.  
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,  
Let my people go.  
We need not always weep and mourn,  
Let my people go.  
And wear these slav'ry chains forlorn,  
Let my people go.

and the spiritual's equally haunting refrain:

Go down, Moses,  
Way down in Egypt's land.  
Tell ole Pharaoh,  
Let my people go.

The bondage and exploitation of the black man decried in the song is what first troubles Ike McCaslin when, at the age of 21, he attempts to make sense out of his McCaslin family genealogy—his procreation—with his older cousin Cass in the commissary of the plantation that has spawned all of them. He thinks that perhaps they are chosen by God to right the wrongs of slavery:

"Maybe He chose Grandfather out of all of them He might have picked. Maybe He knew that Grandfather himself would not serve His purpose because Grandfather was born too soon too, but that Grandfather would have descendants, the right descendants; maybe He had foreseen already the descendants Grandfather would have, maybe He saw already in Grandfather the seed progenitive of the three generations He saw it would take to set at least some of His lowly people free"—(248)<sup>1</sup>

This modern-day Isaac, like his biblical namesake, feels asked to sacrifice his property as a sacred mission, to relinquish the McCaslin plantation and its blood-drenched history of human and natural exploitation. Lucas, the one independent black tenant farmer who remains on the land, is named for Ike's grandfather, Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, whose name procreates his cousins Cass and Roth. But Cass will not allow such romanticism. "His lowly people" are for Cass "The sons of Ham"—the blacks: "You who quote the Book: the sons of Ham" (249). Ike's reply, often cited as Faulkner's basic philosophy, may offer hope or may maintain the same willful blindness:

"There are some things He said in the Book, and some things reported of Him that He did not say. And I know what you will say now. That if truth is one thing to me and another thing to you, how will we choose which is truth? You dont need to choose. The heart already knows." (249)

Such inner sense of knowledge for Ike is only solipsism for Cass. Indeed, God's procreation of His lowly people, alias the sons of Ham, seems



insufficient to call forth from Ike such proud assurance of the powers of his heart to understand what the other members of his white family, the McCaslins, seem ignorant of when examining their black slaves, the Beauchamps. But Ike has earned such knowledge and understanding. Eight pages later, we learn that five years earlier, at the age of 16, Ike snuck into that very same commissary: "He got the commissary key from McCaslin's room after midnight while McCaslin was asleep and with the commissary door shut and locked behind him and the forgotten lantern stinking anew the rank dead icy air, he leaned above the yellowed page"—the plantation account becoming, for him, anyway, the family diary—and there his courage to learn paid off: "He knew he was going to find before he found it" (257). Life and death procreate the words he finds and the words procreate the thoughts that establish his own lineage. Earlier he had seen the hand of his father writing of his grandfather, progenitor of their line:

*Father dide Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, Callina 1772 Missippy 1837. Dide and burid 27 June 1837*

*Roskus. raised by Granfather in Callina Dont know how old. Freed 27 June 1837 Dont want to leave. Dide and Burid 12 Jan 1841*

*Fibby Roskus Wife. bought by granfather in Callina says Fifty Freed 27 June 1837 Dont want to leave. Dide and burd 1 Aug 1849 (254)*

Old Lucius thus founded the McCaslin plantation with slaves he had bought in Carolina long before coming to Yoknapatawpha. And there is perhaps a certain pride as a reason for Ike's father, known as Uncle Buck but named Theophilus, in recording the freedom of these slaves at his father's death, long before the War of Northern Aggression and the Emancipation Proclamation, yet still further pride in their stout refusal to leave the McCaslin home, their apparent desire to remain part of the extended McCaslin family, rewriting, as it were, their own lines of procreation.

But then the entry gets trickier.

*Thucydus Roskus @ Fibby Son born in Callina 1779. Refused 10acre peace fathers Will 28 Jun 1837 Refused Cash offer \$200. dollars from A. @ T. McCaslin [that is, Amodeus and Theophilus, Ike's uncle and father] 28 Jun 1837 Wants to stay and work it out (254-55)*

Work out what? Why, when the parents of Thucydides, corrupted as Thucydus, were offered simply freedom, is he given, as Ike's father indicates but does not fully reveal, a peace offering of 10 acres of land? Why is he not given freedom but is instead being bought off? Then Ike's uncle records a complete reversal:

*3 Nov 1841 By Cash to Thucydus McCaslin \$200. dollars Set Up blaksmith in J. Dec 1841 Dide and burid in J. 17 feb 1854*

*Eunice Bought by Father in New Orleans 1807 \$650. dollars. Marrid to Thucydus 1809 Drownd in Crick Cristmas Day 1832 (255)*

To which his Uncle Buddy writes more precisely,

*June 21th 1833 Drownd herself*

and Ike's father adds,

*23 Jun 1833 Who in hell ever heard of a niger drowning him self*

and his uncle, not to be outdone, writes "unhurried, with a complete finality; the two identical entries might have been made with a rubber stamp save for the date: *Aug 13th Drownd herself*" (256). Now, shrouded in nocturnal secrecy, Ike discovers two more entries that clarify this recorded procreation of the word:

*Tomasina called Tomy Daughter of Thucydus @ Eunice Born 1810 dide in Child bed June 1833 and Burd. Yr stars fell*

....

*Turl Son of Thucydus @ Eunice Tomy born Jun 1833 yr stars fell Fathers will (257)*

At first here, the father procreates searching questions reborn in the son: Ike too has never heard of a "niger" drowning herself. But it may be the way for Ike's father of alerting his son and forcing him back over these entries. For he has subtly issued another question: why is a hardworking slave like Thucydus worth \$200 and Eunice worth \$650? Ike first thinks procreatively himself: his grandfather, Lucius Carothers, purchased Eunice as a wife for Thucydus. But he stops himself because stranger and more important than the slaves' marriage was old Carothers' extraordinary trip to New Orleans, which in no way fit his usual pattern of behavior, to secure

that marriage. Why would he suddenly go so far? Why New Orleans? How would he know what he might find there? Apparently, he had never been to New Orleans before, for there is no mention of it elsewhere in the family commissary ledgers. The only possible answer is that Carothers had known Eunice before he bought her.

The entry regarding Carothers' purchase of Eunice in 1807 also notes that she was married to Thucydus in 1809. If Eunice was purchased in New Orleans to be Thucydus' wife, why were they not married until two years later? And why did Eunice commit suicide when her daughter, Tomasina, was pregnant 23 years later? Something about Tomasina—born in 1810, within months of Eunice's marriage to Thucydus—must have been a factor. For Ike, the only way to make sense of these records is to assume that Carothers had impregnated Eunice giving birth to Tomasina and then covered this misdeed by marrying her to Thucydus. To ease his conscience, Carothers left a peace offering of 10 acres of land to Thucydus in his will. But the gesture did not work: Thucydus, who had some dignity of his own, some loyalty to his wife, and perhaps some loyalty to his foster child, refused the property. Both Ike's father and uncle must have known the reasons behind their father's bequest, because when Thucydus rejected it, they offered him a cash settlement instead.

Ike now realizes that Tomasina's son, Tomey's Turl, is not only his father's and his uncle's own half-brother—that McCaslin blood is intertwined with Beauchamp blood, white blood with black, procreating a miscegenated family—but that Tomey's Turl is also the grandson of his own father, old Lucius Carothers, who sired Tomasina. Knowing that, Ike knows all he wants to know about his family's breeding: "that was all. He would never need look at the ledgers again nor did he" (259). Ike's ancestors—the predecessors who would serve him as models—are whites who invade and impregnate blacks, commit incest with their own children, and try to buy off their guilt and shame, and blacks who struggle in turn to maintain their dignity and, when that fails, repudiate their family, even at the cost of suicide, to preserve the honor of the survivors.

Tomey's Turl courts Tennie Beauchamp—who takes her name, as most slaves did, from the white slaveowners for whom they worked—simultaneously with the courtship of Ike's parents (in an earlier episode

called "Was"; the courtship is witnessed by Cass). Terrel—Tomey's Terrel or Turl—and Tennie have three children: James (born in 1864), Sophonisba (named after Ike's mother, born in 1869), and Lucas, named for the line's progenitor (in 1874). Ike's father and uncle attempt to assuage their guilt over the actions of Ike's grandfather by tripling the \$1000 legacy old Lucius Carothers left for James, Fonsiba, and Lucas, but they do not pay it. Ike attempts to do so, but he at first fails: James has long since left the McCaslin plantation never to be found; Fonsiba married a black Yankee who fought in the War Between the States and moves with him to Arkansas where she denies her inheritance. But Lucas Beauchamp acts otherwise:

one morning Lucas stood suddenly in the doorway of the room where [Ike, now married] was reading the Memphis paper and he looked at the paper's dateline and thought *It's his birthday. He's twenty-one today* and Lucas said: "Whar's the rest of that money old Carothers left? I wants it. All of it." (269)

All of it may mean all of his share—or all of his and James's share—or the shares left to all three grandchildren/children of Lucius Carothers, since Fonsiba has declined to touch McCaslin money. Lucas claims his inheritance as forthrightly as Lucius claimed Eunice; moreover, he will not leave the McCaslin plantation for it is his family's plantation too. He remains as a farmer on a portion of the land. The proud Lucas Beauchamp of *Intruder in the Dust* is the proud Lucas of "The Bear" in *Go Down, Moses*; and as we learn in "The Fire and the Hearth," another chapter of the novel, he stalks into town wearing old Lucius' hat and his gold toothpick on a chain across his waistcoat. Miscegenation creates Lucas Beauchamp, procreates him, as the ledger in the commissary discloses; and his behavior emphasizes both bloodlines.

Lucas Beauchamp is thus introduced into the Yoknapatawpha County in "The Bear" section of *Go Down, Moses* by Ike's philosophy of God's lowly people sent to test and ultimately redeem the white man if only through Ike's relinquishment of the very McCaslin land Lucas hangs on to; and, later, by the facts recounted in the ledger that through two generations, not one, mixes the white and black blood in familial miscegenation. But "The Bear" steadfastly remains Ike's story, not Lucas'. Rather, Lucas' story is in the chapter called "The Fire and the Hearth" which combines "Gold Is Not Always," finished by February 23, 1940, purchased by the *Atlantic*

*Monthly* in September, and published in November that year, and "A Point of Law," published in *Collier's* on June 22, 1940. In this later work Roth Edmonds (born 1898), the twice-removed cousin of Ike (born 1867) runs the McCaslin plantation by inheritance and by default, since Ike refuses to tarnish himself with the land corrupted by the exploitation of his forebears. For Roth, Lucas Beauchamp is

*more like Carothers than all the rest of us put together, including old Carothers. He is both heir and prototype simultaneously of all the geography and climate and biology which sired old Carothers and all the rest of us and our kind, myriad, countless, faceless, even nameless now except himself who fathered himself, intact and complete, contemptuous, as old Carothers must have been, of all blood black white yellow or red, including his own. (114-15)*

But Lucas has earned his toughness, his irreducible strength and stubbornness in a trial by fire. It happened after Lucas began farming McCaslin land, now under the auspices of Roth's father Zack. It began the night Roth was born.

[Lucas] would never forget it—that night of early spring following ten days of such rain that even the old people remembered nothing to compare it with, and the white man's wife's time upon her and the creek out of banks until the whole valley rose, bled a river choked with down timber and drowned livestock until not even a horse could have crossed it in the darkness to reach a telephone and fetch the doctor back. And Molly [Lucas' wife], a young woman then and nursing their own first child, wakened at midnight by the white man himself and they followed then the white man through the streaming darkness to his house and Lucas waited in the kitchen, keeping the fire going in the stove, and Molly delivered the white child with none to help but Edmonds and then they knew that the doctor had to be fetched. So even before daylight he was in the water and crossed it, how he never knew, and was back by dark with the doctor, emerging from that death (At one time he had believed himself gone, done for, both himself and the mule soon to be two more white-eyed and slack-jawed pieces of flotsam, to be located by the circling of buzzards, swollen and no longer identifiable, a month hence when the water went down.) which he had entered not for his own sake but for that of old Carothers McCaslin who had sired him and Zack Edmonds both, to find the white man's wife dead and his own wife already established in the white man's house. It was as though on that louring and driving day he had crossed and then recrossed a kind of Lethe, emerging, being permitted to escape, buying as the price of life a world outwardly the same yet subtly and irrevocably altered. (45-46)

Lucas goes home; Molly remains with Zack to nurse Roth. But after six months of isolation, he goes once more to Zack's house to demand that his wife return to his home. "'I reckon you thought I wouldn't take her back, didn't you? . . . I'm a nigger,' Lucas said. 'But I'm a man too. I'm more than just a man. The same thing made my pappy that made your grandmaw. I'm going to take her back. . . . I wants her in my house tonight. You understand?'" (46-47).

But for all his claims of procreation from Lucius Carothers, Lucas, not entitled to his grandfather's name, senses that the black part of his blood heritage makes Molly as vulnerable before Zack as Eunice was before Carothers, and Tomasina after her. So he decides to seek revenge. He will do this fairly; lurking outside Zack's bedroom at night, he waits until dawn before attacking his own cousin (51).

"Put the razor down and I will talk to you," Edmonds said.

"You knowed I wasn't afraid, because you knowed I was a McCaslin too and a man-made one. And you never thought that, because I am a McCaslin too, I wouldn't. You never even thought that, because I am a nigger too, I wouldn't dare. No. You thought that because I am a nigger I wouldn't even mind. I never figured on the razor neither. But I gave you your chance. Maybe I didn't know what I might have done when you walked in my door, but I knowed what I wanted to do, what I believed I was going to do, what Carothers McCaslin would have wanted me to do. But you didn't come. You never even gave me the chance to do what old Carothers would have told me to do. You tried to beat me. And you wont never, not even when I am hanging dead from the limb this time tomorrow with the coal oil still burning, you wont never."

"Put down the razor, Lucas," Edmonds said.

"What razor? Lucas said. He raised his hand and looked at the razor as if he did not know he had it, had never seen it before, and in the same motion flung it toward the open window, the naked blade whirling almost blood-colored into the first copper ray of the sun before it vanished. "I dont need no razor. My nekkid hands will do. Now get the pistol under your pillow. . . . Get your pistol, white man." (52-53)

They arm-wrestle over the bed to get control of the pistol but Lucas' strength prevails.

*This is it*, the white man thought. . . . "You thought I'd do it quick, quicker than Isaac since it aint any land I would give up. I aint got any fine big McCaslin farm to give up. All I got to give up is McCaslin blood that rightfully aint even mine or at least aint worth much since old Carothers never seemed to miss much what he give to Tomey that night that made my father." (55-56)

But the gun misfires, and Lucas, defeated, returns to plowing his land, making his crops. But his miscegenated bloodline will not leave him alone. "‘How to God,’ [he asks], ‘can a black man ask a white man to please not lay down with his black wife? And even if he could ask it, how to God can the white man promise he wont?’" (58). Confronting the racial mix, the racial divide, no person in all *Go Down, Moses* asks questions so penetrating, so unanswerable. So Faulkner’s ineradicable poetics of procreation in the American South with its history of enslavement, exploitation, and miscegenation.

Ike’s troubled searching of McCaslin ledgers is the lynchpin of the chapter called "The Bear," and its darkest moment. Lucas’ irresolvable quarrel with Zack is the lynchpin of "The Fire and the Hearth" and its most frightening moment. The rest of "The Bear," framing the scene in the commissary, is about a hunt for the bear called Old Ben and the sorry hunt for squirrels when the lumbering company destroys the woods; it seems, somehow, less urgent, even irrelevant. The rest of "The Fire and the Hearth," set in 1942, the year the novel was published and among its last episodes, tells of Lucas at the age of 70. He too is hunting; and it too seems irrelevant. The elderly Lucas still farms during the day, although it is implied he has slowed down considerably. But this is due in part to the fact that he makes illegal whiskey in a hidden still at night. When young George Wilkins begins to copy him, Lucas fears they will both be discovered, and he tells Roth, now in charge of the plantation, that George is making moonshine. Roth calls the sheriff, but George is cannier than Lucas reckoned, and he is found by the sheriff’s men hauling Lucas’ still from its hiding place and setting it up behind his house: "‘who do you charge?’" the commissioner asks Roth. "‘You went out there to catch George, but all your evidence is against Lucas’" (63). Both turn to Nat, Lucas’ daughter and George’s intended bride. Legally, she is unable to testify against her father, but the shrewd and calculating George has already secretly married Nat to prevent her testifying against him. But he does not tell Lucas. Rather, he agrees to marry Nat and forget his charge if Lucas consents to the marriage and, as Nat’s requirement, improves George’s property, builds him a new back porch, and supplies him with a cook-stove. The foolish George outsmarts Lucas. And Lucas consents:

surrendering to George, taking him as a son-in-law, and playing innocent to the sheriff and his deputy, the once-proud McCaslin heir turning into a shuffling sambo before the law.

This diminution of Lucas is astonishing. But it only gets worse. In taking apart his still and hiding it from the law, he buries it in a hill which is, in reality, a sacred Indian burial mound. There he finds a single gold coin, and is convinced he has located a mound of buried treasure he remembered seeing white men bury years ago. He locates a salesman with a machine that can discover and track buried treasure and rents it from him. He is awed before the instrument.

The divining machine sat on the back seat and Lucas stood in the open door, looking at it—an oblong metal box with a handle for carrying at each end, compact and solid, efficient and business-like and complex with knobs and dials. He didn't touch it. He just leaned in the door and stood over it, blinking, bemused. He spoke to no one. "And I watched it work," he said. "I watched it with my own eyes." (79)

Of course it is fraudulent, and Lucas spends long hours, working through the night, hoping to find a legacy far greater than the McCaslins have left him. It is difficult to determine whether his motivation is to better that legacy; a desire to get a legacy, having been corrupted by the original money given him by Ike; or whether he means to get rich fast and nothing more. When the machine fails him and the cost mounts, he salts an Indian mound and rents the machine back to the salesman. But that divining machine like the hunt for gold rather than bear has become an obsession. Getting no sleep, he has trouble farming by day. And Molly cannot convince him to do otherwise. Moreover, he is able to enslave the salesman, at least temporarily, only by once more playing the dumb nigger.

Even the self-possessed Molly is deeply disturbed and she asks Roth to get her a divorce.

"A divorce" [he says]. "After forty-five years, at your age? What will you do? How will you get along without somebody—"

"I can work. I will. . . . I got to go clean anyway. Because he's crazy. Ever since he got that machine, he's done went crazy. . . . Because God say, 'What's rendered to My earth, it belong to Me unto I resurrect it. And let him or her touch it, and beware.' And I'm afraid. I got to go. I got to be free of him." (98-99)



Her words resonate slantingly with Ike's; she too would relinquish the land that greed has corrupted. The maligned Lucas has turned predator, maligns the land, his heritage, his family. Then on a Monday morning the hired hand Oscar, still wearing his Sunday clothes, confronts Roth.

"It's Aunt Molly Beauchamp," Oscar said. "She been missing since yestiddy sometime. We been hunting her all night. We found where she went down to the creek and we been tracking her. Only she so little and light she done hardly make a foot on the ground. Uncle Luke and George and Nat and Dan and some others are still hunting." . . . It was almost noon when they found her, lying on her face in the mud, the once immaculate apron and the clean faded skirts stained and torn, one hand still grasping the handle of the divining-machine as she had fallen with it. (120-21)

Roth helps Molly proceed with the divorce.

Before white law, the black Lucas is helpless. He can only ask Roth to intervene for him, convince him he has changed. For the once-proud Lucas, with the white blood of Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin in his veins, it is a moment of unparalleled humiliation.

"We aint gonter have no contest or no voce either," he said.

"You what?" the Chancellor said. "What's this?" Lucas had not once looked at Edmonds. As far as Edmonds could tell, he was not looking at the Chancellor either. Edmonds thought idiotically how it must have been years since he had seen Lucas uncovered; in fact, he could not remember at all being aware previously that Lucas' hair was gray.

"We dont want no voce," Lucas said. "I done changed my mind" [about continuing to hunt for gold].

"Are you the husband?" the Chancellor said.

"That's right," Lucas said.

"Say sir to the court!" the clerk said. Lucas glanced at the clerk.

"What?" he said. "I dont want no court. I done changed my——"

"Why, you uppity—" the clerk began.

"Wait," the Chancellor said. He looked at Lucas. "You have waited too late. This bill has been presented in due form and order. I am about to pronounce on it."

"Not now," Lucas said. "We dont want no voce. Roth Edmonds knows what I mean." (124)

The dynamic Lucas has learned to give in. He will next learn to give to: "He was not gone long. He returned, unhurried, and got into the car. He was carrying a small sack—obviously candy, a nickel's worth. He put it

into Molly's hand. 'Here,' he said. 'You aint got no teeth left you can still gum it'" (125). And he learns to give up in order to set himself free.

[Roth] was eating when Lucas entered and passed him and set the divining machine on the other end of the table. It was clean of mud now; it looked as though it had been polished, at once compact and complex and efficient-looking with its bright cryptic dials and gleaming knobs. Lucas stood looking down at it for a moment. Then he turned away. Until he left the room he did not once look toward it again. "There it is," he said. "Get rid of it. . . . I dont want to never see it again. Man has got three score and ten years on this earth, the Book says. He can want a heap in that time and a heap of what he can want is due to come to him, if he just starts in soon enough. I done waited too late to start. The money's there. Them two white men that slipped in here that night three years ago and dug up twenty-two thousand dollars and got clean away with it before anybody saw them. I know. I saw the hole where they filled it up again, and the churn it was buried in. But I am near to the end of my three score and ten, and I reckon to find the money aint for me." (126-27)

To give in; to give to; to give up: receding, Lucas disappears from the novel altogether. The proud heir of Carothers has transformed himself into a humbled sambo. "Bound to each other through seven generations that begin and end with miscegenation," Philip M. Weinstein writes of *Go Down, Moses*, "the blacks see in the whites the conditions they cannot escape, the whites see in the blacks the guilt they cannot assuage."<sup>2</sup> Once procreation involves miscegenation, Faulkner seems to be saying, it is self-defeating—like Eunice, suicidal; like Lucas, abject and totally dominated.

This is a troubling, perhaps tragic outcome. But Faulkner will not let us forget it. The very last chronological event in the novel is the anticipated birth of George and Nat Wilkins' first child. This birth only carries on the miscegenation which Lucas bequeaths them through his own bloodline. In a racist society such as that of Yoknapatawpha, whatever its desires, clear-eyed expectations seem to dictate that when procreation involves miscegenation, it may not be creative at all.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>All quotations are from William Faulkner, *Go Down, Moses* (New York: Vintage International, 1990).

<sup>2</sup>Philip M. Weinstein, *Faulkner's Subject: A Cosmos No One Owns* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992) 62.

## The Devil's Advocate: A Response to Clay Daniel\*

ÅKE BERGVALL

In Book 17 of *The City of God* St Augustine briefly discusses the uses and misuses of allegory as a hermeneutic tool for students of scripture. In his younger days he had been quite facile in his application of ingenious allegorical interpretations (of Genesis in particular), often at the expense of the literal level. He has come to revise his hermeneutic practice, however, and now makes an important distinction: "I do not censure those who may have been able to carve out some spiritual interpretation from every historical fact recounted, so long as they take good care first and foremost to adhere to the historical fact" (17.3).<sup>1</sup> I believe this is solid advice in our approach to allegory in general, and it has for me two useful correlates: 1) never be careless about the literal level in an attempt to look for deeper allegorical meanings, and 2) be careful to distinguish the various levels of interpretation.

As I read Clay Daniel's thought-provoking reading of *Paradise Lost* I was often reminded of Augustine's advice. The literal level of *Paradise Lost* concerns the cosmic struggle between God and Satan, including the fall of humanity and the redemptive work of Christ (even if the latter is only foretold). Both the tree in the garden and the cross of Calvary refer within the poem to historical facts (in Augustine's sense) that in the poem function on the same interpretative level. It is true that in biblical typology an earlier fact (such as the Edenic tree) may prefigure a later fact (such as the cross), but Daniel argues for something much more radical: the archangel Michael (in *PL* 12.415-18), and by extension Milton himself, "metaphorically reassigns [the] Crucifixion to Adam's—and God's enemies," that is,

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\*Reference: Clay Daniel, "Crucifixion Imagery in *Paradise Lost*," *Connotations* 8.2 (1998/99): 153-74.

concludes Daniel, to Satan and his devils (153). The devils' torment in hell thus prefigures Christ's suffering on the cross; indeed Daniel throughout books 1 and 10 of *Paradise Lost* sees Satan as an ironic foil to Christ, "reassigned" not only to the crucifixion but also to other christological events such as baptism and resurrection. To picture Satan as crucified was to me a novel thought, whetting my appetite to find out what had been missing in previous readings of the poem. In that respect Daniel's article is stimulating and engaging. Yet upon further thought I feel a resistance to the claims made. To stimulate further debate I shall therefore assume the role of "the devil's advocate" in this rejoinder.

One of my problems with the essay is that Daniel never clarifies the theological or narratological point of this reassignment of christological features to Satan. In short, the essay lacks a broader interpretative context. This is sorely needed since Daniel's basic contention goes against the grain of Christian teaching, as well as biblical typology. Equally worrisome, the methodology used too often violates Augustine's strictures on allegorical readings. (While Daniel never uses the word, his "metaphorical reassignment" is clearly based on an allegorical methodology.) In its absence we are left with a number of less than persuasive points of contact between interpretative levels. Individual words or phrases—such as "Adamantine Chains," "darkness visible," "Pilot," or "Mast"—picked seemingly at random among the thousands of words available in book 1 are made to carry a heavy interpretative load. At other times doubtful comparisons twice or thrice removed from the text are adopted. For example, the devils' battle cry is tied to Jesus' cry on the cross, which through Matthew 27:49-52 is linked to earthquakes. Daniel then goes on to Milton's commentary on the scriptural passage, leading up to the claim that "the devils are still 'Sons of God'" (163), because, if I understand this correctly, both Milton and the Church Fathers connect the earthquakes with the Harrowing of Hell. Somewhere along this chain of proof Daniel loses me, and even more so when we are told that Milton did not believe in the Harrowing of Hell anyway, which somehow makes it "more appropriate" for the poet's purpose of portraying Satan as a false messiah (164).

To take another example, a confusion of both typology and metaphorical levels occurs in sections VI and VII, where, based on the analogy of Moses

lifting his staff at the crossing of the Red Sea, baptism is associated with Satan brandishing his spear. The crossing of the Red Sea is of course a well-known typological sign of baptism. However, as Daniel himself acknowledges, when Milton connects the devils with the Old Testament event, the comparison is not with Moses and his redeemed people, but with the punishment of the drowned "*Memphian Chivalry*" (PL 1.307).<sup>2</sup> The point is not unimportant. It is Moses and the People of Israel (or Noah and his Ark) that prefigure baptism and redemption, not the people who drown in the Red Sea or the Flood. The drowning enemies may well suggest the sins of the "old life" being washed away in baptism, but it is not *they* who are baptized. A parodic use of "baptism" as applied to these enemies, whether Satan or the Egyptians, is therefore misleading besides being theologically heterodox. The latter possibility might be Daniel's hidden agenda, since he starts out by contrasting his readings with Milton's "brief, orthodox account" of the Crucifixion (153). This is certainly a legitimate critical approach, but it then needs to be made explicit and better argued. As it stands, Daniel's contention leads to some startling juxtapositions of allegorical levels, such as the claim that the devils "have rejected 'ingrafting in Christ,' effected by baptism" (158). If we want to attend to the historical and literal level, at what point in the poem are the devils given the option of Christian baptism? Just the thought seems surreal.

Equally problematic to me is the essay's violating Augustine's stricture on care about the literal level, that is the basic semantics of a text. For example, Daniel claims that the devils' "torture" in hell is their punishment "for provoking Heaven's king, which recalls that Jesus was crucified for challenging the princes [sic] of this world" (154), that is, Satan is to God as Jesus is to Pilate and Herod. The problem is of course that Jesus' well-known saying (in John 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11) reads "prince of this world" in the singular. The phrase has always been interpreted as referring to Satan, not to any human rulers, which would create a circular argument by which Satan is to God as Jesus is to Satan.

However, much more damaging to Daniel's whole argument is the fact that the initial claim that Milton reassigns the crucifixion to the devils is based on careless citation: "But to the Cross he nails thy Enemies . . . and

the sins / Of all mankind" (12.415-18, cited on p. 153). In Daniel's elliptical citation "thy Enemies" and "the sins" are presented as parallel events, with the enemies assumed to refer to Satan and his crew. A restored citation, however, reads as follows:

But to the Cross he nails thy Enemies,  
 The Law that is against thee, and the sins  
 Of all mankind, with him there crucifi'd,  
 Never to hurt them more who rightly trust  
 In this his satisfaction; . . . (12.415-19)

First, to say with Daniel that Milton "appeared to avoid the subject of the Crucifixion" because it is so "brief" does not seem to fit a passage that in its entirety runs some 40 lines (12.393-435), but more importantly, the "Enemies" prove to be not the devils at all but "the Law . . . and the sins," which according to St Paul were abrogated through Christ's propitiatory death. Of special relevance is Colossians 2:13-15 (here cited from the Authorized Version), a passage I would claim is a significant subtext behind Milton's lines:

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he [i.e., God] quickened together with him [i.e., Christ], having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us [i.e., the law], which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.<sup>3</sup>

This passage first of all supports a reading of sin and law as the enemies nailed to the cross *together with Christ*. Of greater importance to our discussion, it also places the "principalities and powers," traditionally identified with Satan and his demons, in the context of the crucifixion. Not, however, because they like the law were nailed to the cross, but because the crucifixion of Christ overthrew their schemes. It was Christ who turned the defeat of a criminal's death into a victory over the enemies, "triumphing over them in it," i.e., on the cross. As all of *Paradise Lost* shows, this was an act of humility that would have been completely alien to Satan.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Augustine, *The City of God*, ed. Vernon J. Bourke, and trans. Gerald G. Walsh et al. (Garden City: Doubleday-Image, 1958).

<sup>2</sup>Citations from *Paradise Lost* are taken from John Milton, *The Complete English Poetry*, ed. John T. Shawcross (Garden City: Doubleday-Anchor, 1963).

<sup>3</sup>See also Romans 5:12-20, 7:4-25, or Galatians 2:19-20, 4:4.



## Assessments of the Urban Experience: Toni Morrison's *Jazz* and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

SYLVIA MAYER

In an essay on the first four novels of Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Tar Baby*, Susan Willis observes that the temporal focus of these texts "pinpoints strategic moments in black American history during which social and cultural forms underwent disruption and transformation."<sup>1</sup> This statement applies to an even larger extent to Morrison's trilogy *Beloved*, *Jazz*, and *Paradise*. In *Beloved* and in *Paradise* she explores the transformative impact of historical phenomena such as the Middle Passage, the Reconstruction era, and the Vietnam War. In *Jazz*, Morrison focuses on the impact of the large-scale migration of Southern blacks to the urban metropolis of New York City since the last decades of the nineteenth century and on the quality of the emerging first black urban culture. Depicting the experiences of her cast of characters and probing into their "interior lives,"<sup>2</sup> she tries to capture and assess the transformative energies of Harlem in the 1920s, at that time "the capital of the Black world."<sup>3</sup>

For the purpose of such an assessment Morrison employs various narrative techniques, the most conspicuous, of course, her stylistic reliance on elements of jazz music. Yet, in addition to that, her novel is marked by various instances of intertextual dialogue that place the text within a net of predominantly 'classic' modernist texts. Richard Hardack, for example, has shown in which way Faulkner's *Light in August* figures in *Jazz*, and critics like Nicolas F. Pici have argued that the novel presents a modernist sensibility, i.e. a sensibility characterised by a pervasive sense of historical change and cultural flux and fragmentation.<sup>4</sup>

In this essay I shall analyse a further instance of intertextual dialogue with one of the founding texts of literary modernism. In *Jazz* Morrison crosses generic boundaries and engages in a critical intertextual relation-

ship with T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, a text which like Morrison's novel addresses the urban experience in the aftermath of the First World War. Morrison employs thematic correspondences and a similar narrative technique in order to accomplish a revisionary purpose: while acknowledging the significance of the issues raised in *The Waste Land*, she rejects its inclusiveness of vision. Rather than corroborating the bleak assessment of the postwar urban experience expressed in Eliot's poem she develops a multilayered, more ambiguous picture which is based on the historically and culturally specific experience of African Americans. Morrison's intertextual project can be regarded as an attempt to firmly inscribe the African American presence in this period of North American—or, for that matter, Western—history, culture, and literature.

Morrison's intertextual response to Eliot's text becomes immediately discernible. In its focus on a 'burial of the dead' and on descriptions of the city experience the opening section of *Jazz* evokes the opening section of *The Waste Land*. It becomes obvious that Morrison's and Eliot's texts share a thematically central issue: they are both concerned with the quality of human life and human relationships in the postwar metropolis.

In *The Waste Land* it is the title of the first section, "The Burial of the Dead," a reference to the burial service of the Church of England, which indicates the negative assessment of human experience in the city that permeates the poem as a whole. Human life and human relationships are characterised by a death-in-life quality. The voices which the reader encounters in this section confront him or her predominantly with experiences of loss and betrayal, with memories of unfulfilled sensual and emotional desire, with feelings of despair and hopelessness. Life lacks vitality, beauty, love and joyfulness, and human relationships are characterised by emotional and spiritual sterility.

*Jazz* opens with the reference to a 'real' burial of the dead. The narrative voice relates the events that surround Dorcas Manfred's funeral, and in doing so also presents a vision of human life characterised by a death-in-life quality. Dorcas Manfred is dead, Joe Trace killed her, and Violet Trace interrupted the funeral and cut the dead woman's face. The killing and the desecration of the corpse mark the culmination of a process of estrangement between Joe and Violet which evokes the two key terms of

the thematically crucial third line of *The Waste Land*: Eliot's city dwellers are haunted by "memory and desire,"<sup>5</sup> and so are Joe and Violet Trace. Joe's memories of his mother Wild, who rejected him, and his desire to be finally acknowledged motivate his relationship with Dorcas which, however, ends with tracking her down and killing her. Violet's memories of her mother's suicide and a desire to have children cause severe mental problems, a withdrawal from her husband, and her desperate action at the funeral. Both attacks on Dorcas are instances of a desperate search for love. Unable to communicate and thus to share with each other the burden of haunting memories and tormenting desire, they increasingly live lives of emotional isolation. As a couple, the Traces share the experience of the couples in "A Game of Chess," the second section of *The Waste Land*.

Morrison's reference to this burial of the dead thus initially confirms Eliot's negative assessment. A comparison of the respective first city passages of *Jazz* and *The Waste Land*, however, reveals a first major revision of the precursor text. The last part of "The Burial of the Dead" presents the urban metropolis as a place of anonymity, estrangement and silent suffering:

Unreal City,  
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,  
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
I had not thought death had undone so many.  
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,  
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. (WL 60-65)

In these lines the negative assessment of human experience, its death-in-life quality, becomes explicit and is, moreover, extended in scope. The masses of city dwellers are perceived as a crowd of people who are no longer distinguishable as individuals and who live burdened, isolated lives. Eliot's allusion to Dante—the phrase "undone" by death refers to a few lines of the *Inferno*—emphasises that they live in a kind of hell. His allusion to the following lines of Baudelaire's poem "Les Septs Vieillards" stresses the omnipresence of suffering in the city and offers a reason for it: "Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves, / Ou le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant." It is 'spectres' of an unbearable past, unbearable memories, that haunt the city dwellers.<sup>6</sup>

The emphatic statement "I'm crazy about this City"<sup>7</sup> which introduces the first city passage in *Jazz* echoes the beginning of both *The Waste Land* and Baudelaire's poem. Yet, rather than drawing a picture of anonymity, estrangement, and silent suffering, Morrison's narrative voice continues by creating a much more complex scenario. It starts to delineate both the dangers and the opportunities that city life provides for the African American inhabitants of postwar Harlem. As a result, a much more ambiguous assessment of the city experience is presented.

On the one hand the city is depicted as dangerous. There is violence and criminality. The narrative voice points out that it is necessary "to take precaution," to be alert and ready to defend oneself: "[. . .] you have to understand what it's like, taking on a big city: I'm exposed to all sorts of ignorance and criminality" (J 8). On the other hand, however, the city is teeming with opportunity:

The A&P hires a colored clerk. [. . .] Nobody wants to be an emergency at Harlem Hospital but if the Negro surgeon is visiting, pride cuts down the pain. And although the hair of the first class of colored nurses was declared unseemly for the official Bellevue nurse's cap, there are thirty-five of them now—all dedicated and superb in their profession. (J 7-8)

The passage refers to one of the factors that made Harlem so attractive for black migrants from the rural South: economic opportunity. Employment and educational opportunities offered the chance for a better life. James de Jongh, for instance, has pointed out: "Life in New York may have been harsh, but the migrants themselves often came from backgrounds of such extreme poverty and oppression that Harlem, in contrast, seemed to be the Promised Land."<sup>8</sup>

Another city passage which comments on the motivation of the black migrants that pour into the city around the turn of the century and which can be read as a revisionist response to Eliot's London 'crowds,' points toward a second factor that made the city so attractive for African Americans:

However they came, when or why, the minute the leather of their soles hit the pavement—there was no turning around. Even if the room they rented was smaller than the heifer's stall and darker than a morning privy, they stayed to

look at their number, hear themselves in an audience, feel themselves moving down the street among hundreds of others who moved the way they did, and who, when they spoke, regardless of the accent, treated language like the same intricate, malleable toy designed for their play. (J 32-33)

Moving in such a 'crowd' means sharing one's cultural traditions and values with as large a number of people as never before. Despite the fact that racist discrimination continues in the North, life in the city is to a large extent experienced as exhilarating and empowering. Moreover, it has a liberating quality because moving in such large 'crowds' also means unprecedented safety, in de Jongh's words: "[. . .] the relative safety of blacks in Harlem stood in stark contrast to their evident oppression in the rest of the black world."<sup>9</sup>

Related to this aspect of safety are passages which show that Morrison's city dwellers, like Eliot's and Baudelaire's, are also haunted by 'spectres.' However, rather than creating such 'spectres,' the city offers relief from them:

Part of why they loved [the city] was the specter they left behind. The slumped spines of the veterans of the 27th Battalion betrayed by the commander for whom they had fought like lunatics. The eyes of thousands, stupefied with disgust at having been imported by Mr. Armour, Mr. Swift, Mr. Montgomery Ward to break strikes then dismissed for having done so. [. . .] The praying palms, the raspy breathing, the quiet children of the ones who had escaped from Springfield Ohio, Springfield Indiana, Greensburg Indiana, Wilmington Delaware, New Orleans Louisiana, after raving whites had foamed all over the lanes and yards of home. (J 33)

The spectre which haunts the black Harlemites is the spectre of racism. This passage is representative of various others in which Morrison refers to historically specific instances of discrimination, exploitation, and violence. Here she refers to the discriminatory treatment against black soldiers and veterans after the war, to the abuse of black workers as strike breakers, and to some of the large number of lynchings and attacks against black communities. The migrants had been "running from want and violence" (J 33) and despite the fact that racism does not end in the urban north, Harlem nevertheless offers a much higher degree of security.<sup>10</sup>

By insisting on historical specificity, Morrison qualifies the inclusiveness of vision which is established in "The Burial of the Dead," an inclusiveness

of vision that characterises *The Waste Land* as a whole. She acknowledges the significance of the issues the poem raises, but at the same time emphasises that it is indispensable to acknowledge differences of experience as well.

In drawing her character Joe Trace, Morrison makes conspicuous use of fish imagery and by means of this introduces a figure that is central to Eliot's *The Waste Land*: the Fisher King. Eliot's concern with the possibility of social, cultural, and spiritual recovery led him to an employment of what he in his famous review of James Joyce's *Ulysses* called the 'mythical method'.<sup>11</sup> Eliot incorporated various myths of regeneration in his poem, among them fertility myths in which the figure of the Fisher King is central.<sup>12</sup> The king is impotent, either by illness, by having been wounded, or by old age, and, correspondingly, his land is laid waste, and his people are likewise infertile. The king is waiting to be restored, a task which has to be performed by a stranger who is able to ask or answer certain ritual questions.

A whole series of phrases and passages that contain fish imagery establish Joe as a Fisher King figure. As a young man, still living in the South, Joe is, for example, portrayed as an accomplished fisher. Placed in a pastoral setting he experiences "a couple of hours' spectacular fishing" (J 176). When he leaves the South he gives "away his fishing pole" (J 107), and for one of his first jobs in the city "Joe cleaned fish at night" (J 82). He is linked to Christ, who was able to "feed the world on a fish" (J 120), and in a passage in which Joe remembers trailing Dorcas he twice recalls some women in the beauty parlour who brought "fish dinners" (J 131). To be added to this use of imagery are descriptions of Joe as desolate and devoid of all potency, and the various references that call him 'an old man.' The narrative voice, for example, speculates at length on the effects which the growing awareness that he "isn't young anymore" (J 120f.) may have had on him, and, even more significantly, it is Felice, Dorcas' friend, who repeatedly refers to him as "that old man" (J 201).

Fish imagery is introduced on one of the first pages of the novel. It is used in the first description of the Traces' apartment: "A poisoned silence floated through the rooms like a big fishnet that Violet alone slashed through with loud recriminations." (J 5). The apartment is presented as

a 'land laid waste,' and Joe and Violet, its inhabitants, live a thoroughly 'infertile' life: their marriage is marked by childlessness and by silence, by the inability to talk to each other, especially about their haunting memories and their acute sense of a lack of love. Joe's situation is desperate during the first days of the year 1926. He is introduced as a Fisher King whose life has turned into a failure.

While in *The Waste Land* restoration of the king, his land, and his people is not achieved—the words of the thunder, spoken in the fifth section of the poem, only hint at the possibility of regeneration—, in *Jazz* it is granted. Morrison presents a stranger who is able to ask the Fisher King the necessary question. This stranger is Felice, Dorcas Manfred's friend.<sup>13</sup> The young woman—whose name alludes to a character in Claude McKay's novel *Home to Harlem* (1929) that also bears redemptive powers—arrives at the Traces' apartment on a day of fine spring weather, marked by an atmosphere of generosity and ease. Her goal is twofold: she wants to find out about the ring she lent Dorcas the night of the killing, and, more significantly, she wants to tell Joe Trace that the intensity of his grief might be unnecessary. She has heard that "the old man was all broke up. Cried all day and all night. Left his job and wasn't good for a thing." (J 204-05) Felice knows that Joe's bullet did not kill Dorcas rightaway. It hit her shoulder, and only because Dorcas rejected help, she bled to death. However, more important than this piece of information is a question Felice asks, the question essential for restoration. She talks to Joe about Dorcas and, ultimately, asks him: "'Why'd you shoot at her if you loved her?'" (J 213) Joe's—the Fisher King's—restoration depends on coming to terms with the question of how to love. Pondering Felice's question Joe realises that he "[d]idn't know how to love anybody" because he was "scared" (J 213). Since his childhood, since the rejection by his mother Wild, Joe has been haunted by a feeling of worthlessness and, as a result of this, has been scared to lose whatever he loved. This feeling is described as an "inside nothing" (J 37) and points toward the absence of what is vital for being able to love someone: an affirmation of one's self. Joe has to learn the same lesson that Sethe, the protagonist of *Beloved*, has to learn, namely that he is his "best thing."<sup>14</sup>

The fact that at least the first steps toward restoration have been taken is hinted at by Felice's remark that she has seen Joe "smile twice now and laugh out loud once" (J 207). And, in addition to this, restoration is signalled by the last image that characterises the Traces' apartment. In contrast to the image of the 'poisoned silence' the apartment is now described as filled by music:

Somebody in the house across the alley put a record on and 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. (J 214)

While Morrison employs a key concept of *The Waste Land* for the purpose of drawing the character of Joe Trace, she literally improvises upon two of its most enigmatic passages in order to create her character Violet Trace. Violet's story emerges from eighteen lines of section five which bears the title "What the Thunder Said."

What is that sound high in the air  
Murmur of *maternal lamentation*  
Who are those hooded hordes swarming  
Over endless plains, stumbling in *cracked* earth  
Ringed by the flat horizon only  
What is the city over the mountains  
*Cracks* and reforms and bursts in the *violet air*  
Falling towers  
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria  
Vienna London  
Unreal

A woman drew her long black *hair* out tight  
And fiddled *whisper music* on those strings  
And bats with *baby faces* in the *violet light*  
Whistled, and beat their wings  
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall  
And upside down in air were towers  
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours  
And *voices singing* out of *empty cisterns* and *exhausted wells*.

(WL 366-84; my emphasis)



Important are, first of all, the questions asked in lines 366, 368-69, and 371 because they establish the setting of *Jazz*. The line "What is that sound high in the air" (WL 366) refers to the sounds expressive of the migration and city experience which to make sense of is the goal of the narrative voice or voices of *Jazz*. The lines "Who are those hooded hordes swarming / Over endless plains" (WL 368-69) can be read as a reference to the large numbers of black migrants that have, for instance, to escape from the Vienna region after their homes and their land have been devastated by fire (cf. *Jazz* 173-74).<sup>15</sup> It is, moreover, echoed by Joe's remark on the recruiting of black workers for the war economy: "They were bringing in swarms of colored to work during the War." (J 128) The line "What is the city over the mountains" (WL 371) finally sharpens the focus and underlines the centrality of the urban experience.

A closer look at the passage then reveals that Morrison focuses on the experiences of one specific migrant, on the story of Violet Trace. Several words and phrases (those which are marked by italics) refer to crucial details of Violet's life. The "murmur of maternal lamentation" in line 367 and the "voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells" in line 384 can be read in relation to the suicide of Violet's mother, Rose Dear, a traumatic experience for the girl Violet which is to shape her life as an adult woman. Rose Dear is overcome by the racism and poverty that hits her family during the Reconstruction period. Left alone by a husband who is persecuted because of his political activities, she is unable to care for her five children and for herself and sinks into a depression. Ultimately, she puts an end to her life by throwing herself into a well. Violet watches how she "jumped in the well" (J 99) and "never forgot Rose Dear or the place she had thrown herself into" (J 100-01).

The haunting memory of this incident—the narrative voice points out that "[t]he well sucked her sleep" (J 102)—causes her decision never to have children of her own: "The important thing, the biggest thing Violet got out of that was to never have children" (J 102). She fears the consequences of motherhood for herself and for a child. After a few years in the city, however, Violet starts to regret this decision. She begins to long for a child, and imagines this child as "a brightness that could be carried in her arms. Distributed, if need be, into places dark as the bottom of a

well" (J 22). The thematisation of this longing for a child echoes the image of the "bats with baby faces" of line 379 of *The Waste Land* and marks an additional 'improvisation' on the phrase "maternal lamentations."

The word 'crack,' twice used in Eliot's passage (in lines 363 and 366), points toward the central image Morrison uses for the purpose of describing the consequences of Violet's increasing inability to cope with her haunting memories and her acute sense of lack. They manifest themselves in her "private cracks" (J 22). Violet's self 'cracks,' it splits in two. In a long passage in *Jazz* she is sitting in a drugstore, drinking malt beer, thinking about her divided self (cf. J 89-114). One part of herself, the calm and peaceful one—"this Violet"—observes and is disturbed by the other part, the aggressive one—"that Violet." "That Violet" is the one that enters the funeral of Dorcas Manfred and attempts to cut the dead woman's face; it is the one that abruptly sits down in the middle of a street blocking the traffic; and it is the one that loses control over language: "[. . .] Violet had stumbled into a crack or two. Felt the anything-at-all begin in her mouth. Words connected only to themselves pierced an otherwise normal comment" (J 23).<sup>16</sup>

The narrative voice describes such instances of 'private cracks' in the following way:

I call them cracks because that is what they were. Not openings or breaks, but dark fissures in the globe light of the day. [. . .] Sometimes when Violet isn't paying attention she *stumbles* onto these cracks, like the time when, instead of putting her left heel forward, she stepped back and folded her legs in order to sit in the street. (J 22-23; my emphasis)

The passage, first of all, echoes lines 368-69 of *The Waste Land*. It identifies Violet as one of those "hooded hordes [. . .] stumbling in cracked earth." Secondly, and even more importantly, Morrison's use of light imagery creates the essential link between her character Violet Trace and what in *The Waste Land* is a quality of light which permeates the passages: it connects the character with the phrases "violet air" (WL 372) and "violet light" (WL 79).

The image of hair—given in line 377 of *The Waste Land*: "A woman drew her long black hair out tight / And fiddled whisper music on those strings"

(WL 377-78)—establishes a final, essential link to Morrison's character. Violet is a hairdresser, a profession to which the reader finds almost innumerable references in *Jazz*. One passage in the novel draws a particularly close connection to the two lines mentioned above. Violet is described pondering over the photo of Dorcas which she has placed on the mantelpiece over the fireplace in the apartment: "When she isn't trying to humiliate Joe, she is admiring the dead girl's hair; when she isn't cursing Joe [. . .] she is having whispered conversations with the corpse in her head" (J 15). These whispered conversations evoke the "whisper music" (WL 378) of *The Waste Land* and present one more 'sound' of the city which Morrison's narrative voice tries to interpret.

Morrison's literary improvisation upon the two passages of *The Waste Land* from which the story of a black woman emerges marks a significant contrast to the 'cubistically' portrayed female figures of Eliot's poem. By 'gendering' a quality of light she insists once more that in order to draw an adequate picture of the modern city experience it is indispensable to inquire into the experience of the individual and her or his social milieu. Her focus on the story of a black woman is of special revisionary importance because it provides insight into an experience totally absent from *The Waste Land*.

Of crucial importance in Morrison's intertextual engagement with Eliot's poem is, finally, the correspondence in terms of narrative perspective. Both texts present a chorus of voices which may be read as distinct or as merging in one single voice. Line 218 of *The Waste Land* introduces the figure of Tiresias which in a note Eliot defines as "the most important personage in the poem"<sup>17</sup> in whom all the others merge. Correspondingly, the ten sections of *Jazz* can be read as the performance of a solo voice. Even if we consider the novel a performance of an ensemble of voices, there is still a dominant voice which becomes identifiable by its self-reflective passages. However, while *The Waste Land* and *Jazz* share this feature of narrative technique, they differ considerably in terms of the authority that is granted their respective dominant voice.

Eliot endows Tiresias with a high degree of authority. He grants him the faculty of 'foretelling,' the capability of predicting human behavior: "Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs / Perceived the scene, and foretold

the rest—" (WL 228-29) Moreover, Eliot continues his note with the statement: "What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem."<sup>18</sup> Tiresias' bleak vision of the typist and "the young man carbuncular" (WL 231), another situation that depicts human contact totally devoid of love or, at least, empathy, must thus be regarded as the final reinforcement of *The Waste Land's* negative assessment of the postwar urban experience. In contrast to this, Morrison's dominant narrative voice experiences its fallibility. At the end of the novel the three remaining protagonists, Joe, Violet, and Felice, refuse to comply with its 'plotting': their relationship does not lead to the predicted disaster, but gains a creative, life-sustaining quality. The narrative voice is forced to acknowledge: "I missed the people altogether. [ . . . ] I was sure one would kill the other. [ . . . ] I was so sure it would happen. That the past was an abused record with no choice but to repeat itself at the crack and no power on earth could lift the arm that held the needle." The voice's insight that these city dwellers have turned out to be "original, complicated, changeable" (J 220) marks Morrison's final major transformation of Eliot's text. Its negative assessment of the postwar urban experience is rejected by means of an insistence on human possibility.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Susan Willis, "Eruptions of Funk: Historicizing Toni Morrison," *Specifying: Black Women Writing the American Experience* (London: Routledge, 1990) 85.

<sup>2</sup>Morrison coins this term in "The Site of Memory," *Inventing the Truth: the Art and Craft of Memoir*, ed. William Zinsser (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) 111. In this essay as in various others she claims that it is especially important to articulate the psychological dimension of the experiences of African Americans since this aspect has been neglected for too long a time.

<sup>3</sup>This term refers to the eminent cultural significance of Harlem after the First World War, to the intellectual and artistic movement of the *Harlem Renaissance*. See, for example, Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (London: Oxford UP, 1971), esp. chapter 1 "Harlem: Capital of the Black World," 13-51. Morrison does not focus on

the milieu of intellectuals and artists, but she employs various allusions, and especially her narrative technique, her employment of elements of jazz, conveys the creative spirit of the age.

<sup>4</sup>Richard Hardack, "'A Music Seeking Its Words': Double-Timing and Double-Consciousness in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*," *Callaloo* 18.2 (1995): 451-71; Nicolas F. Pici, "Trading Meanings: The Breath of Music in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*," *Connotations* 7.3 (1997/98): 395.

<sup>5</sup>T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, line 3. *The Waste Land* was first published as a monograph in 1922 (New York: Boni and Liveright); the edition I use for this essay is *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986).

<sup>6</sup>In his "Notes on *The Waste Land*" Eliot refers to these two sources himself. The reference to Dante is: *Inferno* III, 55-57 (see note to line 63).

<sup>7</sup>Toni Morrison, *Jazz* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992) 7.

<sup>8</sup>James de Jongh, *Vicious Modernism: Black Harlem and the Literary Imagination*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) 6.

<sup>9</sup>De Jongh 7.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Making of America* (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1971) 126-55.

<sup>11</sup>For Eliot's definition of 'myth' as a time-transcending means of ordering and giving significance to human experience see his famous review of James Joyce's *Ulysses*: "Ulysses, Order and Myth," *The Dial* (1923): 480-83.

<sup>12</sup>Crucial for Eliot's technique is, as he himself acknowledges in his "Notes to *The Waste Land*," Jessie L. Weston's study on the origins of the grail legend, *From Ritual to Romance* [1920] (New York: Doubleday, 1957).

<sup>13</sup>Felice bears some of the traits Weston identifies in her study: she resembles, for instance, the type of hero who "takes the place of a knight mysteriously slain in his company" (Weston 12), and embodies the "youthful" type of hero (cf. Weston 15).

<sup>14</sup>Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987) 273. Joe's lack of an affirmation of self is a variation on the theme that preoccupies Morrison in *Beloved* and in *Jazz*, the theme of self-sabotage. Reflecting upon the motivation of Margaret Garner, the slave woman who killed her children rather than have them taken back to slavery, Morrison comments: "She had placed all of the value of her life in something outside herself." The same holds true for the young Harlem woman, the model for the character of Dorcas Manfred in *Jazz*, who died rather than reveal the name of the man who shot her. Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison, "A Conversation," *Southern Review* 2 (1985): 584.

<sup>15</sup>This is how Joe Trace describes the events: "One week of rumors, two days of packing, and nine hundred Negroes, encouraged by guns and hemp, left Vienna, rode out of town on wagons or walked on their feet to who knew (or cared) where." (J 173-74).

<sup>16</sup>Important to note with respect to Violet's 'cracks' is that the facsimile edition of *The Waste Land* contains an unpublished poem which Eliot wrote in 1914 and which he used as a source for lines 366 to 384. The poem presents a woman who bears striking resemblance to Morrison's character Violet as she seems to be haunted by nightmarish visions and as a result loses her language. Compare, especially, line three (with

variants): "Concatenated words wherefrom/from which/whereof the sense had/seemed/was gone." T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land. A Facsimile Edition and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1971) 113-15.

<sup>17</sup>Eliot, *The Waste Land*, note to line 70.

<sup>18</sup>Eliot, *The Waste Land*, note to line 70; emphasis in the original.

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## Representations and Transformations in the Fiction of Kojo Laing: The "Language of Authentic Being" Revisited\*

M. E. KROPP DAKUBU

In a recent article in this journal, Francis Ngaboh-Smart presented an interpretation of Kojo Laing's novel, *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars* as a representation of African identity in the modern context of faceless transnational technology. In doing so he claimed to take serious issue with some of my own statements on Laing's use of language. The following remarks respond to some of the points he raised.

In that article, Ngaboh-Smart remarked (with reference to an earlier article of mine) that "... by saying that Laing's work is concerned with the articulation of an "authentic experience," Dakubu presents Laing as yet re-accentuating his precursors' modernist construction of postcolonial identity, for Dakubu's notion of "authenticity" will probably not make sense to us if we do not believe in the enormous emphasis on subjectivity in modern culture" (72). I confess I do not entirely understand this statement, but he is quite right about subjectivity, for the informing spirit behind Laing's literary enterprise is nothing if not subjective. There also seems to be some confusion here concerning the application of the psychoanalytic concept of "authenticity" propounded by the Scottish psychiatrist R. D. Laing (no relation to the novelist), which has nothing directly to do with specifically African identity, let alone the use of African languages, and everything to do with strict honesty and openness in communication at all levels in any language, which means above all the displacement of cliché and stereotypical categories of thought. The necessity of a revolution in communication is indisputably a major concern of Kojo Laing's poetry and of especially the first of his novels, *Search Sweet*

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\*Reference: Francis Ngaboh-Smart, "Science and the Re-Representation of African Identity in *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars*," *Connotations* 7.1 (1997/98): 58-79.

*Country*. It is not quite clear, furthermore, just how Ngaboh-Smart construes the technical use of the term "concrete" in connection with the Concrete Poetry movement in Scotland; Kojo Laing's relationship with this movement, like his reading of R. D. Laing, is a matter of historical record. However one may wish to analyze what this has actually meant in practice, the "concrete" in this context is not to be confounded with the realistic or "mimetic," as Ngaboh-Smart seems close to doing (73).

Such considerations are in any case perhaps irrelevant to the novel under discussion, K. Laing's third, *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars*. The two articles by myself that Ngaboh-Smart referred to were both written, and one was published, well before the appearance of *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars*, and both dealt only with K. Laing's early poetry and first novel. But the language of *Major Gentl* is indeed different, and different moreover in ways that seem to be intimately related to the different concerns and emphases of the later novel. It is worth considering how the language has changed, in relation to the ways in which it has not changed, and what implications this may have for Laing's literary-linguistic program.

One thing that has not changed is the close textual fabric. A major problem in reading Kojo Laing is that his thick and highly expressive language of imagery makes very few concessions to the reader's previous literary experience. The works of most writers quite naturally show continuities of theme and style, among themselves and in relation to other literary texts. Intertextuality as engagement with a literary tradition of any sort, while not of course entirely irrelevant (hence our references to R. D. Laing and Concrete Poetry) is not, I suggest, of central importance to critical interpretation of Kojo Laing. Ngaboh-Smart feels that his "language, as a feat of style, becomes an outrage on the readers' understanding of phenomena" (71). Characteristically, that is, K. Laing continually reworks and resets extremely original figures and the words that clothe them, constructing and reconstructing an intertextuality of his own, and demanding his reader's acquiescence in its apparently eccentric terms. In appropriating the languages of the world at all levels of popular speech, integrated to create a subversive variety of standard English, he plays a double game of solidarity and domination with his audience,



forcing readings that start afresh from words and sensory (not only or even primarily visual) experience, unconstrained by ready-made notions of the relations between signifiers and what they signify (Ngaboh-Smart 71). This is not because such relations do not exist, or because the images are intended to disorient the reader, but because to reach the truth, to allow the kind of communication that is the precondition for personal and national wholeness, the language must be made new.

In his poetry before 1980 Laing built up a literary language that owes relatively little to other literary texts, and continually reappears in his novels, so that for maximum appreciation the reader must be continually aware of the larger corpus. This is most obviously true of the two earlier novels, but on close inspection it also applies to *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars*. Much of the apparent outrageousness of language and image disappears when, for example, we realize that the literal disappearance of most of Ghana in *Major Gentl*, and the necessity of eventually finding it, repeats in a more drastic form the quest for national wholeness of *Search Sweet Country*. The extreme strangeness of equating Nana Mai Grandmother Bomb's former husbands with doors dissipates, although the image is not simplified, when one recalls the church door of the poem "Godsdoor" (*Godhorse*), with its multiple functions as protector, rebel and observer.

This closed intertextuality is situated moreover in a universe of discourse that even to the casual Ghanaian reader is almost hermetic, even though entirely public, because it presumes an intimate knowledge of very many details of southern Ghanaian life and speech, and their recall in contexts that at first may seem highly unusual. His use of personal names provides relatively simple examples. Common Ghanaian day names aside, many of the characters' names are meaningful, but they are not generally included in the glossaries of non-standard English words provided, and even if they were the glosses might not be particularly revealing. One cannot really appreciate the visual and tactile image intended in "Abomu gave a scowl worthy of the stew of his name" (*Major Gentl* 8) unless one knows that *abomu* is indeed the name of a kind of stew in Twi, with a certain kind of surface texture, colour and smell. Similarly, it is important to the appreciation of the character of Nana Mai Grandmother Bomb to

know that in Akan and Ga traditional courts, the elders retire to "consult the old woman," in the popular expression, before giving final judgment. It is part of the character of the politically ambitious businessman, Pogo Alonka Forr, that *alonka* is a common market measure. Indeed, a thoroughly informed reading of any of Laing's novels would seem to require annotation on a massive scale, at least as extensive as has been devoted to *Finnegan's Wake*. Judgements of the presence or absence of "deep meaning" should therefore be made with great caution.

In Dakubu (1993) several prominent characteristics of Laing's language as displayed in *Search Sweet Country* were discussed. These included: multilingualism, or the use of words from many languages (most listed in a glossary provided); an essentially demotic speech style in the mouths of the characters; a great deal of phonetic patterning, particularly alliteration; linking or chaining of clauses and sentences by repetition of words, and the extensive use of balanced images, expressed in balanced clauses, often employing systems or paradigms of contrasting words and expressions. In *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars*, the vocabulary is still highly multilingual, and the characters' speech is still evocative of popular speech, but the other features, the stylistic devices of patterning, linkage and balance, so closely related to the style of his earlier poetry, have gone.<sup>1</sup> I suggest that this is no coincidence. *Major Gentl* is a far angrier novel than either *Search Sweet Country* or *Woman of the Aeroplanes*. The dreadful imbalance between the rich nations and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, is now at the forefront. A diction that both expresses and is linguistically based on balance, so that balance and equality in the medium is a symbol of balance and equality in the world of the novel, is therefore ruled out.

In Laing's earlier novels, language is very much part of the subject matter, for authenticity in communication, among individuals and in society, is seen as a large part of the problem, and a transformation of language is at the core of the solution. The change in diction was already in progress in Laing's second novel, *Woman of the Aeroplanes*, in what Deandrea refers to as his "increasingly ingenious style" (88), compared to the "utter lyricality of the language" of *Search Sweet Country* (68), and he relates this to the movement outward in the characters' attempts to

reconcile the modern and the traditional (74). In *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars*, however, the problem is much worse. The anonymity of "the bosses abroad" (7) has changed the quality of the struggle, from a dialogue framed as interior to the country, Ghana, (*Search Sweet Country*) or a dialogue between North and South in which individuals and cultures recognize a common humanity and both parties can interact fruitfully as equals (*Woman of the Aeroplanes*) to a battle with an impersonal, invisible enemy with whom there is no possibility of real human communication. Bad communication is still at the root of the problem, but it is not at all clear, now, that language can provide the answer.

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#### NOTE

<sup>1</sup>A comparable change may also be observed in his post-1980 poetry. However a discussion of the wider motivations for this change is beyond the scope of this paper.

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## Survival of the Nation(al)?

### Notes on the Case of English-Canadian Literary Criticism

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In an age of 'internationalism' and 'multiculturalism,' societies have *not* become 'post-national'. Current events in Central and Eastern Europe alone testify to the ongoing relevance of the 'national' as a force in late twentieth-century politics—even though concrete definitions of this 'national' vary according to specific social, cultural and ideological conditions.<sup>1</sup> There has been a strong tendency in recent literary and cultural criticism to pronounce the nation dead as a valid concept for discussing the formation of cultural identities; it has been superseded by a poststructuralist and/or postcolonial attention to heterogeneity, difference, diversity and related concepts. However, throughout the 1990s, as questions of communal identities and values have become more urgent again in many societies, the national has resurfaced in critical discourse,<sup>2</sup> with simplistic cultural nationalism fortunately playing a relatively minor role. Rather, contemporary criticism, like historical and political studies, tends to view the national as a flexible construct whose precise contexts of construction at a given cultural and political moment have to be analyzed and made explicit.

The following notes will sketch the history of these contexts for the criticism of English-Canadian literature. As a society and culture notoriously preoccupied with its national identity—or rather its apparent crises—anglophone Canada offers itself as a paradigmatic case for this kind of study. The factors of this concern with national identity have themselves changed with the course of time: Canada had to develop a stance of cultural nationalism to achieve decolonization from Britain; the country has also traditionally suffered from the legacy of having *two* European 'founding nations,' which resulted in the deep division between English Canada and Québec and the 'two solitudes' of their respective

cultures. Additionally there is the ethnic plurality within modern Canada as one of the world's most important immigration countries. Within such constellations, English-Canadian literary criticism has, since the nineteenth century and almost uninterruptedly, participated in various discourses of the nation and its distinctive 'Canadian-ness'.<sup>3</sup>

The Confederation of 1867 established the Dominion of Canada and marks the beginning of the country's autonomy in political and historical terms. The years leading up to and following this event saw the first outbursts of Canadian cultural nationalism, which was prominently linked with demands for a recognizably (English-)Canadian literature. In this early phase the desire to construct a distinctiveness of the emerging nation through its literature was so strong that missed chances were openly lamented. In 1884, for instance, the critic John Logan complained that the white settler culture had failed to "amalgamate" with the indigenous culture found in the colony:

I doubt not but the day will come when [. . .] we will produce a great writer, or even great writers; but will they be founders of a 'distinctive literature'? I think not, unless they write in Anglo-Ojibbeway, and educate a nation to look upon Nana-bo-john as a Launcelot or a Guy of Warwick.<sup>4</sup>

If this was a missed opportunity, another strategy of making Canadian literature distinctive was adopted frequently: indigenous peoples and other typically 'local' elements—especially nature and landscape—are standard components in nineteenth-century English-Canadian literature, and critics of this literature favouring a "national-referential" aesthetics<sup>5</sup> also helped to establish the 'locality' of motifs and themes as cornerstones of 'Canadian-ness'. Thus Thomas D'Arcy McGee, a poet-journalist and fervent promoter of Canadian nationalism (as he had earlier been of Irish nationalism), demanded in "Protection for Canadian Literature" (1858) that Canadian literature "must assume the gorgeous coloring and the gloomy grandeur of the forest. It must partake of the grave mysticism of the Red man, and the wild vivacity of the hunter of western prairies."<sup>6</sup> The conviction that the 'Canadian-ness' of Canadian literature is most obviously established by the 'sense of place' it conveys, also underlies the first anthologies of Canadian poetry. Edward Hartley Dewart's *Selections from Canadian Poets*

(1864) was expressly offered as a contribution to the "formation of a national character,"<sup>7</sup> and of the poems assembled in this volume, only those in the "descriptive" section are deemed to have a "national" potential. In the introduction to his *Songs of the Great Dominion* (1889), William Douw Lighthall freely admitted that poems without a local touch were expressly omitted from his collection:

The present is an imperfect presentation of Canadian poetry from a purely literary point of view, on account of the limitation of treatment; for it is obvious that if only what illustrates the country and its life *in a distinctive way* be chosen, the subjective and unlocal literature must be necessarily passed over [. . .].<sup>8</sup>

Lighthall here points to the reductivism always inherent in a focus on the national in literature: aesthetics are de-emphasized for the sake of literature's extra-literary reference. Despite this limitation, some Canadian criticism continued in the same vein until well after World War I. Lionel Stevenson's "Manifesto for a National Literature" (1924), for instance, claims that "Canadian art is almost entirely devoted to landscape, Canadian poetry to the presentation of nature."<sup>9</sup> However, writers and critics informed by modernist ideals now also started to reject a literature that was "heavy with Canadian topics," as F. R. Scott writes in his poem "The Canadian Authors Meet" (1927).<sup>10</sup> They emphasized the need for a criticism that would privilege aesthetic quality rather than national relevance and reference. In a "Rejected Preface" for the anthology *New Provinces* (1936), a milestone of English-Canadian literature which he co-edited with Scott, A. J. M. Smith programmatically emphasized that

we do not pretend that this volume contains any verse that might not have been written in the United States or in Great Britain. There is certainly nothing specially Canadian about more than one or two poems. Why should there be? Poetry today is written for the most part by people whose emotional and intellectual heritage is not a national one; it is either cosmopolitan or provincial [. . .].<sup>11</sup>

In 1942, Ralph Gustafson's preface to the first edition of his anthology of Canadian poetry optimistically declared the phase of ardent Canadianism passé: "A Canadian poet can no longer consider that his poem derives importance solely because it is *written*."<sup>12</sup> Yet, during a symposium on

Canadian culture held more than three decades later, Gustafson again felt obliged to remind his audience that "content alone has never yet made a good poem. An Eskimo eating maple syrup on snowshoes is not a good Canadian poem."<sup>13</sup> Modernism had apparently not eradicated the national from Canadian critical discourse, and in the 1970s, the concept could easily be reawakened in a new cultural-political context.

The kind of Canada-minded criticism against which Gustafson raised his voice came to be named and castigated as 'thematic' criticism. It gained a strong impact around the nation's Centennial in 1967, as Canadians embarked on several new waves of national crisis and national affirmation. The upsurge of English-Canadian nationalism in these years has to be seen in connection with Québec separatism as well as a pronounced anti-Americanism. A century after Confederation, Canada considered itself as the prime victim of U.S. imperialism and felt that it had entered a neo-colonialist phase of its history. In the words of the ardently nationalist critic Robin Mathews: "Canada has a three-part history of colonialism, first as a French colony, then as a British colony, and now as an economic colony of the U.S.A."<sup>14</sup> Since the country was so highly dependent on the United States in economic terms, *cultural* nationalism focussing on a homogenized self-image with a set of shared defining features became the driving force in the affirmation of a national identity. Thus a massive promotion of the national arts and letters was launched; the Canada Council, founded in 1957 as a national cultural agency, generously sponsored what was unfavourably termed a "'Can.Lit.' industry"<sup>15</sup> of prolific writers, an effective Canadian bookmarket and a considerable increase in academic interest—if perhaps not a wide public actually *reading* Can.Lit. At a time when structural, text-orientated criticism was the critical vogue in Europe and the United States, English-Canadian Literature and its criticism were thus once more strongly context-orientated and heavy with Canadian topics—not least because a considerable number of academic teachers and critics were also very active as writers of Can.Lit. (and vice versa) and expressly understood themselves as champions of the new nationality. Studies influential at least in academic circles, like D. G. Jones' *Butterfly on Rock* (1970), Northrop Frye's *The Bush Garden* (1971), John Moss's *Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction* (1974) and in

particular Margaret Atwood's frequently quoted *Survival* (1972), are only the tip of a critical iceberg that tried to establish a national cultural mythology of garrison mentalities (Frye) and victim complexes (Atwood).<sup>16</sup> Or, in the words of the novelist George Bowering: "The Canadian Centenary was perhaps the worst thing that ever happened to Canadian criticism because we started counting mooses and snow forts instead of paying attention to writing."<sup>17</sup>

As early as 1974 a seminal article by the poet and critic Frank Davey, "Surviving the Paraphrase,"<sup>18</sup> warned that thematic criticism with its high esteem for Canadian-ness but otherwise anti-evaluative tendency would reflect negatively on the quality of the country's literary production. Thematicists also tended to ignore certain 'un-Canadian' writers. Thus John Metcalf, another writer-cum-critic, was keenly aware that as a writer of novels and short stories he seemed to fall through the country's dominant critical grid:

I don't think I stand *anywhere* in the CanLit Scheme. I haven't got a Garrison Mentality and I'm not at Stage Three or a Victim or on Cloud Nine or whatever the fuck all that twaddle was about. My work suffers from a paucity of Indians and Myth.<sup>19</sup>

The criticism of national thematic criticism and its reductiveness became pronounced towards the end of the decade, for instance during the Calgary Conference on the Canadian Novel in 1978. The writer Barry Cameron summarized the issue:

... such criticism looks at language not for itself, but primarily as a referential or representational tool that points to something beyond or outside language. But verbal stances or attitudes or visions in novels can only exist in verbal structures; they do not derive from the physical, geographical, or social environment in which the writer lives, but from the particular verbal forms and conventions, the language, that a particular society employs to speak of its physical, socio-political, psychic, and spiritual life in that place.<sup>20</sup>

Many critics in the 1980s recorded with relief that the surge of cultural nationalism of the previous decade seemed to be abating. The volume *Future Indicative* (1987) edited by John Moss, the former thematicist, hails a new internationalism of Canadian critics and literary theorists under



the impact of postmodernism and poststructuralism: "They have been deconstructing the box in which we have tried to contain our culture; not peering over garrison walls but walking right through them."<sup>21</sup> But it was not only the (belated) arrival of new modes of international criticism that caused the watershed in Canadian criticism. Critics were also responding to a significant re-conception of Canada's official social and political self-image: recognizing that immigration was essential for maintaining its population size, Canada now started to officially promote itself as a society committed to multiculturalism and acknowledging the cultural contribution not only of its first nations, but also of its many immigrant groups. A policy of multiculturalism had already been instituted in 1971, but the Multiculturalism Act of 1988 explicitly protects and supports the individual's right to preserve his or her cultural heritage and mother tongue.

In the light of this new political image of the nation, critics of Canadian literature now embarked to celebrate cultural values other than essentialist Canadian-ness, counting the variety of ethnic voices rather than 'typically' Canadian themes and motifs such as moose. In a volume of interviews with Canadian writers of the mid-eighties,<sup>22</sup> questions concerning their Canadian-ness are characteristically avoided; writers are no longer expected to act as spokespersons for a 'national' literature; if they *choose* to speak for a group, this is usually one with a certain 'ethnic,' 'gender' or 'regional' identity. Diversification and decentrement became the new critical catchwords of English-Canadian literary criticism<sup>23</sup>—resulting in a drastically changed image of Canadian literature in anthologies,<sup>24</sup> literary histories and teaching curricula.

Ironically, however, the decentring of 'Canadian' literature did not mean that Canadian literary criticism became post-national. Rather, the national was reconstructed in terms of the new political ideal of a society with many (e.g. ethnic and regional) voices. Even if (English-)Canadian identity became increasingly complex and difficult to define, the quest for some kind of nationally definable identity survived, and several Canadian critics managed to fuse basic assets of postmodernism with the desire to define Canadian-ness. They reconceived the nation as *distinctively* heterogeneous, decentred and many-voiced, thus adapting postmodernist creed to

Canadian needs. Linda Hutcheon, for instance, argues that when postmodernism arrived in Canada, "the form it took was a distinctly Canadian one."<sup>25</sup> The poet, novelist and critic Robert Kroetsch (1989) hailed Canada as a quintessentially postmodern country that has adopted "disunity as unity" as a specifically "Canadian strategy" and celebrates multiplicity, diversity and difference: "There is no centre. This disunity is our unity."<sup>26</sup> As Paul Goetsch observes, Hutcheon and Kroetsch are "not content with just practicing a postmodern form of multiculturalism; they also wish to create a master narrative through which postmodernism will acquire special importance in Canada."<sup>27</sup> This strategy may result in a paradoxical construct of the nation, but the national *per se* continues to matter.

The writer and critic Janice Kulyk Keefer proposes the concept of a 'transcultural' instead of 'multicultural' Canadian literature<sup>28</sup> because this concept—in her definition—also encompasses the formerly dominant ethnic voices alongside formerly marginalized ones. But even with such a pronouncedly decentralized concept, Kulyk Keefer's transculturality does not transcend national borders; she, too, claims that there is a distinctly *Canadian* case of transculturality. At a time when politics was sparking yet another crisis of Canadian identity, Kulyk Keefer perceived a strong longing in her country's community to retain the national as a frame of reference. The 1995 referendum on Québec separation and the discussion preceding it, accompanied by demands for greater independence in other provinces, posed a threat to Canada's political unity but at the same time revived public concern about the national:

Given our present constitutional crisis, many Canadians feel that we are in desperate need of a collective and centripetal ethos, a national sense of self which will unite instead of divide. Ironically, just when our newest writers have set out to celebrate difference, to subvert or at least open up a social formation which has for far too long denied any significant form of power to minority groups and the conspicuously other, many Canadian readers are expressing a desire for an atavistic construction of national identity: something coherent and stable, monolithic and monologic. At a recent conference held at the University of Guelph and organized around the topic, 'Canada: Break-Up or Restructure,' countless speakers from the floor—members of the general public and, most prominently, senior-level high-school students—articulated precisely this desire that Canadian artists and academics provide for them a unified, immutably distinctive sense of what it means to be Canadian.<sup>29</sup>

A similar perception was expressed by the South-Asian-Canadian writer and critic Arun P. Mukherjee during a conference in 1995, to which he was invited to discuss theoretical frameworks for reading 'minority' literatures:

And yet on 30 October 1995 I knew what it means to be part of a nation and what it means to wish that your nation survives. I am talking about the referendum that night. We have really been through a very traumatic time and similar to the last two weeks of the referendum we have been almost ill [. . .]. 'Nation' is also something that postmodernists and globalizers make fun of, thinking it's a *passé* institution. And yet, when a nation is in the process of forming, you don't know what else you want; first of all, you want to preserve it.<sup>30</sup>

Too many critical concepts currently in vogue are too locationless for Mukherjee to do justice to a phenomenon such as South-Asian-Canadian literature—a literature that may form networks across national borders with other South-Asian literatures world-wide, but which is also localized in Canada and thus different from literature produced by South-Asians elsewhere.

The last two quotations seem to testify to a new sense of the national community among English-Canadian critics in the allegedly post-national 1990s. This is not a nationalist stance as in earlier phases of Canadian cultural criticism. Kulyk Keefer in the quote above is clearly critical of a popular "desire for an atavistic construction of national identity." At the same time, she does not ignore that desire. A greater awareness of communal needs and values and the idea that Canadian literary criticism should again be more concerned with this community emerge in a number of critical writings of the 1990s. In 1993 Frank Davey, who had so vigorously attacked thematic criticism in the 1970s, published a study entitled *Post-National Arguments*, focussing on the heterogeneity in Canadian literature but ultimately ending on a note of regret since the loss of recognizable 'Canadian-ness' in the more recent of the texts discussed suggests "a world and a nation in which social structures no longer link regions or communities, political process is doubted, and individual alienation has become normal."<sup>31</sup> The suggestion that Canadian writers and their critics should be *engaged* in the discourse about their country and its community has been pronounced most vehemently by Robert

Lecker, who has published widely on the problematic *and* the importance of a Canadian canon for the Canadian self-image.<sup>32</sup> His collection of articles, *Making It Real*, was completed "in the months leading up to the second Quebec referendum on the futures of the province and Canada. In such a political climate, no one who writes about Canadian literature can pretend that they are engaged in an apolitical activity." By no means does Lecker wish "to return to the days of using criticism to celebrate Canada for Canada's sake. Those days of feel-good criticism are long over. But I want to encourage critics of Canadian literature to recognize the national bias that informs their work, and to ask whether this bias has extraliterary connections that need to be explored."<sup>33</sup> This exploration has to take place within a flexible, constructivist notion of the national. Lecker rejects radical postmodernist positions that have threatened to decentre the imagined community of Canada almost into annihilation. However, his conception of the national is tinged by poststructuralist thinking itself: the nation according to Lecker can only be conceived today as a unity whose very instability must be shown; one needs "a vision of the nation that you propose in order to destabilize it."<sup>34</sup> Critics who approach Canadian literature with such a notion of the national can help to imagine *and* constantly reimagine the country and will thus help to retain Canada alive and real for its community:

[. . .] those involved in the study and teaching of Canadian literature need to reassert the Canadian aspect of what they do. [. . .] It does not mean finding Canadian themes in, say, [Michael Ondaatje's] *The English Patient* or [Rohinton Mistry's] *Such a Long Journey*. It does mean that we consider these books different because they are written by Canadians, and that one aspect of studying them involves an investigation of this difference. In order to do this, Canada itself needs to be reimagined. This process or reimagining should be an explicit part of Canadian literary study. It is a necessary form of critical positioning. Those who teach Canadian literature carry a conception of the country. This conception needs to be foregrounded.<sup>35</sup>

As this sketch of English-Canadian literary criticism has suggested, the national has survived as a leading concept in this criticism from the nineteenth century to the final days of the twentieth. Since the national is not an essence but a social and cultural construct, it has been defined

and redefined repeatedly throughout this history, but it has never been entirely discarded. Canadian literary criticism has thus been offered in these notes as a paradigmatic case for studying the changing relevance of the national in literary criticism—a study that seems relevant at a time when nationalism in its most bigoted and dangerous forms raises its head again in many regions world-wide. Should and how can literary criticism engage with the national discourse(s) of the societies in which it is practiced? The Canadian case clearly exemplifies the blinding limitations of a simplistic, culturally nationalist criticism, the last instance of which in Canada was the thematicist vogue of the 1970s. But the Canadian case also reveals an ongoing concern with the national in the more dynamicized concepts of Canadian-ness developed since the 1980s. To quite a number of contemporary critics, the national as a framework for discussing Canadian literature is still a valid concept through which they can participate in Canada's continuing discourse(s) of identity. That this is an engagement which literary critics *should* practice, especially at a time of strong public feeling about the state of the nation, is emphasized by Robert Lecker. It is the only way, after all, for critics (as professionals) to take part *critically* in their country's national discourse and thus to prevent this discourse from relapsing into blind nationalism. A lesson to be learned from earlier phases of Canadian criticism is, however, that concern with the national should not entirely preoccupy the critic, who has many options to complement the national with other categories—the global, the local, the multi-, trans- or intercultural, and, of course, the traditional categories of literary aesthetics.

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Tübingen

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>As Anderson and Hobsbawm have shown in their seminal studies. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), and Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Canto, 1990).

<sup>2</sup>The well-known volume edited by Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London/New York: Routledge, 1990), had an important initiating function in this debate; see also the entry on "nation/nationalism" in Bill Ashcroft et al., *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), with notes on further reading.

<sup>3</sup>For examples of the ongoing discussion in the 1990s see, for instance, Frank Birbalsingh, *Novels and the Nation: Essays in Canadian Literature* (Toronto: TSAR, 1995); Jonathan Kertzer, *Worrying the Nation: Imagining a National Literature in English Canada* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998), or two thematic issues of *Canadian Children's Literature* (86 and 87/1997) on "What's Canadian about Canadian Literature?"

<sup>4</sup>*The Search for English-Canadian Literature: An Anthology of Critical Articles from the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Carl Ballstadt (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1975) 116.

<sup>5</sup>See Robert Lecker, *Making It Real: The Canonization of English-Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Anansi, 1995) 4.

<sup>6</sup>*Towards a Canadian Literature: Essays, Editorials and Manifestos*, eds. Douglas M. Daymond, Leslie G. Monkman, vol.1 (Toronto: Tecumseh, 1984) 44.

<sup>7</sup>*Selections from Canadian Poets with Occasional Critical and Biographical Notes and Introductory Essay on Canadian Poetry*, ed. Edward Hartley Dewart, repr. (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1973) ix.

<sup>8</sup>Daymond, Monkman 131.

<sup>9</sup>Lionel Stevenson, *Appraisals of Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1926) 11.

<sup>10</sup>*The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse in English*, ed. Margaret Atwood (Toronto: OUP, 1982) 91.

<sup>11</sup>Daymond, Monkman 275.

<sup>12</sup>*The Penguin Book of Canadian Verse*, ed. Ralph Gustafson, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984) 25.

<sup>13</sup>*Voices of Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Culture*, ed. Judith Webster (Burlington, VT: Association for Canadian Studies in the United States, 1977) 19.

<sup>14</sup>Robin Mathews, *Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution* (Toronto: Steel Rail Educational Publishing, 1978) 1.

<sup>15</sup>See B.W. Powe, *A Climate Charged* (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1984) 63.

<sup>16</sup>See D.G. Jones, *Butterfly on Rock: A Study of Themes and Images in Canadian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1973); Northrop Frye, *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (Toronto: Anansi, 1971); John Moss, *Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974); Margaret Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972).

<sup>17</sup>*Future Indicative: Literary Theory and Canadian Literature*, ed. John Moss (Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1987) 15.

<sup>18</sup>Repr. in Frank Davey, *Surviving the Paraphrase: Eleven Essays on Canadian Literature* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1983).

<sup>19</sup>John Metcalf, *Kicking Against the Pricks* (Downsview, Ontario: ECW Press, 1982) 8.

<sup>20</sup>*Taking Stock: The Calgary Conference on the Canadian Novel*, ed. Charles Steele (Downsview, Ontario: ECW Press, 1982) 28.

<sup>21</sup>Moss (1987) 3.

<sup>22</sup>*Speaking for Myself: Canadian Writers in Interview*, ed. Andrew Garrod (St. John's, Newfoundland: Breakwater Books, 1986).

<sup>23</sup>See also Martin Kuester, "The Decentring of Canadian Literature," *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien*, 18.1 (1998): 26-39.

<sup>24</sup>The text of the Multiculturalism Act is reprinted, for example, in a landmark anthology edited by Linda Hutcheon and Marion Richmond, *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fictions* (Toronto: OUP, 1990); another more recent programmatically multicultural anthology is Smaro Kamboureli's *Making a Difference: Canadian Multicultural Literature* (Toronto: OUP, 1996).

<sup>25</sup>Linda Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English Canadian Fiction* (Oxford: OUP, 1988) 1.

<sup>26</sup>Robert Kroetsch, "Disunity as Unity: A Canadian Strategy," in his *The Lovely Treachery of Words: Essays Selected and New* (Toronto: OUP, 1989) 21-33, here 21 and 31.

<sup>27</sup>Paul Goetsch, "'The Long Saga of the New New Criticism': Political and Cultural Implications of Poststructuralism and Postmodernism in Canada," *Zeitschrift für Kanada-Studien*, 14.1 (1994): 75-86, here 80.

<sup>28</sup>Janice Kulyk Keefer, "From Mosaic to Kaleidoscope: Out of the Multicultural Past Comes a Vision of a Transcultural Future," *Books in Canada*, 20.6 (1991): 13-16; and "From Dialogue to Polylogue: Canadian Transcultural Writing During the Deluge," *Difference and Community: Canadian and European Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Peter Easingwood et al. (Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1996) 59-70.

<sup>29</sup>Kulyk Keefer (1996) 60f.

<sup>30</sup>Arun P. Mukherjee, "How Shall We Read South-Asian-Canadian Texts?," *Post-colonial Theory and the Emergence of a Global Society*, eds. Gordon Collier et al., *ACOLIT Special Issue*, 3 (Frankfurt a. M.: Institut für England- und Amerikastudien, 1998) 77-96, here 77.

<sup>31</sup>Frank Davey, *Post-National Arguments: The Politics of the Anglophone-Canadian Novel since 1967* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993) 266.

<sup>32</sup>See, for instance, *Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value*, ed. Robert Lecker (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991).

<sup>33</sup>Lecker (1995) ix.

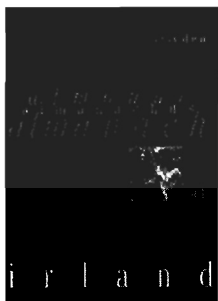
<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.* 10.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.* 237.

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