Connotations

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We are delighted to welcome Professor John Whalen-Bridge of the National University Singapore as a member of the Editorial Board. Professor Whalen-Bridge has kindly agreed to be included (as he puts it) "on the *Connotations* masthead" and act as an editorial scout in Asia and Australia. His email address is: elljwb@nus.edu.sg.

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A Journal for Critical Debate

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ARTICLES and DISCUSSION

Poetry as Procreation (III)

Connotations
Vol. 9.2 (1999/2000)

Classroom Capers: The Case for Using Mnemonics*

WILLIAM E. ENGEL

> Above all, the memory of children should be trained and exercised: for this is, as it were, a storehouse of learning; and it is for this reason that the mythologists have made Memory the mother of the Muses, thereby intimating by an allegory that there is nothing in this world like memory for creating and fostering.
>
> Plutarch, *Education of Children*, §13

I. Background

This essay both stands on its own as a demonstration of the pedagogical value of mnemonics and also supplements my earlier manifesto on the subject. That essay concluded: "Mnemonic criticism provides a way for Renaissance scholars to recover some of these shadows because it enables us once again to see the source of light, and to contemplate how these commonplace images were conceived, projected, and viewed" (30). My orientation to Memory Theatres has tended to be primarily Neoplatonic, which is evident from, not only the tenor of my argument, but also my use of images typically associated with that tradition (light symbolizing knowledge; darkness, ignorance). The same applies to my more recent study which explored how our general categories of knowledge are based on conceits taken from the classical *ars memorativa* and Plato's theory of anamnesis—that knowledge is predicated on remembrance—and which

*Reference: William E. Engel, "Mnemonic Criticism & Renaissance Literature: A Manifesto," *Connotations* 1.1 (1991): 12-33.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debengel00101.htm>.

used another dominant motif in Neoplatonism (the scaling of heights as an allegory of spiritual life).[1]

This present essay, which builds on and periodically alludes to my previous efforts, seeks to include a more Aristotelian element and to reach for an Augustinian conclusion. Specifically, by tapping into the Renaissance Art of Memory, I have identified and adapted five distinct, though closely related, mnemonic practices which lend themselves to being incorporated into contemporary classroom activities. What is more, owing to the interactive nature of working with such intellectual exercises, students become more personally engaged with the material and less reliant on the teacher to "make them learn." As a consequence they take a more responsible role in what they are learning. This in turn enables students, as a culminating aspect of working reflectively with artificial memory systems, to focus attention toward the deliberate cultivation of their character with an eye toward perfecting their moral conduct. The ethical claim that I am making here reaches much farther than did my previous somewhat more modest academic one, which Mary Carruthers characterized as follows: "'Mnemonic criticism' is not one 'approach' among many to the *interpretation* of literature (as Engel's term might imply) but was a fundamental feature of ancient and medieval art, since it was basic both to elementary pedagogy and to all meditative composition."[2] To this I would add that mnemonic criticism not only was *but still can be* a fundamental feature of learning and an integral step on the path toward ethical development. I contend that mnemonics are not just a *technique* (a tool for thinking and inventing),[3] but also a spur to conscience which gets one moving along a path toward more reflective and humane dealings in the world.[4]

Frances Yates's pioneering work demonstrated that renewed attention to the Memory Arts was important for classical and Renaissance scholarship.[5] Toward the end of *The Art of Memory*, she delivered what amounts to an open-challenge to research scholars of all stripes: "The history of the organization of memory touches at vital points on the history of religion and *ethics*, of philosophy and psychology, of art and literature, of scientific method" (374) [my emphasis]. Inge Leimberg was among the

first to recognize and demonstrate the vitality of this intellectual and spiritual impulse often found at the heart of Renaissance poetic practices.[6] Many literary historians subsequently have taken up various lines of inquiry made possible by developments in mnemotechnical research, myself included.[7] And while Yates claimed not to have used the artificial memory systems she studied, I on the other hand have made them an indispensable part of my teaching, scholarship, and daily life. As a result, through a series of controlled and on-going experiments with curriculum, I have found that retrieving and modifying some of the more lucid mnemotechnical schemes enables students to produce work that goes far beyond what one might otherwise expect of them.[8] The judicious use of artificial memory schemes not only strengthens natural memory (to reiterate an age-old claim among proponents of the memory arts) and leads to greater comprehension of material, but also—and which is more laudable still—gives one the means and inclination to apply in the world the ethical lessons one has encountered in books. Beginning with formal considerations, we quickly find ourselves with a moral dimension on our hands. An aesthetic component bridges the two.[9]

Mnemonics can be generative and dynamic learning tools. Artificial memory schemes need not be viewed as convoluted, contrived ways to conjure what you want to recall. They need not be treated as tricks for locating, and short-cuts for retrieving, previously buried information. To be sure though, students in most traditional classrooms are called upon to dig up that information; they need to know where the proverbial bone was placed and how to get at it as quickly as possible. But once these tasks are accomplished and the bone brought back, what will be done with it? Will Fido simply show it to the master so it can be tossed out once more and the game of fetch continue until grades are assigned? Gnawing on it further only will reduce it to nothing—and nothing will have been gained beyond the exercise. Often this is the case when students are made to learn isolated facts by rote. Only when many such bones are retrieved, and along with them the occasional treasures that are unearthed in the process, can something more exciting and vital take place. When these dry bones have been recollected, arranged, and resplendently recovered, when they then

are animated by the Art of Memory, then we are in a position to build anew the body of knowledge, which (to echo Ezekiel's parable) shall live again.

II. Living Mnemonics

In what follows I will present a practical five-point program for using generative mnemonics. If nothing else this somewhat programmatic approach, based on principles of mnemonic criticism, will be useful for finding your way in exemplary texts in the Western literary tradition. Learning more about how to come up with and implement memory images has the added benefit of inspiring us to be creative and responsible in our interpretation and manipulation of symbols—whether in books or in the world.

The five main mnemonic practices I have adapted for classroom use are (1) TAGGING, (2) MEMORY GRIDS, (3) MIND MAPPING, (4) MAGIC CIRCLES, and (5) SPEAKING PICTURES. For the sake of making it easier to recall and use these five methods, I have devised a simple hand mnemonic, which incidentally models what will be described in what follows (FIG. 1).[10] Each type can stand on its own; and yet, taken collectively from thumb to fifth finger, constitutes a flesh-and-blood tool for manipulating points of information with which we then can build something original. Since each organizes information in particular ways, the properties and limits of each type must be respected when being used. Despite these formal differences, the resulting mnemonically oriented worksheets, which collectively I refer to as "capers," are spirited leaps of thought and lively steps of the mind; they are mental gymnastic exercises to be done alone or in groups, to be completed during class time or on one's own.

Most often capers are distributed in advance of the due-date for the reading assignment, but a single caper can be given at different times during the semester; sometimes the same exact caper is given to explore any shifts in approach the student might take to the material; sometimes with a new set of instructions to get students to push beyond what they

think they have learned and to encourage them to do something more sophisticated with the material. Capers are not simply study-guides or convenient ways for the teacher to assess the extent to which a student is keeping up with the assignments, though to be sure they fulfill both of these functions. More than this though, capers are windows to the core of the curriculum; they make it possible for students to project where they want to go once they have seen the larger picture by virtue of having pieced together the component parts in ways that make sense to them. I have had to limit myself to only a few examples of each main type, for the variety and range of such capers is vast—and their implementation in the classroom is limited only by the zodiac of your own wit.

Tagging comes first. On our hand mnemonic (FIG. 1), it is represented as a cipher composed of the first two letters of the word with the arrow-flourish indicating that more is to follow—literally and figuratively.

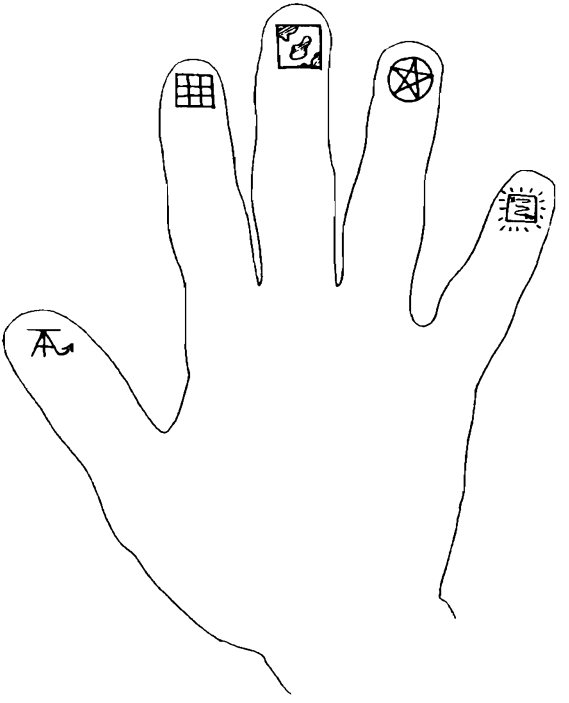

FIG. 1

Tagging is the most rudimentary mnemonic process upon which the others often depend. Tagging is the marking of a designated "place" as being part of one's own intellectual territory, a landmark one wants to indicate as having been visited. In this sense it is like the old cartoon accompanied by the motto "Kilroy was here" left by U.S. servicemen abroad, or like the more up-to-date spray-painted ciphers on urban walls and overpasses. Like these personal marks made on public property, mnemonic tags become part of one's own internal repertoire, and can be taken to signify larger social meanings beyond what originally may have been intended. Street tagging turns the tagger's environment into a virtual memory theatre, remarkable for the places visited and the common public spaces that have, in a sense, become part of the tagger's territory covered, his or her graphically claimed property. Academic tagging on classroom capers works in the other direction: it is geared to create a kind of interior landscape within which tell-tale way-posts help students to identify, and thereby make their own, key dates, facts, lines of poetry—the bare bones of future learning. The use value of such commonplace information, which can be thought of as intellectual capital, extends beyond its having been recognized and marked as being something worthy of finding a place in one's "table book." If it simply is stored away and never used, then it is like congealed capital which serves no social purpose and accumulates nothing beyond itself—like the dragon's treasure horde in *Beowulf*. So too tagged words, like discrete jewels stored in a treasury, stand ready to be selected and placed in a new setting—a point reflected in the etymology "thesaurus."[11] So long as graphically tagged words are seen as being part of a larger literary economy, then, like capital that is wisely invested or property put to a good use, they are likely to yield great profit.

Tagging can, though it need not always, take the form of reducing words or ideas to cryptic symbols that stand for them. Appropriate tag-devices can suggest themselves from within the work itself (for example, the number 1 for Una in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, a star for Stella in Sidney's sonnet cycle), or mnemonic place-holders might just as easily come from the tagger's own private set of memory images (the works of Blake and Rimbaud, for example, contain many such idiosyncratically coded emblems

whose meanings unfold the more one reads of those authors). Fundamental to tagging though is that first one must identify key concepts or words to be tagged, perhaps grouped topically, so they can be seen both in their own right and also as part of a larger constellation of points constituting much wider meanings.

For example one caper, which while introducing students to working with tag words, was designed primarily to help them learn to recite the

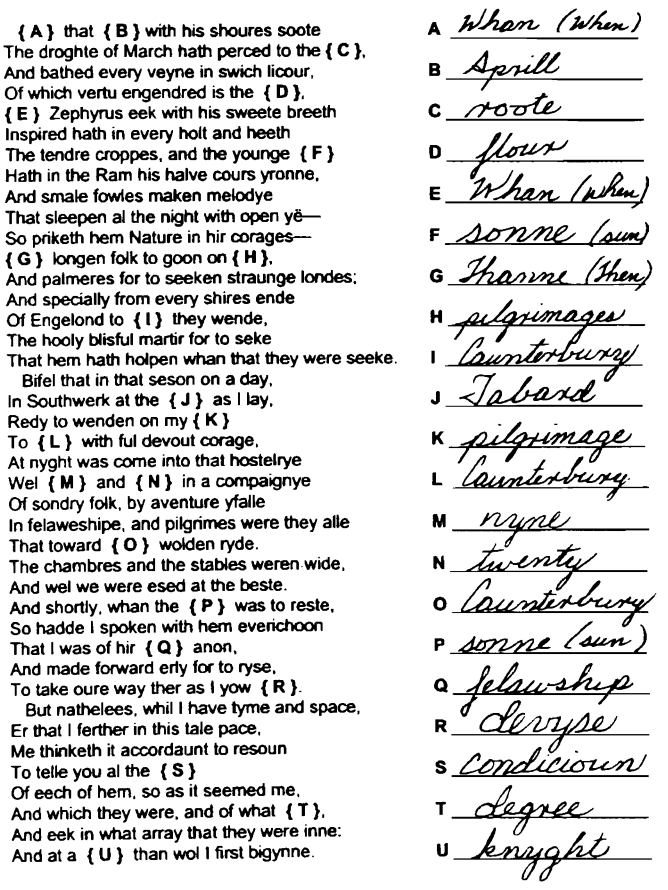

FIG. 2

opening lines of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and to do so with some degree of fluency, with some knowledge of and respect for the original language, with basic comprehension of the semantic sense of the passage, and with rudimentary knowledge of the rhetorical and poetic conventions in which it was written (FIG. 2). Because of the nature of the passage selected, this caper also helped to clarify for the students the plan of the entire work, to fix in their minds the basic poetic form and meter, and to bring to prominence issues of social class ("condicioun" and "degree"; see letters "S" and "T" on the right-hand column).

Being able to recite the words though, while a worthwhile exercise in itself, is only the beginning of the adventure. For as Montaigne admonished: "The gain from our study is to have become better and wiser by it. [. . .] To know by heart is not to know; it is to retain what we have given our memory to keep."[12] And so I instructed the students first to try to learn the lines on their own; then, while working in groups in class, I asked them to fill in the blanks of the caper and to focus on (and enter into their notebooks) any patterns that emerged from the tagged words. Among the things they "discovered" and thereby kept as their own, which then were reserved for future use (certainly more so than had I adopted the "lecture-listen" model of instruction) were: (1) the poem rhymed in iambic couplets ("what rhymes with *soote*?" one student asked another about "C" so that her answer-sheet would be complete by the end of the class period); (2) to convey the setting Chaucer used for classical poetic conventions (his reference to the wind as "Zephyrus" and allusion to Aries as "the Ram"); (3) a commonplace rhetorical structure guides and constrains how we are to construe and understand what seems to flow conversationally from the speaker's poetic reflections of what happened "in that seson on a day" (the "when, when, then" formula comes into view when students attend closely to "A," "E," and "G"); "something is going on with seasons and cycles of time and the idea of rebirth—maybe resurrection?" remarked one student who wanted to pursue the implications of a possible pun on sun/son ("F" and "P"). Such information, once derived, can be arranged in any of a number of ways, depending on the special talents of students, the tasks assigned, or uses projected. And this leads us quite naturally,

as it were, to the second type of mnemonic design, ready-made for housing tagged information: memory grids.

Memory Grids allow the students to box up minimal, though often highly suggestive, bits of information. But more than this though, by virtue of the way memory grid capers are set up (and this is where the professorial hand can show itself to its best advantage), they tend to encourage the

(1)

character	from	how died	citation
Tamberlaine	*Scythia*	*sickness, ironically from a cut he made*	*5.3.248*
Zenocrate	*Egypt*	*sickness, consumptive*	*2.4.95*
the virgins	*Damascus*	*slaughtered by Tam's men; corpses hoisted*	*5.1.120-31*
Calyphus	*Persia*	*stabbed by his leader/father, Tamberlaine*	*4.1.120*
Bajazeth	*Turkey*	*bashes brains against inside of his cage*	*5.1.301-03*
Zerbina	*Turkey*	*bashes brains on outside of husband's cage*	*5.1.316-18*
Olympia	*Balsera*	*tricks Theridamas to stab her in the neck*	*4.2.81*
Gorboduc	*Britain*	*slain by populace*	*between 4 & 5*
Videna	*Britain*	*slain by populace*	*between 4 & 5*
Ferrex	*Britain*	*killed by brother, Porrex out of insecurity*	*3.1.941-45*
Porrex	*Britain*	*killed by his mother, Videna to avenge son*	*4.2.140-44*

(2) Compare and contrast the issue of succession by looking at specific topics, play to play:

II Tamberlaine	Gorboduc
sons and followers are not as willing or eager to rule and take charge as Tam has done (esp. Calyphus)	*sons are not trained to rule effectively and hear counsel of often incompetent advisors; like the father in that they ignore good advice and don't know it*
he has but one kingdom and two sons to succeed (after discounting the third as a coward) and wants there to be only one ruler	*by splitting kingdom among two sons in effort to be fair, he sparks civil war b/c each is jealous of the other's share*
his sons will never be able to fill his shoes as a great conqueror; don't have his natural abilities or his charmed skin (and astral destiny)	*Gorboduc tries to retire too early and sons cannot safe-guard the stability of the once unified kingdom*
How much loyalty can exist among members of the family if the loftiest goal is an earthly crown (given to Amydas)?	*b/c Gorboduc didn't give the kingdom in entirety to oldest son and b/c wife was Partial to Ferrex, bad blood was bred*

FIG. 3

generation and not just the storage of basic information. Instead of recalling unchanging facts that fit into neat segments of orderly arranged boxes (as is the case with the Periodic Table of Elements) or filling in the blanks with answers that implacably reflect a designated pattern (as with the multiplication tables), the students, often working in groups, were asked to come up with appropriate responses and then to express them as "mnememes."[13] This meant that students first had to locate, and then tag, the information. Once it was secured and set off on its own, the students then could regard it carefully and critically so as to determine and decide how it might be used most effectively, appropriately, and responsibly (effectively, with respect to the student's goals and aims; appropriately, with respect to the course requirements and institutional guidelines; and responsibly, with respect to the integrity of the work being studied).

This process comes into focus, for example, on a rudimentary memory grid caper from a Renaissance drama class, in which students were given just a list of characters from two of the assigned plays (a student's responses are in italics) (FIG. 3). As this was among the first capers of the term, it was designed in part to help convey the sorts of things they should begin to be looking for on their own so that, as the course progressed and the material got more complicated, they would need minimal guidance when constructing their own capers. One student reflected that distilling responses into "mnemic-bites" helped make her own, as it were, discrete parts of a larger whole, which then could be fit into a more encompassing scheme still, as can be seen from this caper covering a whole semester's reading assignments (FIG. 4). These slots obviously cannot (and are not intended to) hold much. The student must come up with direct and concise tags that stand in for, and trigger recollection of, key aspects of the works being studied. For example, the narrative thread of Skelton's "The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng" is summed up well (under *Sk.* "*El.*" on the memory grid): "tells of a woman who makes good beer and people give anything to drink it." Just below this entry, the student has listed as "something else true and accurate" a moral theme that she took from the poem: "Intemperance to trade things in order to indulge."[14] By such means students can begin to build an edifice of knowledge out of the bare bones

to record and construct (for easy recall, days or years hence) mnemic-bites and to use as a model for your graphic SHIELD SURVEY due on Mon 11 Dec 95

	Beowulf	CT, Ind, Bou	SPENSER	Sidney	Sh LLL	Sk. "El"	H&L, WYATT, SURREY
subjectively rank by - +	+	−, +, +	+	+	+	+ SKELTON	−
title & dating; author's name	"Beowulf" (650–850) author ?	CT: Chaucer (1380) Ind: Sackville (1563) Bou: Skelton (1500)	Faerie Queen Edmund Spenser (1596)	Astrophil & Stella Philip Sidney (1554)	Love's Labor Lost Shakespeare (1564–?)	"Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng" (1500)	H&L, [illegible] Marlowe (FSA?) Wyatt (1503?) Surrey (1517?)
genre; kind of work it is; models...	epic poem from middle ages; most likely was from oral tradition; no known models.	poems that tell stories; idealized images of human behavior; inspired by secular & classical works.	allegorical poem; epic + a romance; a quest; pagan, biblical images; modeled after Ariosto, Tasso, & Virgil, esp. du Bellay	allegorical sonnets 4 fold allegorical pattern; inspired by Spenser.	romance, comedy + tragedy; play that has a simple sequencing of events.	rhyme scheme aa, bb, cc.... "Skeltonic", allegorical.	H+L is a "mini epic" and a tragic love story; Wyatt + Surrey write about love that has not been awarded to them.
characteristic features of style, tropes	caesura throughout, a lot of kennings, epithets, some litotes		14 lines: octave, — iambic pentameter, sestet–iambic hexameter.	many conceits, emblems, thought images. → for Sidney.	Constant rhyme scheme in dialogue.	specific images.	Surrey invented blank verse & English sonnet.
content summed and its place in the sweep of ENGL lit & cult	A quest to conquer Grendel, who torments the Swedes. The quest is lead by Beowulf, the hero. An early epic w/ valiant battles.	All three of these works are narrated stories that tell of an event or events that deliver a moral in their ending.	Quest of Guyon to obtain the 12 virtues that make a gentleman. Spenser's intention was to present the 12 virtues in 12 books through the use of allegory.	Astrophil professing his love to Stella. 4 step trajectory of poem that involve wooing, desire, virtue, + passion. Founder of love sonnets.	3 women tease the 3 men who are wooing them. In the end, they accept their love but will not be together. Comedy, dramatic plays!	Tells of a woman who makes good beer & ppl. give anything to drink it.	All of these poems discuss the labor of wooing someone and trying to gain their love. Also learns to suffer through not gaining this love.
something else true & accurate	Great value placed on kinship; stress hoarding vs. expenditure, reversal of fortune; desire for fame	Similar poetic qualities in all 3 authors. Offer morals or virtues to redeem spirit.	Book II deals directly w/ the virtue of Temperance + how temptation can make someone intemperate.	Based on how Sidney felt about Penelope Rich, a woman who would never return his love.	Common theme of Shakespeare: the wisdom of the foolish vs. the foolishness of the wise.	Intemperance to trade things in order to indulge.	The narritive qualities of H+L; the other 2 poets relay their personal feelings through a poetry form that helps to reflect them.
summed up	Great epic qualities; poetic diction is difficult but beautiful.	Narratives are entertaining. Some fantasy and mysticism.	An intricate allegory with detailed, symbolic descriptions. Beautiful poetic diction.	Passionate sonnets. Many reoccurring thought images. Very emblematic.	Excellent example of Shakespeare's plots + the themes represented in them.	allegorical images to depict detail & story line.	Speak of a strong, passionate love and the pain it can cause.

FIG. 4

encountered in their studies, and along the way recognize and seek to emulate specific traits associated with the attempt to live honorably and thus to shun those that lead, for example, to dissipation and desecration. And this is where the ensuing mnemonic method comes into play: mind mapping.

Mind mapping helps students track the flow of thoughts—whether their own or someone else's.[15] This technique, once perfected on paper, enables the student to keep "in mind" a sequence of narrative events or complicated shifts in ideas. For example, we see its practical benefits in a schematic chart used for identifying the straightforward events in the Morality Play *Everyman* (which, incidentally, follows a stark chiastic plan) (FIG. 5).[16] Mind

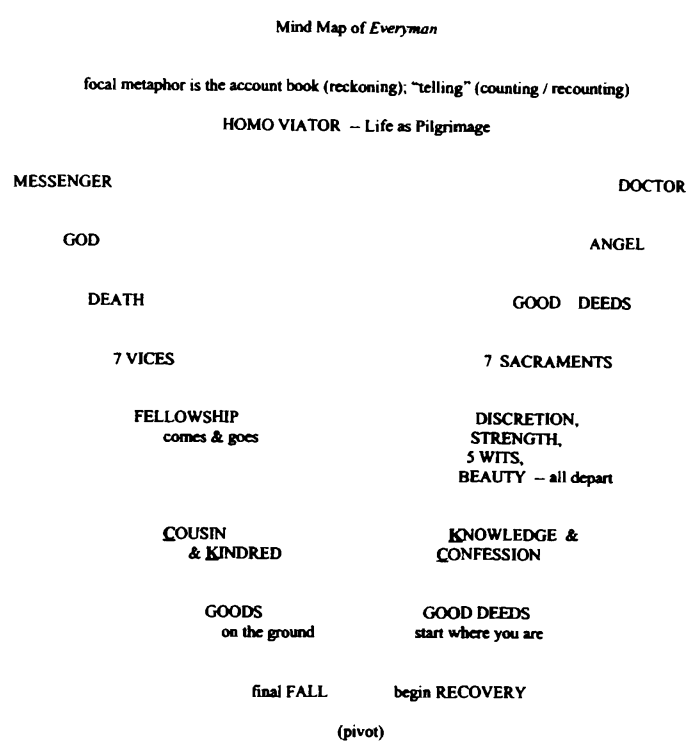

FIG. 5

mapping also can make use of artificial memory images to record and display key points extracted from still more complicated works, like John Skelton's satirical *Bouge of Court* (FIG. 6).[17] Moreover, this particular form of mnemonic caper can be used as a kind of road-map, highlighting, for example, the main allegorical locations and events in an epic—as can be seen here regarding the quest of Sir Guyon, Spenser's Knight of Temperance (FIG. 7).[18] The student can be sure he will not get lost in "Faerie-land" once he has visually tagged, and incorporated into his map, the key episodes encountered along the way, thus making literal use of artificial memory "places."

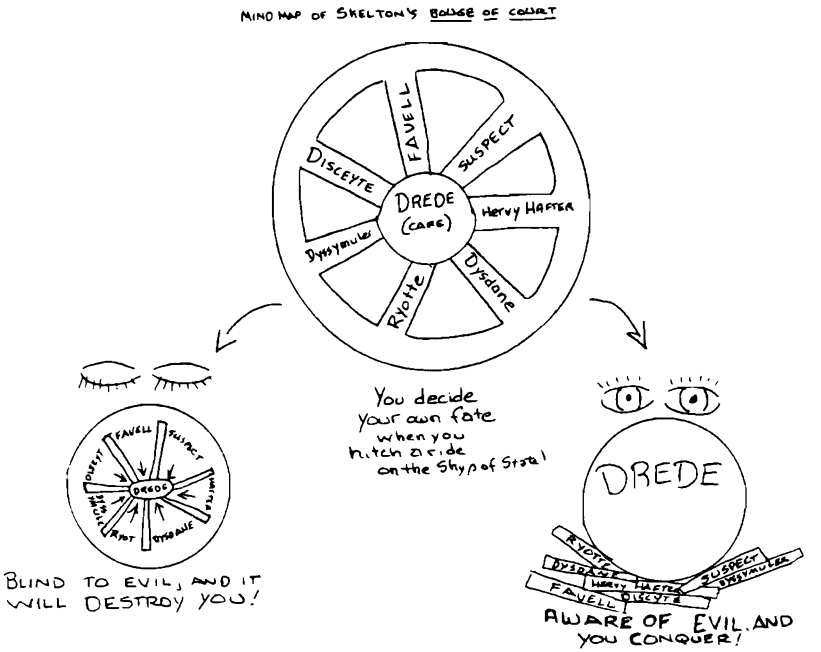

FIG. 6

My claim here is hardly unique; in fact, the plotting of a graphic itinerary is central to visual mnemonics in general. This explains in part why I chose mind mapping as the third type discussed, corresponding to the middle finger that is slightly above and coming between—and yet serving to con-

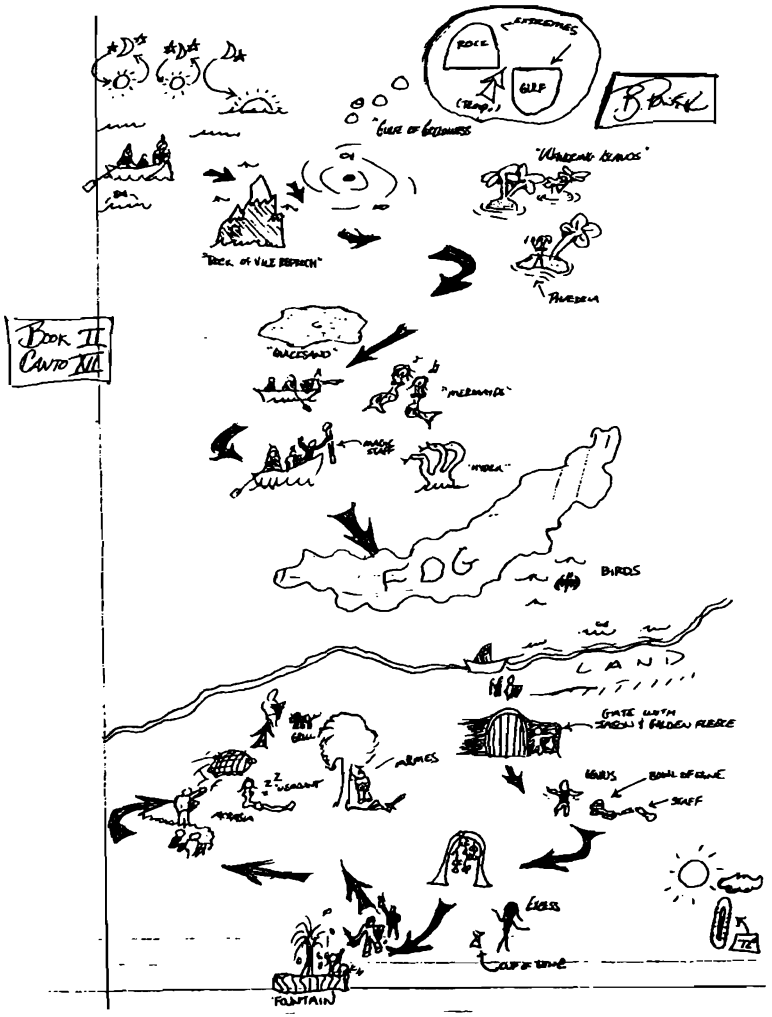

FIG. 7

nect—all of the others (see again FIG. 3). Mind maps typically were provided for books like Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, one which aptly was called "Plan of the Road from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City."[19] At least as early as Rossellius's *Thesaurus Artificiosae Memoriae* (Venice, 1579), schematic charts of Dante's Hell and Paradise were discussed in terms of providing readers with ready-made, convenient sites within an artificial memory theatre.[20]

Thus remaining faithful to the principles associated with these kinds of mnemonic exercises, though simplifying and modifying them for the classroom, students are able to descry and map out even the most involuted patterns of thought, like those for example in Burton's sprawling *Anatomy of Melancholy* (FIG. 8). The student here (obviously an accomplished illu-

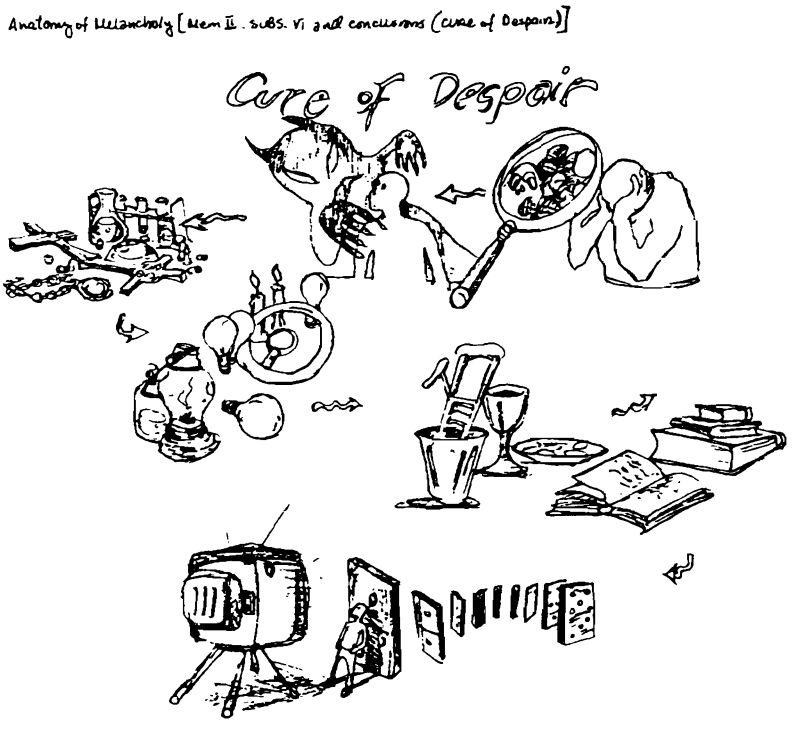

FIG. 8

strator) has selected a contemporary image to designate the stultifying culmination of idleness—T.V. And were Burton living today, he too would warn us about television, situated at the end of a deadly domino-effect, as a way to emblematize in a succinct memory image the main point of his section on cures for melancholy: "be not solitary; be not idle." What Richard Feynman did to clarify some especially dense patches in modern physics using his revolutionary diagrams, an earnest student like Rico Blancaflor can do to some especially lapidary passages in seventeenth-century prose using his graphic wit. For example the crutch shown in connection with the Eucharist faithfully sums up in a strikingly vivid memory image the crux of Burton's argument and attitude regarding cures for melancholy.

Mind mapping, while fundamental to all manner of visual mnemo-techniques, is but a heuristic, pedagogical, tool. It is an effective way to depict rudimentary and suggestively disclosive points of reference so that a larger structure can be reconstituted, and so that then selected twists and turns of the narrative, as well as broader and more complicated issues, themes, and concepts—including ethical considerations—can be filled in and explored further. This is what I had in mind when, in the introductory section, I alluded to Ezekiel's parable of dry bones being made to live again once they had been covered with sinews and flesh and then were animated by a special kind of breath, which in this essay corresponds to Art of Memory. This seemingly miraculous change leads us into the next form of mnemonic capering, magic circles.

Magic circles put memory grids to good use by encouraging students to identify connections between and among, say, sixteen poets. Such an exercise might very well begin with a variation on a typical memory grid, where the poets are paired so that students can focus on alternative, though still somewhat linear, modes of categorizing the basic data (FIG. 9). Students are made aware from the outset that such a brief summing up of characteristics (like gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, sexual preference) must be subjected to further critical examination. Accordingly they were asked to question and discuss whether and the extent to which such categories could help them understand and interpret the poetry. As

with every caper, the students are encouraged to reflect critically on the assignment and how, necessarily, it is set up to elicit certain kinds of information.

a key date	gender, religion, ethnicity nationality, sexual preference	points of connection; why are they paired?	something that marks poems; characteristic
Hardy			
Tennyson			
Vaughan			
cummings			
Larkin			
Snyder			
Hughes			
Plath			
Atwood			
Swenson			
Randall			
Aiken			
Lovelace			
Moore			
Hopkins			
Donne			

FIG. 9

Looking beyond the pairing of poets to more open-ended possibilities, the memory grid exercise paved the way for a magic circle caper (FIG. 10).

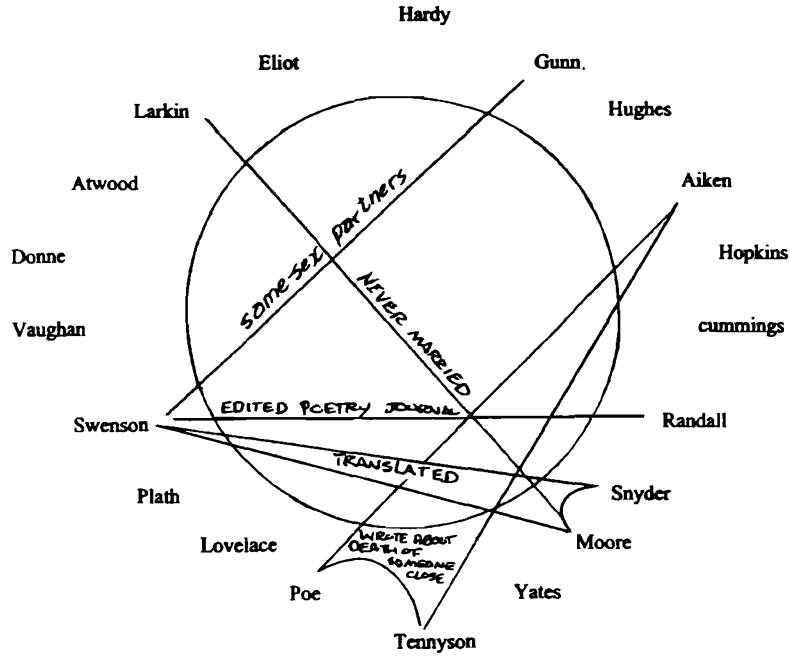

FIG. 10

This particular diagram is but one of several handed in that term, as each student charted out some basic connections (which often reflected work carried out individually on an assigned poet), and did so on a clear transparency using a colored marker. When different groups of students were brought together to discuss their findings, the transparencies were placed one atop the other and projected onto a wall, which made for lively and informed discussions. Collaborative learning exercises (both inside and outside the classroom), student reports (based on tutorials, so as to minimize the proliferation of misinformation and factual errors), and recitations (at least thirty lines per student) took the place of lecturing.

Students thus came to rely on one another, since everyone was responsible for all sixteen of the poets by the end of term. By pooling their information, the students came to see and to forge links that made lasting and strong impressions. Magic-circles capers like this one encourage students to arrange information in evocative ways and to generate questions they might not otherwise have considered.

Preliminary memory grids help students construct their own magic circles, as can be seen for example in this one which situated Kerouac's *On the Road* with respect to other works involving the theme of life being a journey (FIG. 11). This memory grid made it easy for students to get

Below the names of each *On the Road* character, analyze for puns and allegorical significance; then chart out how they are like or unlike the main wanderers in:

On the Road	*Zarathustra*	*Winter Journey*	*Werther*
Salvador Paradise			
Dean Moriarty			
Carlo Marx			

	children/wives/lovers	source of income	where is "home"?	habits/tics
Sal				
Dean				

FIG. 11

down some basic points about the works being considered, and then to arrange, cross-apply, and transfer the information so as to put it to other uses (FIG. 12). The resulting analytical papers indicated that most students were beginning to discern for themselves some of the larger connections, rifts, and shifts in literary and cultural history in the West.

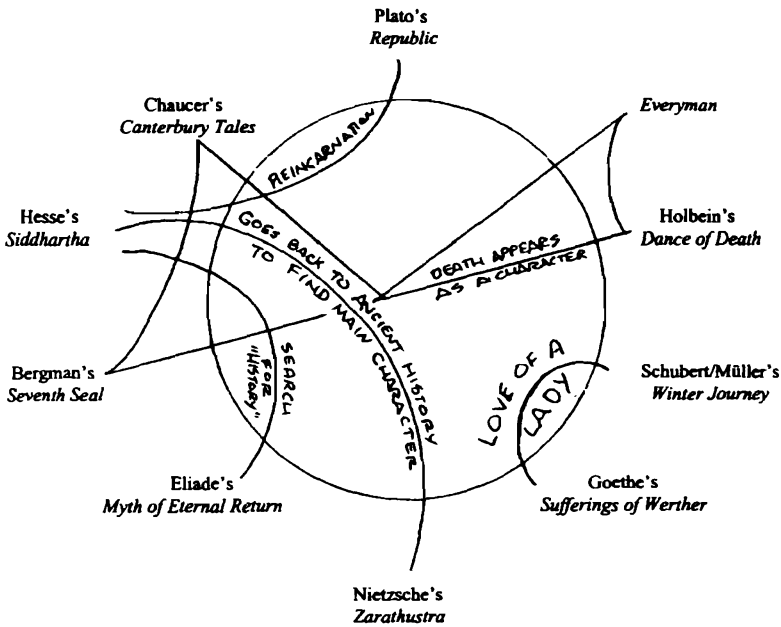

FIG. 12

Speaking pictures extend the principles of mind mapping further still to encompass larger themes. For example, an entire course of study can be localized and represented in terms of pictures, like statues in niches, placed around a room, as in traditional memory theatres.[21] The practice of giving elaborate, even poetic, descriptions of the specific symbolic points that have been encoded into a picture derives from an age-old rhetorical commonplace, *ekphrasis*.[22] For our purposes, we began the term with rudimentary pictures for each of the assigned books (*Daphnis and Chloe*,

Iliad, Odyssey, Aeneid, Divine Comedy, Decameron, Pantagruel, Don Quixote, Sophocles's *Antigone* and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*) (FIG. 13). At the beginning of each class session we added a few images, or encoded mnemonics,[23] making sure to mark (or tag) the panels in some meaningful way, so as to nuance and represent the students' evolving relationship

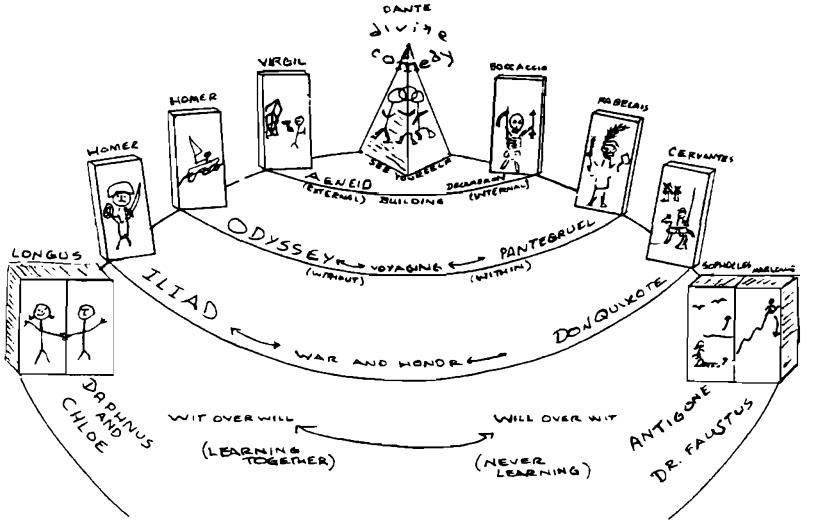

FIG. 13

and on-going engagement with the books. To help students become familiar with the practical applications of speaking pictures, the first book they read that term was *Daphnis and Chloe*, which begins: "When I was hunting in Lesbos, I saw, in a wood sacred to the Nymphs, the most beautiful thing I have ever seen—a painting that told a love story. [. . .] After gazing admiringly at many other scenes, all of a romantic nature, I was seized by a longing to write a verbal equivalent to the painting. So I found someone to explain the picture to me, and composed a work [. . .] to refresh the memory of those who have been in love and educate those who have

not."[24] Accordingly, their first caper involved making a picture showing what the "painting that told a love story" might have looked like. In this way each student kept a running visual record of key episodes in the book, and in so doing they came to understand how speaking pictures could give coherence to what one encountered in a book or in the world.

At the end of the term students were asked, by way of a final exam, to reconstruct as much of the panels as would be useful for filling in a memory grid with academic bare bones (author, genre, date, main themes, helpful secondary criticism and how it helped) so that they then could expatiate judiciously on three of the assigned books, each in its own right and also with respect to the others. According to the evaluative criteria used for assessing and measuring the instructional objectives of this particular class, the students exceeded what was expected (including a "special needs" pupil who in previous classes, I subsequently learned, had had only marginal success on exams covering a vast body of information). Moreover, the structure of the three-part exam helped students reflect on how information gets stored and recycled. Insofar as students were able to draw on and apply information from one part of the exam to the others thus duplicating information, it could perhaps be deemed a flawed exercise by conventional assessment standards. And yet the form of repetition favored by practical mnemonics served students well as a point of departure; it enabled them to get down what they knew and to do so in a variety of ways, and then to translate and transform that information into something else again.

For example, Part One of the exam, through a standard matching exercise, asked the students to link names and deeds—all of which echoed a dominant theme of our class discussions, human relations. (In the final weeks of class, students presented research projects elucidating how their chosen topic wove its way through three of the books; some reported on the role of women, some on guest-host relationships, some on piracy in the Mediterranean world). To help the students do something practical with the "mnemic bites," and in the process to consolidate and situate their knowledge of the facts at hand, they were asked in Part Two (which also had sections on the speaking picture panels and the memory grid) to fill

in blanks on family trees. Some of the names from this section could be read back into Part One (the matching exercise) and could feed into Part Three (the original composition). This enabled students to demonstrate the extent to which many "old bones" when carefully excavated and cleaned up made possible a new arrangement of the body of knowledge which, once animated by Art of Memory, could then take on a new form (whether, for example, an analytical essay or, as one student boldly attempted, an allegorical short story with modern parallels to three epics).

In another course (one covering benchmark works in English Literature from *Beowulf* to *Paradise Lost*), students created their own speaking picture as part of their final projects. They were assigned to use a shield as the organizational mnemonic background image, some precedents for which they had encountered, among other places, in Sackville's "Induction" to *A Mirror for Magistrates* (Death's "targe [. . .] In mids of which depaynted there we founde [. . .]"), Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and of course in the emblematic sonnets of Sidney and in the heraldic allusions riddling the lyrics of Wyatt and Surrey. In effect, the student's shield could serve as a visual epitome of the course (FIG. 14). Moving from the top left and then down, I would draw special attention to this rendering of Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale," where the root of the tree (under which death, in the tale, waits for the rash youths) serves as a figure in a rebus that echoes the dubious clergyman's signature refrain: "Radix malorum est cupiditas" (translated here as "$ is the root of evil"). Not every student sought to intertwine various types of mnemonics into this project as did Britt Farwick, though most like her followed some sort of a sequential itinerary. Irrespective of what approach or combination of approaches was chosen though, all of them demonstrated the extent to which the students had taken to heart what was covered during the term and made of it, literally and allegorically, something they could carry away with them from the course—to help ward off Oblivion—as they went out into the world.

The guiding theme that term was temperance, and it was accompanied by the *sententia* "Bene legere saecla vincere [To read well is to master the ages]." One student depicted the course motto as a living vine twisting its way through the main terms encountered that semester, ingeniously

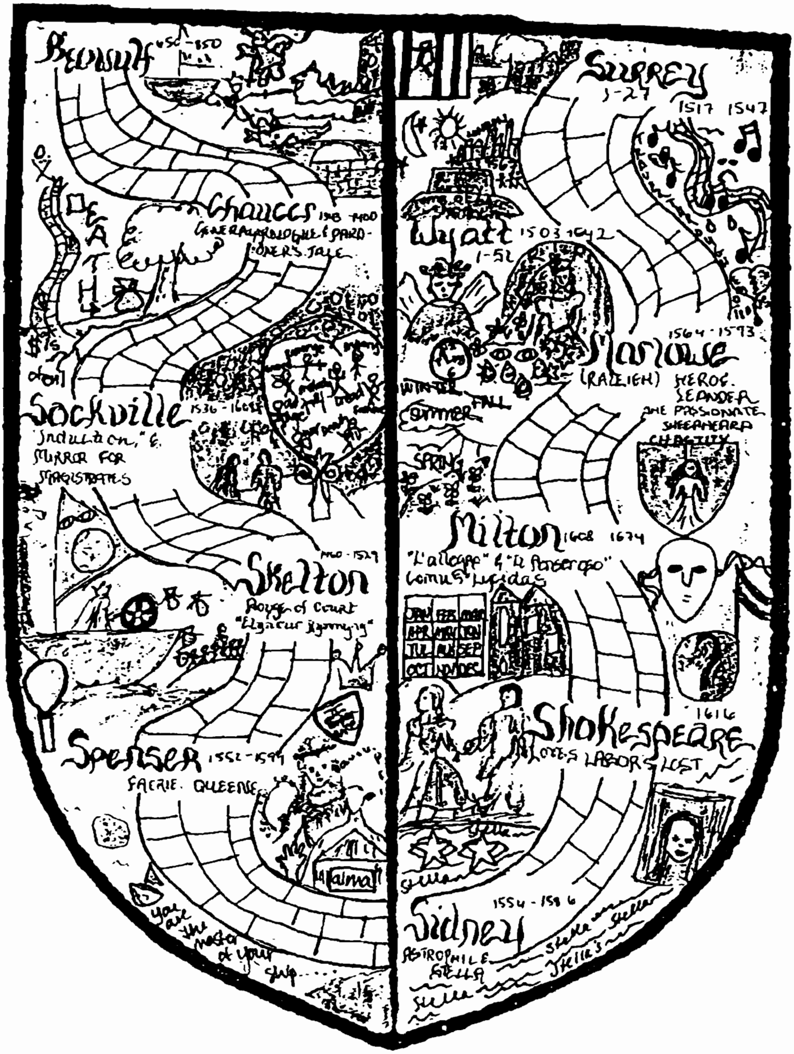
Beowulf
Chaucer
Sackville
Skelton
Spenser
Surrey
Wyatt
Marlowe
Milton
Shakespeare
Sidney
Faerie Queene
Love's Labor's Lost
Astrophile Stella

FIG. 14

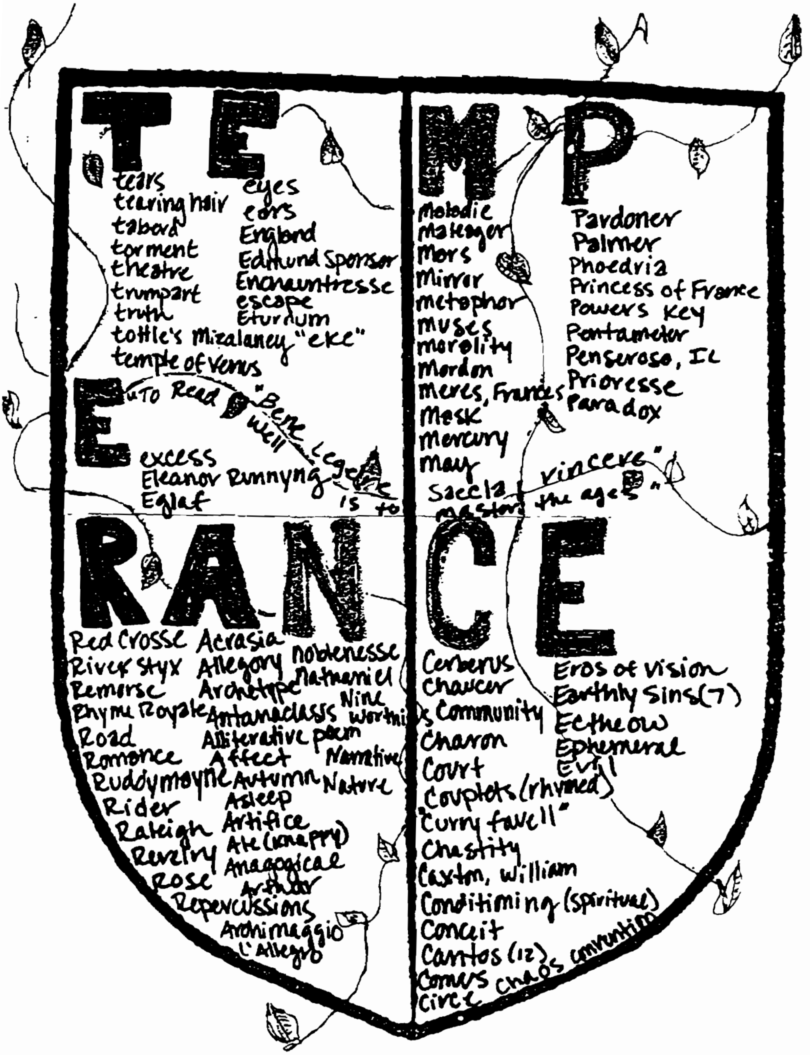
T E M P E R A N C E
tears
tearing hair
tabard
torment
theatre
truth
tottle's Mizalaney
temple of Venus
eyes
ears
England
Edmund Spenser
Enchauntresse
escape
"eke"
"To Read Bene Well
Legere is to
master the ages"
excess
Eleanor Rummyng
Eglaf
Melodie
Mors
Mirror
metaphor
muses
morality
meres, Frances
mercury
may
Pardoner
Palmer
Phoedria
Princess of France
Powers Key
Pentameter
Penseroso, Il
Prioresse
Paradox
Red Crosse
River Styx
Remorse
Rhyme Royale
Road
Romance
Rider
Raleigh
Revelry
Rose
Repercussions
Acrasia
Allegory
Archetype
Alliterative poem
Affect
Autumn
Asleep
Artifice
Anagogical
Arthur
L'Allegro
noblenesse
Nathaniel
Nine worthies
Narrative
Nature
Cerberus
Chaucer
Community
Charon
Court
Couplets (rhymed)
"Curry favell"
Chastity
Caxton, William
Conceit
Cantos (12)
Circe
chaos
convention
Eros of Vision
Earthly Sins (7)
Ephemeral
Evil

FIG. 15

arranged as tag words mnemonically linked to the letters in "TEMPERANCE" (the original shield was color-coded as well) (FIG. 15). It was a happy coincidence indeed that the noppy "ale" in Skelton's "Elynour Rummyng" preceded "anagogical" in her list; reveling "Comus," seductive "Circe," and "chaos" appeared in close proximity—something all of us would do well to keep in mind, but college students especially. By virtue of pursuing this mnemonic scheme, one which required that she look back at her notes and re-read parts of the assigned books so as to identify and cull appropriate tag words, this student postulated and defended some remarkable connections between developments in English literature and Augustinian theology in her final essay.

But irrespective of what thesis was or was not fully evinced in a paper crowning a semester of work, the practical knowledge of mnemonic capering itself, seen and used as a viable and fundamental approach to literature and life—coupled with the moral messages one encountered along the way—was a fine and noble thing for students to have gotten out of a course required of all English majors (FIG. 16). For it is by these means that we are more likely to learn to see that at times we are not only like, but, each in our own ways, we *are* Sir Guyon, the Knight of Temperance, and he us. By the same token, since at times we are likely to find ourselves deeply implicated in Burton's discourse on despair, let us hope as well that at times we can be like—and indeed can *be*—Everyman, to whom Knowledge says: "I will go with thee, and be thy guide, / In thy most need to go by thy side."

III. Envoy

Through my teaching I have sought to make available a variety of time-tried mnemonic techniques as a preliminary step toward finding authentic points of connection to works of literature, art, and philosophy. It has been my experience that students trained to be adept at inventing and applying mnemonics tend to carry with them, not only the specific target-skills (close reading, analytical thinking, cogent writing) and the designated content

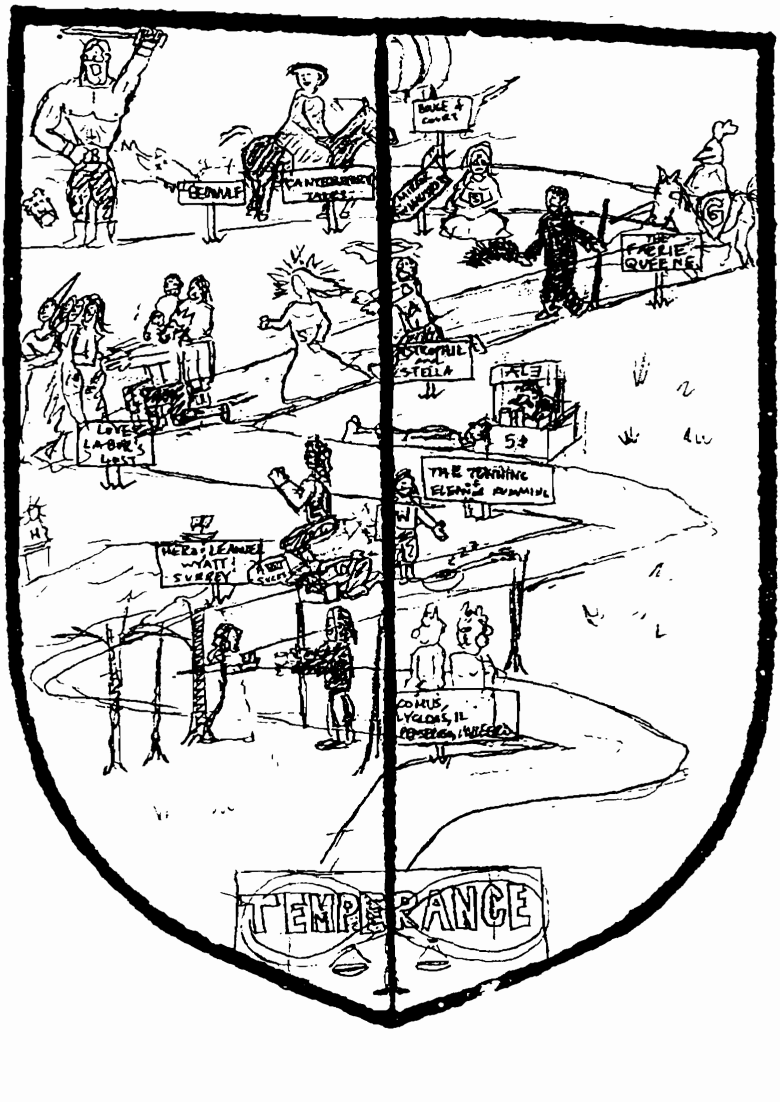

FIG. 16

(for example, Book II of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*), but also the larger moral themes. By virtue of the mnemonic capers that students were assigned, which cumulatively constituted a visual record of their journey toward Knowledge, they succeeded in internalizing, each in their own ways, reminders of the moral guide-posts discovered in great books that then could be applied in their own lives and, as it often turned out, in the lives of others as well. From what has been presented here: take, and shape to your own ends, what works; the rest, forget. Valé.

Saint Augustine! Well hast thou said,
  That of our vices we can frame
A ladder, if we will but tread
  Beneath our feet each deed of shame!

All common things, each day's events,
  That with the hour begin and end,
Our pleasures and our discontents,
  Are rounds by which we may ascend.

* * *

The heights by great men reached and kept
  Were not attained by sudden flight
But they, while their companions slept,
  Were toiling upward in the night.

Standing on what too long we bore
  With shoulders bent and downcast eyes,
We may discern—unseen before—
  A path toward higher destinies,

Nor deem the irrevocable Past,
  As wholly wasted, wholly vain,
If, rising on its wrecks, at last
  To something nobler we attain.[25]

Nashville, Tennessee

NOTES

[1]William E. Engel, "Patters of Recollections in Montaigne and Melville," *Connotations* 7.3 (1997/98): 335.

[2]Mary Carruthers, "Inventional Mnemonics and the Ornaments of Style: The Case of Etymology," *Connotations* 2.2 (1992): 103.

[3] Carruthers, Inventional Mnemonics 104. For a more full elaboration of this theme, see Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998) 155-61; and on precedents regarding ethics as an end or by-product of applied mnemonics, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), esp. 156-88.

[4]Lothar Cerny, "Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*: Revisiting and Reformation," *Connotations* 7.3 (1997/98): 261.

[5]Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964; rpt. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1991); and Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (1966; rpt: Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978). Yates summed up the trajectory of her investigations, especially how the Art of Memory enabled her "to see the whole Renaissance in a new light," in "Autobiographical Fragments," in *Ideas and Ideals in the North European Renaissance, Collected Essays III* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984) 320; for a list of her complete writings, see 325-36.

[6]Inge Leimberg, "George Herbert 'The Sinner': Der Tempel als Memoria-Gebäude," *Archiv* 206 (1970): 241-50, esp. 242.

[7]And sometimes in surprising ways for, notwithstanding my indebtedness to Yates's work on the memory arts, it was her biography of John Florio that led to my study of place-based mnemonics in commonplaces of travel literature: "Knowledge that Counted: Italian phrase-books and dictionaries in Elizabethan England," *Bulletino del Centro Interuniversitario di Ricerche sul "Viggio in Italia"* 31-32 (Jan.-Dec. 1995): 107-28.

[8]This judgment is based on entrance/exit surveys and pre-test/post-test inventories; the results were assessed with respect to comparable instruments used in other courses covering roughly the same subject matter. Although this essay is not designed as a full-fledged case-method research project, I would point out that the student work included in this particular sampling of accumulated data came mainly from courses taught in the college of Arts and Science at Vanderbilt University. I have written elsewhere about other populations of students, further corroborating the findings outlined here; see especially Bill Engel, "Can Ethics Be Taught? Even to Lawyers?," *Creative Teaching* (1999): 77-84; and Bill Engel, "The Future of Classroom Mnemonics," *Midwest Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (forthcoming 2000).

[9]This point is implicit in much of the present essay but not developed here in depth. For a more thorough treatment of this theme, which goes hand-in-glove with "Classroom Capers," see Bill Engel, "The Aesthetic Core of Memory Training," *Creative Teaching* (1998): 91-111.

[10]For a brief survey of Renaissance precedents of this sort of "organizational mnemonic device," see William E. Engel, *Mapping Mortality: The Persistence of Memory and Melancholy in Early Modern England* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1995) 32-46.

[11]Cf. Carruthers, *Book of Memory* 34-35, and Engel, *Mapping Mortality* 114. For a more involved development of this theme with respect to Renaissance literary practices, see William E. Engel, "Aphorism, Anecdote, and Anamnesis," *Montaigne Studies* 1 (1989): 158-76; which, as it happens, has been used in the service of a larger argument about Baroque art: Anthony Colantuono, "Poussin's *Osservazioni sopra la pittura*: Notes or Aphorisms," *Studi Secenteschi; Revista Annuale* 41 (2000): 297.

[12]Michel de Montaigne, "Education of Children," *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald Frame (1957; rpt. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1976), 1: 26, 112.

[13]I borrow this term, mnememe, from Daniel Martin, "Pour une lecture mnémonique des *Essais*: une image et un lieu," *Bulletin de la Société des Amis de Montaigne*, 5th series, 31-32 (1979): 55.

[14]Obviously the poem's structure and meaning are far more complex than an undergraduate's synopsis can allow; still, her tagged findings hit quite close to what an outstanding explicator of Skelton has related, Arthur F. Kinney, *John Skelton, Priest as Poet: Seasons of Discovery* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1987) 167-87: "They come to a mock confessional, and to be communicants in an Offertory of various goods [. . .] holding them up, indiscriminately, we are told, 'To offer to the ale-pole' (l. 526) or 'To offer to the ale tap' (l. 286). It is, in fact, the surrendering of these symbolic tokens of their worship (and their souls) on which Skelton spends so much time in the poem" (178). The student's moral "mnemic-bite" accords well with Kinney's parting assessment of the poem (187): "a sermon fit for every age."

[15]Nancy Margulies, *Mapping Inner Space* (Tucson: Zephyr Press, 1991).

[16]Chiastic ordering, as a mnemotechnical principle of composition, which was referenced briefly in Engel, "Mnemonic Criticism" 13, is a theme to which I plan to turn my attention in the future (especially as a way to understand the ludic design and formal properties informing and animating the major works of E. A. Poe), along the lines discussed by R. G. Peterson, "Critical Calculations: Measure and Symmetry in Literature," *PMLA* 91.3 (May 1976): 367-75; and Max Nänny, "Chiastic Structures in Literature: Some Forms and Functions," *The Structure of Texts*, ed. Udo Fries (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1987) 75-97. On chiasmus as a preeminent expression of Renaissance architectonics, see especially Christopher Butler, *Number Symbolism* (London: Routledge, 1970); Alastair Fowler, *Triumphal Forms* (Cambridge: CUP, 1970); *Silent Poetry: Essays in Numerological Analysis*, ed. Alastair Fowler (London: Routledge, 1970); John Macqueen, *Numerology: Theory and Outline of a Literary Mode* (Edinburgh: EUP, 1985); and Maren-Sofie Røstvig, *Configurations: A Topomorphical Approach to Renaissance Poetry* (Oslo-Copenhagen-Stockholm: Scandinavian UP, 1994).

[17]Incidentally a passage from this poem appears as the epigraph to the inaugural issue of *Connotations*, and it bears repeating, again: "I, calling to mind the great authority / Of poets old, which full craftily, / Under as covert terms as could be, / Can touch a truth and cloak it subtilly / With freshe utterance full sententiously, / Diverse in style, some spared not vice to wyte, / Some of morality nobly did endite; / Whereby I rede their renown and their fame / May never die, but evermore endure."

[18]This kind of mind map, while different in form and content from the more schematic charts that show, for example, ethical cruces in *Faerie Queene*, Book II, like those presented by Røstvig, *Configurations* 312-58, is not at odds with the spirit of the exercise.

For as Røstvig maintains, and I concur: "extensive use of diagrams" encourages "spatial awareness" (xviii). (In this regard, see Walter Ong, *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue* [1958; rpt. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1985] 260: "What goes is what can be readily and convincingly 'pictured' in at least semidiagrammatic form"). The needs of undergraduates encountering Spenser's poem for the first time necessarily are quite different from those of literary scholars who have devoted their professional lives to discerning the interrelated patterns of creation and redemption (xi)—or, put in less religious terms, of making and reclaiming. Diagrams and charts, especially when accompanied by spatially arranged visual cues and thus animated by the potentially refreshing breath of the Art of Memory, serve both the studious undergraduate and the seasoned scholar well—each according to his means.

[19]This popular illustration from *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Mansell Collection) is reproduced, among other places, on the cover of the Penguin Edition (1965; rpt. Harmondsworth, 1985).

[20]See Yates, *Art of Memory*, figures 8a and 8b, between pages 220-21.

[21]See Yates, *Art of Memory* 18: "The commonest, though not the only, type of mnemonic place system used was the architectural type." From a form of inner writing to the ingenious outward display of one's private intentions, it is by now commonplace among scholars to observe that visual mnemonics adorned prince's palaces, temporary triumphal arches, religious houses, guild halls, stables and inns, civic forums, and public squares.

[22]See Clark Hulse, *The Rule of Art: Literature and Painting in the Renaissance* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990); and Michael Bath, *Speaking Pictures: The Emblem Book in Renaissance Culture* (London: Longman, 1994).

[23]Francis Bellezza, "Mnemonic Devices and Memory Schema," *Imagery and Related Mnemonic Processes*, ed. Mark A. MacDaniel and Michael Pressley (New York: Springer, 1987) 34-55.

[24]Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*, trans. Paul Turner (1956; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989) 17.

[25]Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Ladder of Saint Augustine" (1850), from the subsection "Birds of Passage; Flight the First" in *The Courtship of Miles Standish, and Other Poems* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1992) 61-62. The opening and closing verses of this poem are cited here not just as a fitting coda to my ethical theme, and not just because, like my essay in general, they begin by evoking and end by reaching an Augustinian conclusion; but also because Longfellow's career and poetry accord well with the pedagogical program and the kinds of courses I have been discussing. After all, the title poem of the collection in which "The Ladder of Saint Augustine" appears, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, is a narrative written in dactylic hexameter, like Virgil's *Aeneid*; and, further, among his many poetic translations (from Spanish, Swedish, Danish, German, Portuguese, French, as well as Latin and Anglo-Saxon) Longfellow translated Dante's *Divina Commedia*—works and authors mentioned in the section of my essay discursively glossing FIG. 13. Also Longfellow's three-volume work, *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, was inspired by *The Canterbury Tales* and, like Chaucer's masterpiece, mnemonically contains many story poems connected by a narrative framework.

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Vol. 9.2 (1999/2000)

Dracula and the Idea of Europe

ELENI COUNDOURIOTIS

"... and the glories of the great races are as a tale that is told." (35)

Our persistent interest in the politics of Dracula—whether they pertain to Ireland, class conflict, gender, or empire—acknowledges the historical relevance of the novel.[1] Political arguments imply particular constructions of history. Yet historicity poses problems for the reader of *Dracula* as its questions are addressed by the novel scientifically, or even anthropologically, and not historically. Stoker seems to ask insistently, what is Dracula? Although this could be construed as a question of origins (how has Dracula come about and what can we infer about his meaning from such a narrative of becoming), Van Helsing, the man who masterminds the hunt for Dracula, addresses the question in terms of the monster's behavior. To come to know what Dracula is, Van Helsing first meticulously records the details of the Count's behavior. He does not insist on the causes for Dracula, but on deciphering a pattern of behavior that will enable him to classify the Count as a vampire and hence to know what he must do to defeat him.[2] Some of the criticism on the novel reflects this same anthropological attitude: Dracula is explained in terms of Eastern European folklore, and the "historical" Dracula (presumably, the fifteenth-century prince Vlad, the Impaler) is treated as a legendary figure about whom contradictory stories abound.[3]

The anthropologic masks a larger preoccupation in the novel with repressing historical discourse and delegitimating historicity more generally. This negative attitude towards history has its own politics, a politics, I will argue, that shapes Britain's relation to the idea of Europe.

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debcoundouriotis00902.htm>.

Its delegitimation of history is selective, targeting the Ottoman history of Eastern Europe in particular at a time when the nations newly emerging from Ottoman rule challenged the idea of Europe that had been defined through the Concert of Europe since the early years of the nineteenth century.[4] Critics have consistently treated the Eastern European setting of the novel as incidental. The consensus has been that the politics of the novel lie closer to home; that Ireland stands behind Transylvania.[5] This type of metonymic reading adds resonance to the novel's setting, but we should not overlook the significance of Eastern Europe itself. In his notes for the novel, Stoker indicates that he always had Eastern Europe in mind, setting the action first in Styria, Austria, and then changing it to Transylvania (Frayling 341, 345). Treating the Eastern Question as central to Stoker's project focuses my reading on the ways in which the actual historical context of the novel informs its discursive delegitimation of history. Instead of looking at how the novel might be coded (Transylvania as a code for Ireland, for example), I want to argue that Stoker is setting in motion a delegitimation of the Ottoman history of Eastern Europe through the figure of the vampire, whose hybrid identification (a result of his history) as both Christian and Ottoman, makes him monstrous and ultimately incoherent, a source of history that "logically" (but also anxiously) needs to be silenced.

The deployment of multiple types (even technologies) of documentation, the absence of a narrative center, and the fragmentation of the text into dated entries are evidence of a struggle to replace the authority of history with that of science.[6] While, of course, the novel proposes neither a true history nor a true science, its narrative method suggests a scientific storytelling paradigm which is more likely than history to uphold the narratives of progress in crisis at the end of the nineteenth century. As David Glover has noted, the novel's temporality is not historical, but "a continuous present that is constituted jointly through the procedures of law and science" (62). I am less concerned here with defining this scientific paradigm than I am with the ways in which the novel constructs history as a discourse to be overcome. Formed out of a profound mistrust of historical memory, the scientific paradigm is essentially documentary.

Obsessed with the present, it seeks to establish the objective facts at the time of the events in order to obviate the necessity for remembrance.

In the epigraph of this essay (spoken by the Count to Jonathan Harker) emerges a keen awareness of history as fabulous. The "glories of the great races are as a tale that is told," and thus the glories themselves are tentative and immaterial, precariously dependent on the method of telling. The structure of the novel, its accumulation of documentary evidence, attempts to prevent a slide into the fabulous. Presented as evidence of a scientific method of representation, the deployment of various discourses gives the impression that the novel regulates the vicissitudes of telling associated specifically with historical modes of remembrance. Thus all writers of this tale come up repeatedly with the same plot. The only one with a different plot is the Count, who considers himself the victim and not the wrongdoer. As a relic, the Count speaks of and from the past. He never has his own text but his voice, like orature, has peculiar power and cultural resonance, especially in laying claim to his audience: Jonathan he declares is his, Mina the flesh of his flesh. In their pursuit of the Count, the characters in *Dracula* set out to erase a history that threatens to claim them.

When Van Helsing arrives on the scene, he immediately warns Seward of the vicissitudes of memory. He tells Seward: "Remember, my friend, that knowledge is stronger than memory, and we should not trust the weaker . . . . Take then good note of it. Nothing is too small. I counsel you, put down in record even your doubts and surmises" (112). Memory misrepresents. Although opposed as weak and strong, memory and knowledge are compared as essentially similar powers that can be used interchangeably. However why would one use the weaker, when the stronger is available? The difficulty for Van Helsing is that knowledge is tied to time so whereas he distinguishes knowledge from memory, he cannot disentangle knowledge from temporality. Knowledge itself is contingent on the passage of time. Thus Van Helsing must appeal to Seward to "remember" that "knowledge is stronger than memory." But what does Van Helsing propose is knowledge? Knowledge evolves from the comparison of written sources and lived experience. To learn, Van Helsing has recourse to books; but books are not enough. We need, he proclaims,

"the proof of our own unhappy experience" (209). Consequently, time and experience license the revision of the written record. The same documentary operation that establishes knowledge erases memory. Seward is urged to record all his doubts and surmises so that they can be compared with an ongoing experience that sheds light retrospectively on the written record and corrects it. Indeed Van Helsing regrets how long it takes him to decipher and believe in the fact of the vampire, time which is measured in the loss of Lucy. Furthermore, Jonathan's journal acquires the status of a primary text only after Lucy's death confirms Jonathan's record. In contrast to Van Helsing's obsession with controlling time, the Count has no control of time. Overwhelmed with the implications of long, historical time, the Count haunts the characters in the novel, subverting their effort to valorize only contemporaneity.

Jonathan's journal records more explicitly than anything else in the novel the claims of the past. The past that haunts Jonathan brings to the fore a European cultural consciousness that threatens his identity as an English gentleman, a man of business, traveling to the Continent. His experience at the castle of Count Dracula illustrates the dangers of memory. Although apparently secure in his modernity, Jonathan concedes that he is awed by the powers of the past. As he writes his journal in the castle, a sense of the past invades him:

> Here I am, sitting at a little oak table where in old times possibly some fair lady sat to pen, with much thought and many blushes, her ill-spelt love-letter, and writing in my diary in shorthand all that has happened since I closed it last. It is nineteenth-century up-to-date with a vengeance. And yet, unless my senses deceive me, the old centuries had, and have, powers of their own which mere 'modernity' cannot kill. (40-41)

Jonathan may have overcome the fair lady's anxiety about writing by using a modern spelling system, shorthand. Yet as Jonathan acknowledges the past, he is ridden with anxiety. It is not only his senses and sense, which he repeatedly thinks he might be losing, that worry him. He is anxious about the weight of the past and its capacity to drown out his modern experience. The reference to vengeance is not casual since indeed much of the hunt against the Count is achieved through the technologies of

writing. Vengeance defines modernity's attitude to the past which looms large and is ready to invalidate the new.

Jonathan's near seduction by the three female vampires is foregrounded by his seduction by the place. The beauty of the Carpathians stirs his imagination: "I soon lost sight and recollection of ghostly fears in the beauty of the scene as we drove along," he tells us (14) and proceeds to describe natural scenery that is lush and idyllic. Neither like Britain, nor alien like the tropics, the landscape shows Europe as magically familiar:

> Before us lay a green sloping land full of forests and woods, with here and there steep hills, crowned with clumps of trees or with farmhouses, the blank gable end to the road. There was everywhere a bewildering mass of fruit blossom—apple, plum, pear, cherry; and as we drove by I could see the green grass under the trees spangled with the fallen petals. (14)

This is a bountiful picture of spring "crowned," as Stoker says, with the signs of man's harmony with nature: farmhouses, fruit trees. The beauty of the place is full of cultural significance since it reminds Jonathan of scenes from drawings in "old missals" (11). He is in the midst of medieval Christian Europe. After he meets his driver (the count in disguise), Jonathan's impression of the place changes; it turns dark and he enters what he calls a second "atmosphere" (16). His time at the castle, however, is once again full of recognition (as in the writing scene cited above) even as he must cope with the Count's strangeness.[7] Jonathan seems ready to live in the imaginary space of romance. His response is conditioned by a cultural memory to which he is awakening through the imagination for the first time.

When Jonathan's journal is read later by the others, these aspects of his experience are not commented on. The return trips to Transylvania and especially the last trip, the one after the death of Dracula, refigure the Carpathians as safe, cleansed of the energies of romance that threatened Jonathan's mental equilibrium. Mina sees timeless beauty, devoid of a sense of the past. She writes in her journal before Dracula is killed: "It is a lovely country; full of beauties of all imaginable kinds, and the people are brave, and strong, and simple and seem full of nice qualities" (312). Her language

here is remarkably bland ("lovely country," "nice qualities"). In Jonathan's note that concludes the novel, there is no reference to the beauty of the Carpathians: "every trace of all that had been was blotted out. The castle stood as before, reared high above a waste of desolation" (326). The splendid landscape, which had been visible not only on the journey there but from the windows of the castle itself, is now desolate. The Carpathians have been stripped of cultural significance to Mina and Jonathan; the killing of Dracula enacts a high-handed erasure that desolates in order to eliminate the traces of history.[8]

So far I have alluded to various instances in which the characters, discomfited by a sense of the past, try to elude and repress it. Our only source of history in the novel is the Count himself. The final assault on the Count is masterminded through a reading of his history recorded in Jonathan Harker's journal. However, the Count's history is not read as history. It is read only as a predictor of the Count's behavior, and hence it is read ethnographically as a description of what the Count is. Van Helsing is not interested in how the monster came to be, but he examines the Count's history in order to find a pattern of behavior that might give clues to his future actions. Thus Van Helsing uses the Count's narrative as a means to dominate and destroy him.

Dracula's own words regarding his origins are enigmatic (32-35). What purports to be the count's history is, as Jonathan transcribes it, the history not of an individual but variously of a family, a race, an ethnicity, a nation ("country" is the word used, 33), a region, even a continent—Europe itself—since the Carpathians are figured as a "whirlpool of European races" (33) from North and South, a center that once located renders the rest of Europe (Britain, France, Russia, the new unified nations of Germany and Italy) peripheral.[9] In a phrase that echoes the Count's expression, Jonathan speaks of the Carpathians "as if they were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool" (10). Stephen Arata has noted that the Count's vampirism is connected by implication to conquest, the spilling of blood: "In Stoker's version of the myth, vampires are intimately linked to military conquest and to the rise and fall of empires" in the region of the Carpathian mountains long associated with "political turbulence and racial strife" (113).

In the novel's image, the "earth has been enriched by the blood of men, patriots or invaders"(27). The ground of Europe itself is bloodthirsty and seems to elicit more blood. To Mina, the Count speaks of avenging a wrong, but who is the agent of wrongdoing and what was the action?

These problems bring me to the argument that *Dracula* symbolizes Europe or at least an idea of Europe based on historical narratives conveniently contained and repressed during the period of Ottoman rule in the Balkans but reemerging with great urgency in the last quarter of the nineteenth century with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Not unlike our own recent history that has witnessed the reemergence of the Balkan nations from behind the Iron Curtain and the outbreak of spectacular, violent conflicts on European soil which challenge Western Europe's understanding of Europeanness, so did the collapse of the Ottoman Empire expose peoples and territories of diverse cultures and beliefs to the consciousness of Europe. Underscoring the importance of the East to Europe's identity, Gladstone noted in his retrospect on the Bulgarian Massacres that "the curtain rising in the East seems to open events that bear cardinally to our race" (quoted in Matthew 32). Ottoman rule lasted anywhere from two hundred to four hundred years in different parts of Eastern Europe and spread as far West as Hungary, burying many peoples under an autocratic imperial power that shut them off from the cultural revival of the Renaissance. Jonathan reminds us in the first paragraph of the novel that the Danube River divides East and West: crossing the Danube, he recounts, "took us among the traditions of the Turkish rule" (9). Reconfiguring these borders meant redefining what Europe had become since the Renaissance. The Eastern Question—the problem of the collapse of the "sick man of Europe" and the emergence of new nations which were mostly Orthodox Christian and thus fell naturally under the influence of Russia—was avidly discussed in Britain from the mid 1870s and entailed an anxious search for Britain's identity in the new Europe.

Britain had until the mid 1870s been traditionally pro-Ottoman because it saw in the Ottoman Empire an important bulwark against Russia's ascendancy. Moreover, Britain's economic interests in Turkey were very significant. In 1875, Britain supplied one third of Turkey's imports and

much of Turkish banking was in British hands (Clayton 122-23). Yet Britain was about to see its preeminent role as Turkey's ally challenged (eventually to be supplanted by Germany) as European powers tried to uphold the Ottoman Empire in the hopes of stemming the spread of Russian control of the Balkans.[10]

In 1876 popular opinion in Britain turned abruptly against Turkey as a huge public outcry erupted in response to Turkish massacres of Christians in Bulgaria. Gladstone's pamphlet on the Bulgarian massacres which fueled this public debate sold 200,000 copies in less than a month (Matthew 31-32). In the pamphlet, Gladstone accused Disraeli's government of concealing what they knew about the massacres, and treating the reports of atrocities as if they were a "tale told" (Gladstone 18). Doubts over the reports of the massacres produced "the result, not of belief qualified by a reserve for occasional error, but of disbelief qualified by a reserve for purely accidental truth," what Gladstone called a "moral, though not a verbal, denial" (Gladstone 19).

Gladstone's distinction makes an interesting commentary on the uses of documentation. Provided with the evidence of atrocity, Disraeli's government refused to moralize it; it saw accident, rather than design. Gladstone, however, insists that a historical consciousness should have guided the reading of the evidence. Depicting the Turks as a people with a history of bloodthirsty, autocratic rule over conquered nations, Gladstone hoped to make political support for the Turks untenable unless one saw Britain as similar to Turkey, and thus as bloodthirsty and autocratic. Gladstone describes the Turks' history in phrasing that is echoed by Dracula's description of the savagery of the Ottomans who left behind "the bloody field where his troops were being slaughtered" (35):

> Wherever they went, a broad line of blood marked the track behind them; and, as far as their dominion reached, civilization disappeared from view. They represented everywhere government by force, as opposed to government by law. . . .
>
> They were indeed a tremendous incarnation of military power. This advancing curse menaced the whole of Europe. It was only stayed, and that not in one generation, but in many, by the heroism of the European population of those very countries, part of which form at this moment the scene of war . . . . (Gladstone 13)

In a similar vein, Dracula boasts: "to us was trusted the guarding of the frontier of Turkey-land" and that he "beat the Turk on his own ground" (34). Gladstone feels obligated to remind his readers of a history they have neglected: Europe was saved by the sacrifices of the people at its Eastern frontier, who have been buried under a rule "of force." Whereas Gladstone uses the litany on Ottoman violence as, what I called earlier in the case of Van Helsing's use of Dracula's history, a predictor of behavior, the history brought to light here is the history of the martyrs who resisted Ottoman rule. It is the obligation of the rest of Europe to save these Christian peoples now and in the process restore all of Europe to civilization.

When Gladstone returned to power in 1880, he actively promoted the Concert of Europe as a means of governance of European affairs through consensus among nations. His vision was "to sustain the United Kingdom as a Christian, united, free-trading, non-expansionist political community in the comity of nations" (Matthew 5). The Concert of Europe was the model for this "comity of nations," an expression of the "reasonableness of Europe" which, from the mid 1870s was to be repeatedly "assaulted by the brutality and inflexibility of the Ottoman Empire" (Matthew 5). In its mandate of "settling . . . disputes by the consensual authority of the great powers" (Jenkins 314), the Concert of Europe worked to integrate the newly unified Germany and Italy, and Russian ascendancy into its body. But it also had to deal with Turkey which had joined in 1856 under the condition that it would reform and modernize. The reforms, however, failed and an Islamic reaction put an end to further reform in the early 1870s (Matthew 21).[11] The Bulgarian massacres of 1876 proved for Gladstone the failure to Europeanize the Turkish Porte. Gladstone attacked the "moral failure of Turkish rule" (Matthew 27) which had allowed slaughter "within the boundaries of 'civilization'" (Matthew 21). The implication was that the legitimacy of Ottoman rule depended on Turkish consent to the European standards of civilized governance and that the ethnic and religious differences that separated the Turks from their Christian subjects did not necessarily invalidate their authority to rule. Gladstone did not promote openly the nationalist claims of Eastern

European ethnic groups; he advocated the punishment of Turkey for its misgovernance (Matthew 21).

Gladstone saw Britain's role in Ireland as analogous to the Ottomans' role in Eastern Europe (Jenkins 280). The Eastern Question and Home Rule together constituted for Gladstone the main issues for national debate in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Despite the Bulgarian Massacres, Britain's pro-Turkish policy resumed,[12] although strong anti-Turkish feeling resurfaced in 1894 when revelations of further massacres (this time against Armenians) were made. Gladstone's last public speeches in 1895 and 1896 were on the Armenian massacres (Jenkins 619).

In his notes for the novel, Stoker places under the heading "characteristics of Count Wampyr" an entry which reads: "Immortality-Gladstone" (Frayling 343). Although this reference is too elliptical for us to be certain of its meaning, it is provocative that Stoker links the Count to Gladstone. Michael Valdez Moses argues that Dracula comes to embody the contradictions of an authoritarian, nationalist leader (in fact he links Dracula to Parnell) and using the same reference ("Immortality-Gladstone"), he sees Van Helsing and his companions as Gladstonian "liberal progressives" (98, 109n44). If we follow this string of associations further, we might ask a broader question: how does Dracula's history address the implications of Gladstone's politics for the Concert of Europe—in which the fate of Irish home rule is also entangled?

The analogy between Dracula and the idea of Europe is complicated by the incoherence of the Count's history as we have it in two places: Jonathan's reported account (33-35), and then later Mina's repetition of the Count's words at the scene of her "bloody baptism" (247-49). The historical Dracula, Vlad the Impaler, supports the fictional Dracula's monstrosity, his insatiable violence, and reputation for autocratic and arbitrary rule.[13] To be a hero, Vlad the Impaler, also had to be a villain, ruling his people, who were often reluctant to fight the Turks, with force (Nandris 370-71). But, despite his cruelty, the historical Dracula was a hero of Christendom, a defender of Christianity against Islam. His reputation as a villain was fanned largely by the Turks.[14] It is unclear whether Stoker knew the sobriquet "impaler," but he never uses it in the novel.

Stoker's reinvention of the historical figure is driven by his desire to disclaim the Europe that the Count represents. The Count, I have suggested, symbolizes medieval, Christian Europe reemerging into modernity, monstrously out of date. To hold this reality at bay, Eastern Europe can be left to linger behind the "iron curtain" of the Ottoman Empire. As this became politically untenable because of the spectacular violence against Christians, Eastern Europe had to be refigured without the traces of its Ottomanization. Brought under the cultural influence of Western Europe, these nations would have to be newly assimilated. Dracula, who fought against the Turks and then survived Ottoman rule, represents both Christianity and the history of Ottoman Europe. His hybridity—an Ottomanized European—results in a dissonant figure fitting uncomfortably, a blasphemous Christian hero.

The Count complicates his affiliations in his accusatory speech to Mina:

> And so you, like the others, would play your brains against mine. You would help these men to hunt me and frustrate me in my designs! You know now, and they know in part already, and will know in full before long, what it is to cross my path. They should have kept their energies for use closer to home. Whilst they played wits against me—against me who commanded nations, and intrigued for them, and fought for them, hundreds of years before they were born—I was countermining them. (251-52)

Reminding Mina of his antiquity ("hundreds of years before they were born") and of the debt owed to him by the West for guarding against the Turks, the Count asserts a forgotten history. But he also warns that all along he has been "countermining" the West. The references to struggles between Europeans and infidels here are oblique. If the Count is referring to those battles, then his narrative can be glossed as follows: I fought for you—the West, Christianity, Europe. Then you turned against me, but all along I have been "countermining" you. The count casts himself as the victim seeking to avenge himself by "countermining" the West. As a countermining agent, the Count, however, blurs his identity as a Christian martyr and becomes the antagonist of the West, hence a closer affiliate to the Ottomans.

Therefore, an alternative identity for the Count suggests itself. The claim of "countermining" makes sense in terms of Turko-British relations in 1870s and 1880s, affiliating Dracula with the "sick man of Europe," the Ottoman Empire itself. "Countermining" seems more like the behavior of the Ottomans who repeatedly promised reforms to maintain the support of the Western powers but failed to fulfill these promises, delivering instead massacre after massacre. We need to see Dracula as a composite figure straining to represent coherently all the social forces that the disintegrating Ottoman Empire brought to light. There is even a similarity, for example, between Dracula and the Grand Vizier Abdul Aziz who ruled from 1861 until May 1876 when he was deposed; he committed suicide five days later (Clayton 133). We know from folklore that vampires are suicides (Leatherdale 28). The cultured, "occidentalized" Abdul Aziz is like the cultured, "occidentalized" Count Dracula.[15] Abdul Aziz was the first ruler of the Ottomans to travel extensively in the West, and to learn European languages. Indeed he became a cosmopolitan leader, but he was plagued with charges of corruption and of misappropriation of the loans he received from the West. The Bulgarian massacres occurred in the crisis that followed his deposition and the backlash against his reforms.

Created out of violent conflict in the fifteenth century and brought back into the limelight once again in violence in the nineteenth century, Dracula represents the irreconcilable aspects of history that do not fall neatly into a European narrative of progress and cannot be accommodated without forcing a significant change in that Western identity. British policy indicated a preference for a Europeanized Ottoman state over the resurrection of a pre-Ottoman, Christian Eastern Europe that would ally itself with Russia. Yet the Europeanized Ottoman state had proven to be impossible to realize; hence, Britain's burden as the hegemonic force behind the Concert of Europe was to create a new Europe by destroying both what remained of the sick man of Europe and his antithesis, the powerful belief in the existence of a "pure" Christian Eastern Europe. The destruction of Dracula fantastically enacts the destruction of these historical resonances. It is imperative to slay the dragon (Dracula means "son of the dragon") in an action that calls to mind the feat of England's patron saint, Saint George.

It is also best not to learn too much about the Count since his history, according to the testimonies of both Harker and Seward, is seductive.

Dracula's own ambitions are less imperial than reclamatory. The Count emerges into modernity having studied it (what Arata refers to as the Count's "occidentalism") and seeks not to defeat it but to appropriate it, to reinvent it as his own community, monstrous as the results will be. In his resurgence, the Count lays claim to a kind of worldliness denied him as he is driven back to his homeland. To defeat the Count, Van Helsing must recontain him geographically, force him back to his place. History for Van Helsing is ultimately a metaphor for place. When he describes the challenge with which the Count's defeat presents him, he describes it in terms of place, giving further evidence of the novel's obsession with geography. Van Helsing asks, "How shall we find his where; and having found it, how can we destroy?" (209). Van Helsing implies that the Count is synonymous with his place of origin and that destroying him is also destroying it, the place. But the Count's identity is more properly transnational. Although intimately identified with the soil of Transylvania, the Count demonstrates in a very alarming way that his "where" can travel without changing its essence. In a wonderful image of migration that displays all the problems that migration causes for national histories, the Count not only packs his soil but spreads it and threatens to proliferate accordingly.

The Count is finally defeated because his history gives him away. When the Count fails to show up in Varna, Van Helsing turns once again to Jonathan's journal to find clues that will reveal the Count's nature and likely actions. With Mina (who helps him decipher the journal), Van Helsing turns to the Count's own words, as rendered by Jonathan, for evidence. Van Helsing triumphantly concludes, "His past is a clue" (296), by which he means that the count is likely to repeat the strategies that he had followed in the past. The historical account reveals that the Count always returns home. So Van Helsing surmises that the Count misled his pursuers by pretending that he was going to Varna, but has fled instead to Galatz. Van Helsing reaches the correct conclusion, but more importantly he demonstrates that the count's vulnerability was his desire to tell his history. Van Helsing's logic, therefore, demonstrates why it is best not to

tell one's history. In a similar vein, Jonathan remarks with relief at the end of the novel that there are no authentic documents of their adventure, and thus no way to prove that it happened. To verify the history of the struggle against the Count is in some ways to risk resurrecting him. It is best to forget.

In the letter to Gladstone that accompanied his presentation copy of the novel, Stoker states that "I trust that [the horrors and terrors] are calculated to cleanse the mind by pity and terror" (quoted in Belford 275). By deploying the language of tragedy, Stoker elevates the artistic stakes and makes the novel's happy ending appear problematic. He also indicates obliquely that Dracula is a tragic hero. Dracula, however, fulfills the model of a tragic hero only perversely. He is a nobleman and, at key moments, he speaks with eloquence and dignity. But he is also a vampire who indulges in shameful acts and whose death is particularly undignified. The indignity of his death threatens to cling to his murderer, Quincey Morris, just as the killing of the three women vampires stains Van Helsing. He refers to these killings as "butcher work" (320).[16]

Divided in its attitude towards the hero, Stoker's narrative sets in motion an incoherence that aims to blur and repress the cogency of Eastern Europe's claims on Europe. As readers we can either accept this incoherence as irresolvable or try to forge the disparate characterizations into a plausible explanation. Dracula remains the central challenge, as critics continue to ask Van Helsing's question, "what is Dracula?" Michael Valdez Moses aptly explains that "*Dracula* owes much of its mythopoeic power to the uncanny ability of its central figure to call forth a diverse and even mutually contradictory set of symbolic associations" (68). My reading, therefore, adds yet another set of associations to our considerations of *Dracula*, but it also addresses what I perceive as an oversight in the many fine contextualizations of the novel (in terms of empire and Ireland especially) that overlook the more obvious historical context of the novel, the Eastern Question. If we overlook this entirely, we risk carrying out the historical elision that the novel itself seeks to establish.

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NOTES

[1]For political arguments made about *Dracula* in recent years see: Glover, Moses, and Schmitt on Ireland; Croley, Moretti, Wicke on class and capital; Auerbach, Craft, Roth, Signorotti on gender; Arata, and Boone on empire and national identity.

[2]Van Helsing's strategy is to determine first "the kind of enemy with which we have to deal." He arrives at the conclusion that it is a vampire by comparing the evidence of the monster's destructiveness with information he finds in his books. After he has gained knowledge of the enemy, he will "make known to [the others] something of the history of this man" so that the history can be used against the vampire to defeat him (209). I examine this reasoning more closely later in the essay.

[3]See, for example, Leatherdale, Kirtley, Nandris, McNally. The acknowledged source of Stoker's descriptions of the Carpathians is his brother's travel narrative, *With the Unspeakables; or Two Years' Campaigning in European and Asiatic Turkey*. On this, see Belford (128-29).

[4]The historian of Gladstone's political career, H. C. G. Matthew, describes how the Concert of Europe functioned from 1814 until 1871: it "had rested on the principle of reconciling the interests of the Great Power states through congresses (occasionally), conferences (frequently), and co-ordinated pressure upon deviant members. Membership of it conferred and confirmed status and in turn expected responsibility, and its members were ready to go to considerable lengths to maintain the framework of Concert and Conference. It thus had a practical and a theoretical justification. It recognized the differing interests of state, it accepted that some states were more powerful than others, and it worked through the existing social structure of Europe, the continuing power of the aristocracy being exemplified in its control of the embassies and chancelleries through which the Concert system was worked" (19). This was the Concert of Europe that Gladstone wanted to strengthen; free trade would regulate the international community economically and the Concert would regulate it politically (Matthew 20).

[5]See critics cited above in note 1. The most extreme argument of this sort is Moses's who argues that Dracula is a portrait of Parnell, not necessarily the historical Parnell, but the mythified Parnell. Moses's essay is provocative on the emergence of the new nationalisms of postcoloniality for which Ireland sets the example and which he discusses as setting forth a "vampire nation" built on the idea of freedom but tyrannical in nature.

[6]Because of Stoker's deployment of multiple discourses, there have been several narratological readings of the novel. See, for example, Seed, Case, and Wicke.

[7]Not only does Harker recognize contemporary things in the castle (as, for example, the Count's English books), but he recognizes all the signs of wealth: the quality of the upholstery and draperies, the furniture, the table service. He recognizes all the accoutrements of aristocratic existence which he acknowledges are not only old but well preserved in comparison to those he has seen in Hampton Court (25).

[8]In a suggestive, alternative reading of Stoker's image of eliminating ("blotted out") the "trace" of Dracula, Stephen Arata argues that the "psychological and epistemological" erasures suggested here also "poin[t] to the cancellation of writing, to Harker's

(though not necessarily Stoker's) attempt to disavow the Gothic narrative preceding the 'Note'" (130-32).

[9]Jennifer Wicke also argues that the Count is portrayed as the "purest European;" the Count, however, according to Wicke "has . . . felt himself on the periphery . . . and by coming to England he has an opportunity to meld vampirism to the modern forces of imperial control" (487). Wicke thus argues that the vampire colludes with Britain's imperial project. I argue instead that the characters in the novel must come to terms with the revelation that the center of Europe may be in the East, in the Carpathians.

[10]For a discussion of the changing attitudes of the British public toward the Ottomans from the early to late Victorian periods see Cunningham 75ff.

[11]The reform-minded Grand Vizier Abdul Aziz was deposed in May 1876. The Bulgarian massacres occured in June of that year. A new regime installed in 1877 passed a new constitution, "a mere manoeuvre, another airy promise of reform, which would not be fulfilled" (Clayton 137). This constitution was thrown out soon after.

[12]Much of the anti-Turkish sentiment faded in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78 where Russia's successes in the early part of the war panicked Britain (Webb 354-55). Bram Stoker's brother, George, served as a medical officer in this war on behalf of Turkey. He drew on these experiences to write *With the Unspeakables*. See note 3 above.

[13]Although Stoker's Dracula is a composite figure, he is usually identified as Vlad V who ruled as Prince of Walachia from 1456-62. He defeated an invading Ottoman army of 250,000 men on the Danube in 1461, but then lost his throne in 1462 when the Ottomans installed his brother Radu on the throne. For fuller historical information see Nandris, and MacNally.

[14]Kirtley enumerates the atrocities supposed to have been perfomed by Vlad (13-14). Nandris explains how Vlad's scorched earth policy alienated the peasantry and made them reluctant to fight the Turks. The Turks capitalized on this dissatisfaction by demonizing Vlad (371).

[15]Arata describes Dracula's knowledge of the West as his "occidentalism;" this is part of Arata's argument of "reverse colonization" (121ff.).

[16]Quincey already mortally wounded by the gypsies strikes the decisive blow but Mina narrates this as if it is the knife and not Quincey that kills: "Mr. Morris's bowie knife plunged into the heart" (325). Quincey is presented clearly as a martyr; his death cleanses him of the stain of the murder.

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Connotations
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Scholarship and Its Phantoms: Anthony Burgess's *Shakespeare* and "fin de siècle" Conceptions of Genius

FRÉDÉRIC REGARD

This short article is a revised version of a paper given on the occasion of the Fifth Conference of the European Society for the Study of English held at the University of Helsinki in August 2000. Professor François Laroque of La Sorbonne Nouvelle (Paris 3) had invited me to address an audience of renowned authorities in the small world of Shakespeare specialists. Here I was, then, true to a promise made perhaps too rapidly to a dear friend, engaged in a workshop tantalizingly called "Fin de siècle Shakespeare," suddenly finding myself in the very uncomfortable position of the layman willing to defend a thesis no one in the audience was prepared to hear, and understandably so. For the problem was—and still is—that my presence was slightly, if not totally, incongruous. As everybody well knew, I am *not* a Renaissance expert. I spoke then, and write now, as a professor of 19th and 20th-century British literature *with a point of view*.

My view of Shakespeare is inevitably constrained by the position I occupy and the encyclopedia that it implies: first, by my knowledge of modern literature and, second, by my familiarity with "fin-de-siècle" critical theory, notably the contemporary issues raised in the field of biographical writing.[1] My concern is evidently not with Shakespeare's work as such, but with the man himself, not the author, though, but the *representation* of a man whose "genius" has become, as Andreas Höfele of Heidelberg wittily observed in the course of the seminar, "the Coca Cola of culture."[2] The thesis I wish to put forward is in fact dictated to me by a close reading of Anthony Burgess's serious biography of the Bard, *Shakespeare*, first published in 1970[3] (when I say "serious," I have in mind the novelistic biography, *Nothing Like the Sun* [1964], devoted mainly to the sexual aspects of the playwright's amorous life). The central issue of my paper is the same

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as Höfele's: how do we determine cultural significance? My German colleague chose what I would call a sociological approach; for my part, I shall attempt to tackle the same issue of Shakespeare's resilient "genius" from a more literary point of view. I propose to sum up my point in the following two assumptions, which Burgess's reconstuction of "Shakespeare" seems to rely upon:

Assumption 1: There is no original Author in *Shakespeare*, the biography. By which I mean two things: a) that the biographer *produces* the two authors, both himself and Shakespeare; b) that he produces the two figures as two *undistinguishable identities*. It is clear from the text itself, that is, from its rhetorical strategy, that Burgess is prone to view Shakespeare as his own past self:

> We would not want to call Milton Jack, but Shakespeare seems to ask for an intimacy of address. [. . .] From now on we shall say Will and not William. (24)

The phonetic proximity of "we" and "Will" is symptomatic of such a confusion. Further in the text (177ff.), this confusion contaminates the whole narrative: in an attempt at reconstructing the workings of the mind of Shakespeare, the biographical narrator speaks in *Shakespeare's place*, as if he were inside the poet's skull, reacting both to external events and internal movements of the mind he cannot possibly have witnessed or experienced. In other words, Burgess—whose real name, we should remember, was John Wilson—puts himself in the place of a great 'biographical adventurer'—John (Dover) Wilson?—through an act of absolute "imposture":[4] he becomes "himself," that is the author of another author's life, as a Shakespearean production. In a sense, John Wilson says "we" because he is indeed Will's son, and at the same time he comes to existence as the one who gives life to the dead poet, as Shakespeare's father, whose name, we remember, was also John. It appears therefore that biographical authority is nothing but an effect of the text. And it is also an effect of Burgess's autobiographical narrativization of himself. In an interview made public in 1979, Burgess strongly insisted on his Catholic origins and curiously noted that one of his ancestors, also named John Wilson, had been persecuted for his faith in the Roman doctrine under the reign of

Queen Elizabeth, a fate quite similar, according to a significant number of critics, to that of Shakespeare's recusant father.[5] The ghost story of scholarly research is taking shape. Burgess does not place himself as a *spectator* of Shakespeare's life and work: he comes to life, he comes to "himself," as if he were spoken by a voice that is not "purely" his. Which leads me to my second assumption.

Assumption 2: In fact, I can see a crucial objection to my first assumption (according to which there would be no original author in this life of Shakespeare). The objection could be formulated as follows: Is Burgess not spoken by another authority, an invisible authority, I mean Shakespeare's authority? This, of course, takes us back to the same old question of influence, i.e. of Shakespeare's force as the original signature behind the rest of British literature in the last four centuries. My second assumption runs up against this theory. For Shakespeare's voice is not here an author's voice. Burgess views Shakespeare as the voice of literature itself. The kind of authority that is thus at stake is a "fin-de-siècle" authority: it is an authority that cannot be assigned to residence, an authority that is invisible and nomadic, an authority that, following Derrida, I shall therefore call "spectral."[6] Shakespeare's plays are never presented as original pieces; rather, they always appear to be the work of a "lucid *bricoleur*,"[7] who invariably finds his inspiration in the words of others, while at the same time adapting his own production to a given situation:

> Let us imagine that Will starts to translate the *Menaechmi* of Plautus into English. Like other creative artists, he becomes bored with following another man, word by word, and ends with a translation that is, though close to the original in theme, characters, general movement, yet very different in its deployment of words—a translation so free as to develop into an original work [. . .]. Starting to write the *Menaechmi* in English, he ends up with *The Comedy of Errors*. (45)

The overwhelming sentiment one is left with is that Shakespeare is never perceived as being *quite himself*. Burgess's lexical choices are very interesting here: according to him, Shakespeare does not have "a gift," he has "a skill" (39), which consists mainly in

> finishing plays started by others, brightening up old stuff with fresh topical references, throwing in new rhetorical monologues to swell the lungs of the star performer. (84)

In other words—the words of a "fin-de-siècle" academic—Shakespeare's life is construed as a "dialogic" event: life is made possible by the existence of the other, or more precisely, by the existence of the other's word.[8] "Shakespeare's" authority is in fact a linguistic construction, owing its richness to the traces left in it by ancient masters, but also to the competitive relation that ties it to the contemporary production of other playwrights, most prominently among them Greene and Marlowe. Above all, however, Shakespeare's authority is due to *the state of the English language itself*, a language still in the making, still open to invention and revision, in short, Burgess tells us, a language "not fixed and elegant and controlled by academics" (14-15) and the potentialities of which the "author" knows how to explore. "Shakespeare" is a child of language, a child of what Burgess views as "a melting pot": again, authority is a linguistic construct, made possible by English itself, then "coarsely rich and ready for any adventures that would make it richer. English was a Golden Hind" (14).

Shakespeare's ability to survive in a globalized landscape is not therefore to be explained in terms of world-wide distribution and clever commercialising. What Burgess's book tells us is that the enduring cultural significance of "Shakespeare" is due to an initial "im-posture." This approach has the merit of avoiding at least two pitfalls: a) the temptation to essentialize the genius of Shakespeare, with all the ideological appropriations this might entail; b) the temptation to quantify Shakespeare's genius in terms of produced effects, i.e. in terms of the number and intensity of the actions and reactions it provokes.[9] Burgess's *Shakespeare* now brings me to two conclusions:

Conclusion 1: *The individual self is never unproblematic and never self-explanatory, much less an irreducible metaphysical substance.* Shakespeare's biographer never considers his author as an autonomous individual, or, if you prefer, as an original genius. The narrative strategy he constantly adopts is that of the contextualist placement. This is in fact a very pragmatic conception of subjectivity: the author himself appears as *an effect* of a mass

of discourses that interpellate him and produce him through interpellation. "Shakespeare" is effectuated by layers of fundamental narrative forms that are universal and preexist his own emergence, but the way those forms are styled and filled in with content depend on particular historical conventions of time and place. As the author grows more mature, he responds more and more to historical contingencies (political motives, architectural constraints, financial worries, etc.). This is where Burgess's contextualist view of human conduct is most effective: Shakespeare's self, more than any other, is considered to be an *evolving construction*; i.e. it emerges out of continual social interaction in the course of time. There is therefore no original Shakespeare in Burgess's life of the Bard: what he calls "Shakespeare" is in fact *a lacuna* to be filled in the great pool of intersubjective selfhood. Shakespeare's genius, his unique self, is precisely this capacity to exist as such a lacuna. This view is undeniably that of a postmodernist novelist, whose fascination for the polyphonous is attested in the critical work he dedicated to James Joyce (*Here Comes Everybody*, 1965), but also of course in his own literary production. Which leads me to my second conclusion.

Conclusion 2: The biographer himself is never quite himself. He also is preceded by ghosts that speak through him and "dis-place" his authority. Burgess, too, is an effect of the words of the others. His *Shakespeare* is necessarily born from former interpretations of Shakespeare's life, serious (Harris and Brown, Wilson and Rowse, etc.) and less serious (Aubrey, Kipling, Wilde, Joyce). Since the "serious" ones are easily verifiable,[10] I choose to concentrate on the "less serious." What the specialist of modern fiction cannot fail to recognize is the insisting presence of another text behind the text, a text that entirely determines Burgess's biographical approach. This text is Joyce's "Scylla and Charybdis" chapter in Ulysses. This famous chapter clearly haunts Burgess's text, especially on page 176, when Hamlet's name is associated with that of Shakespeare's dead son, Hamnet.[11] But if *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*—in the same interview with Aggeler, Burgess mentioned his Irish grandmother's name: Finnegan—are the two novelistic filters through which the biographical reconstruction of "truth" is achieved, in fact the one textual phantom Burgess's biography is haunted

by is purely Shakespearean. Burgess's conception of life is to be found nowhere but in *Hamlet*, the interpretation of which is constrained by Joyce's vision of father-son relationships. Is *Hamlet* not the text *par excellence* about usurpation, parricide, lost regal authority and wrong relations of transmission from generation to generation? I can now reach my main point: *the task of the "fin-de-siècle" biographer is to let the ghost speak*, to speak to it, to have it speak, to *speak with it*. This second aspect of Burgess's conception of authority, i.e. this "deferral" of the biographer's own "true" voice is precisely what the scholar, the expert, the professor, cannot perform. Such a performance is the privilege of the postmodernist artist, who, unlike Horatio, does not seek to arrest the phantom and stabilize its speech.

The thesis I have just put forward—Burgess's life of Shakespeare is a haunted house which, in a true "fin-de-siècle" fashion, raises the problematic status of textual authority—finally leads me to a series of highly disturbing questions, which will serve as a general conclusion to my paper. It usually goes without saying that a knowledge of the "classics" is indispensable to the modernist. Less obvious is the reverse: what use was there in having someone like me address an international Shakespeare conference? I hope I convinced a few of my eminent colleagues that a professor of contemporary literature could at times be useful to the specialist, and, to be quite frank about it, that Professor Laroque knew what he was doing. The modernist will immediately see that Burgess's reconstruction of Shakespeare's life is dependent on a number of novelistic lives of the Bard, most prominently among them Joyce's theory of paternity as a "legal fiction," but I am not sure this was big news—in fact, all Shakespearians know Joyce's chapter in *Ulysses*. My iconoclastic point of view as a "fin-de-siècle" specialist sought to raise a number of more fundamental issues concerning scholarship and its limits.

For it seems to me Burgess's life of Shakespeare touches on something that concerns us all as "fin-de-siècle" interpeters of the text. What I really mean is: *on which side is seriousness?* On which side the truth of Shakespeare? Are we ready to play the game of fiction? Are we willing to abandon ourselves to the play of endless specularity? I am not only asking the

question of whether Burgess's *Shakespeare* should be placed on the shelves of serious criticism. The question engages nothing less than the conception we have of ourselves as active participants in cultural history. Allow me, to finish, to put things in an unusually straightforward manner: can we tolerate what decisively places itself outside the scope of the "anxiety of influence"? Can we, in fact, understand *the ethics* of the biographer who chooses to be nothing but the effect of the absolute absorption of the precursor?

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NOTES

[1]See *La Biographie littéraire en Angleterre*, ed. F. Regard (Saint-Etienne: PUSE, 1998), abstracts in English.

[2]Höfele's own paper was entitled "Millennial Shakespeare: Profile of a Megastar." My German colleague was kind enough to send me a copy of his lecture, to which my present paper is both a tribute and a rejoinder.

[3]Rpt. London: Vintage, 1996. All further references to this edition.

[4]I borrow the concept from Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *Interpretation as Pragmatics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) 89ff.

[5]See G. Aggeler, *Anthony Burgess: The Artist as Novelist* (U of Alabama P, 1979) 3.

[6]J. Derrida, *Spectres de Marx* (Paris: Galilée, 1993) 16.

[7]F. Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World*, trans. J. Loyd (Cambridge: CUP, 1998) 191.

[8]See M. Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (London: Routledge, 1990) passim.

[9]See Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London: Picador, 1997) 191.

[10]See S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991) 487, 560-61.

[11]Cf. Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922), ed. J. Johnson (Oxford: OUP, 1993) 183.

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My Poet is Better than Your Poet: A Response to Rajeev Patke*

JOHN WHALEN-BRIDGE

I am, shall I say, slightly saddened. I wrote an essay about poet Gary Snyder explaining how we human beings can sit down and have a nice chat with rocks and trees (mainly by writing poems in which we do not privilege the human-centered concerns absolutely) and, lo and behold, a human being has completely misunderstood me. Rajeev Patke's response says that I am guilty of committing the pathetic fallacy when I claim that the poetry of Gary Snyder helps us communicate better with the world, and then the response goes on to show how Wallace Stevens is philosophically wiser than Gary Snyder. Part of me wants to ask, in the mode of mock-angst I now enjoy, Why must it always come to that?

Snyder quotes a Zen story that asks this question in his book-length essay *The Practice of the Wild*:

> One time when the Master was washing his bowls, he saw two birds contending over a frog. A monk, who also saw this, asked, "Why does it come to that?" The Master replied, "It's only for your benefit." (Dong-Shan, *PW*, 175)

If Professor Patke were considering this story, he might accuse the Master of the pathetic fallacy, but such a comment would be about as far from the point as possible. The Master (which really means anyone who has a correct, working understanding of a situation as opposed to a self-interested distortion) certainly has not said that two birds woke up in their feather-beds one morning, stretched, and said one to the other, "hey, let's

*Reference: John Whalen-Bridge, "Gary Snyder, Dôgen, and 'The Canyon Wren,'" *Connotations* 8.1 (1998/99): 112-24; Rajeev S. Patke, "Response to 'Gary Snyder, Dôgen, and "The Canyon Wren,"'" *Connotations* 8.2 (1998/99): 261-67.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debwhalen-bridge00801.htm>.

you and me go contend over a frog so that some bald-headed monk can learn a little bit about impermanence." Such would be the "hard reading" that Patke sets up as an impossible requirement. Patke is saying something like "for Whalen-Bridge's claims to stand up, we can only talk to the world if fables are regarded as literally true." I never said in my essay that fables were literally true, nor is the Master in Dong-Shan's account saying that the birds are serving a human need in any direct, intentional way. The Master *is* saying that the birds and the frog answer to a human need for drama. The Master is saying that the monk's own surprise and sympathy are themselves a matter of pathetic fallacy, and that the young, inexperienced monk only perceives the bird-frog carnage as "other" because he is implicated: the monk's hunger to see himself as pure and harmless cause him to frame the scene as he does. When the younger man tries to flatter himself by saying to the Master, and I paraphrase freely here, "Isn't it nice that you and I are not savage killers like those little beasties over there," the Master corrects the monk by saying "don't kid yourself: you paid to enter the show, and thus you are very much part of it." That is to say, we are intersubjectively related to the world around us. Our choice, it could be said, is not whether or not to communicate with the world, but whether or not we should do it *well*.

Perhaps picking up on my comment about Harold Bloom's sense of "strong readings" (which are formative, constructive misreadings that take a tradition in new and interesting directions), Patke divides strong-and-hard from weak-and-soft readings in order to argue that my essay "Gary Snyder, Dôgen, and 'The Canyon Wren'" is a weak-and-soft reading that sentimentally indulges in pathetic fallacy in order to pretend that the world talks back to us humans *as a human would*. The last idea, which I have emphasized, is Patke's projection, and it has been specifically ruled out in my essay. When Dôgen says that we do not experience water as a dragon does, he is using non-literal and fully figurative language to cure us of our erroneous belief that all beings experience the world in the same way and through the same vocabulary. I should put "vocabulary" in quotation marks here just to show that the word is being used figuratively. I should not hope to inspire any readers to squat next to a tree or put ear to ground

to hear what words these inanimate items actually use. I plead, forsooth: please read my essay or just about anything by Dôgen with more attention to what these texts actually "say" to better appreciate what is meant by a phrase such as "the speech of the world." And words do come out of the world. Snyder relishes a notion from an aboriginal Australian person at one point in his text: man is nature dreaming. Our words, as well as bird peeps, *are* the speech of the world. Like Harold Bloom's reader, who better understands herself through the experience of poetry, the world comes to know itself through various languages and other information networks. Philosophers such as Dôgen and poets such as Snyder do not question whether Japanese and English are limited to *homo sapiens*, but they vigorously question the idea that Being is bound by the epidermis.

Yes, I know Richard Rorty will tell us that truth only exists in human sentences. Most academic philosophers, critical theorists, and everyday people will insist that the human way of speaking is the only way of speaking. Consequently, most human societies are barely on "speaking terms" with the natural world any more.

In his final paragraph Dr. Patke brings in Orientalist appropriation, which strikes me as a knee-jerk reading. Casual phrasing such as "Zen on his sleeve" and the imputation that Gary Snyder's references to Dôgen are somehow part and parcel of the Western imperial domination of Asia—this questionable move causes me to stand up like a Zen master and give my sleeves a hard shake for an answer, but as a special kindness to *Connotations* readers I translate my ineffable gesture into verbal form: I write this from Asia, where it is, today, Friday the 13th. But in America, on the other side of the International Date Line, it is Columbus Day, and Columbus is a famous historical example of just the sort of appropriation that Patke accuses me of—and practices himself. Columbus came to the New World and began by misnaming the people he found there. He did not ask who they were—he told them who they were. He did not listen very well. He renamed the rivers. He did not ask what the names of the rivers were—he went back to Europe and reported his own set of names. Columbus might have said, in his own defense, that the humanoid creatures he met in the New World were not really people since they do not speak "our" language.

Their information-exchange simply did not count to Columbus. Consequently, Columbus is considered by many, nowadays, to be a bad guy. He is yet one of two persons in America who have a national holiday named after them (the other being Martin Luther King, Jr.), but I would not be surprised if this situation were to change in the next decade or so.

Practicing this (or a similar) kind of appropriation, Patke distorts my meaning when he transforms this statement from my essay: "'The Canyon Wren' is not just about how we express ourselves in the world: it is a public record of the world speaking back to us" (Whalen-Bridge 113). "Public record," the reader is reminded, is the exact translation of the Japanese word *kôan*. It is the public record of a moment between two or more speakers when one speaker or the other has slashed through the conceptual shortcomings of the words we use to communicate; a student within the Zen tradition might spend years trying to understand what that strange conversation is about. Patke, misunderstanding what a *kôan* actually is, finds my reading comes up short: "I think the poem does not do enough to exemplify or communicate a non-dualistic experience" (Patke 262). A *kôan*, however, does not *represent* nonduality—nonduality cannot be represented.[1] It is a primary point in Zen discourse that the finger pointing to the moon is not the moon, but in his essay Patke is criticizing the finger for failing to be the moon. My essay does not claim to present a Polaroid snapshot of the Void, nor does Snyder's poem. The poem *does* point to the ways in which the world (the bird, the river, the historical remains of other people along the bank) aids and abets moments of self-forgetting. It points to those moments, but it cannot *be* those moments, and to demand that a poem or essay capture all of the permutations of Buddhist selflessness is to ask for the world, rather than a textual redaction of it.

Why does it come to that? Perhaps it is only for your benefit. I'm not merely mocking when I write this: I'm truly grateful for Patke's resistance to my essay and for the ego-driven clamor of minds that allows us to say (more and more skillfully, I hope) what we want to say. In a sense, we are two birds contending over a frog, and "it is only for your benefit."[2]

But who are "you"? The Harold Bloom idea I referred to in my essay, that poetry teaches us to talk not to others but to ourselves, was probably

not explored sufficiently. The Zen Buddhist critique of self never says that there is no "you" walking around in your body—only that "you" are not limited to the arbitrary dividing lines between yourself and other that you (and I) necessarily work with to exist in the world. We say of a beloved spouse "my better half" and we are *not* just being figurative. A neuroscientist will explain in convincing detail that, when the marriage fails, each party will be in serious pain until a certain set of brain cells actually die off. To be deeply implicated with the Other is, as Freud notes early in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, to risk great pain. Likewise, we are, in our various ways, implicated with the world. Mainly we *practice* this implication through poetry and storytelling. To attempt to satisfy any demand for a thoroughly non-figurative way of talking about this implication would be a fool's errand.

To say that "we talk to nature" or "the mountains have a voice" means only that we may try to listen in ways that are not *absolutely* self-interested. The reward is that we may hear more accurately and usefully if we give up the fantasy that humanity is the only form of existence that matters, that warrants care. Our language, our human way of speaking and writing and listening, is one mode of information transfer, but language thus is a subset of other kinds of information transfer. Chuang Tzu, a Taoist philosopher from the 4th century B.C., has put the question that may lead to this insight this way:

> Words are not just wind. Words have something to say. But if what they have to say is not fixed, do they really say something? Or do they say nothing? People suppose that words are different from the peeps of baby birds, but is there any difference, or isn't there? (Watson 32)

We are, needless to say, not the same as birds in all respects, and birds have yet to come out with a *Norton Anthology of Bird-Peeps*, but this acknowledgement of differences need not lead us to deny all commonality with birds. If we literally demand that the world speaks to us in "our" language, then we are defining ourselves as radically different from the world at the outset. Why is the peep of a bird or the patter of raindrops not "my language"? Of course, I cannot pretend to be too surprised by this sentiment. The

discounting of all information that is not directly related to and useful to Myself is in fact what human beings in cosmopolitan societies generally do. We do not usually, except in an odd private poem or sentiment, regard ourselves as being part of the earth's body. And, with global warming on the rise, we are soon to live with the consequences of this view.

There are environmental matters at stake, to be sure, but there is also at stake our understanding of literature itself. Wallace Stevens has presented, in a poem, the claim that poetry is the supreme fiction. We vary from his way when we fail to see that all parts of our lives, whether we call them fantasy or reality, figurative or literal, are parts of a vast poem. Sure, I can hear Professor Patke saying, that is a quaint Romantic sentiment. But there is also a huge development within literary studies currently taking literature's institutions to task for unquestioningly privileging the "homocentric" imagination over the "ecocentric." For a possible next stage in the present conversation I would suggest reading Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination*, which discusses Thoreau's *Walden* and other environmental texts to show how we might use literature to talk to the world without looking like we have lost our minds.[3]

May this conversation—and many another warm, witty, and vigorous debate—continue in Halberstadt, where conversations may happen between you, I, rocks and trees, birds, and poets both living and dead.

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NOTES

[1]Ineffability is a notoriously hard subject to discuss, but efforts have been made. See David Loy's *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy* (originally published by Yale UP; republished by Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 1998). Subsequent references to this text will be cited parenthetically as "Loy." Nonduality, simply put, is the "nondifference of subject and object" (Loy 25), an experience of a "self" that has shifted dramatically beyond our skin-bound sense of self. Loy quotes the following sentence from Dôgen: "I came to realize clearly that mind is not other than mountains, rivers, and the great wide earth, the sun and the moon and the stars" (Loy 25).

[2]If I may mention a third bird, I would also like to make up for a previous omission and thank Dr. Barnard Turner for catching the typographical error in first editions of "The Canyon Wren" in which "cool in the dark" erroneously substitutes for "cook in the dark." Dr. Turner's sort of bird has unusually sharp eyes.

[3]In his introduction to *The Environmental Imagination* Buell defines "environmental" literature as a mode of writing composed of those texts suggesting 1) that human history is implicated in natural history; 2) that human interest is not the only legitimate interest; 3) that human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation; and 4) that physical environments are better seen as processes rather than static "givens" (6-8).

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Agency in Vaughan's Sacred Poetry: Creative Acts or Divine Gifts?

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Henry Vaughan was certainly familiar with the classical trope of the poem as child "fathered" by its creator. Like many poets of the Renaissance, he made witty use of it in both his early volumes of secular verse to emphasize his role as procreator. Yet in the volume of religious poems for which he is justly celebrated, *Silex Scintillans* (1650, 1655), he maintained that God was the "author" of his poems. In this essay I want to explore what the absence of the poet-as-father metaphor implies about the source of the inspiration for Vaughan's religious poems.

As Ernst Curtius reminds us, the notion that poets leave behind immortal children in their works goes back to Plato's *Symposium* (208d-209e), where Diotima explained that some seek immortality of the body by betting children while others seek immortality of the soul through literary "offspring."[1] The Greeks, of course, called the poet a "maker" (ποιητής). Similarly, Ovid in his *Tristia* (III, 14) identified his *carmina*, which were created *sine matre*, as *stirps haec progeniesque*; thereafter, according to Curtius, *partus* came to be a synonym for a literary work.

During the Renaissance the classical metaphor was most popular with the poet sometimes figured as "mother" though more usually as "father" of a literary corpus. For example, in the well-known first sonnet of *Astrophel and Stella*, Sidney compared the making of a poem the labors of childbirth.

> Thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
> Biting my trewand pen, beating myself for spite,
> Fool, said my Muse to me, look in thy heart and write.[2]

Shakespeare's sonnets were dedicated to Mr. W. H., or Mr. W[illiam] S[hakespeare], in either case, to "the onlie begetter of these insuing

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sonnets." And Jonson memorialized the death of his seven year-old son, "thou child of my right hand, and joy," in a deeply personal epigram that Vaughan would have certainly known. Jonson, whose father died before he himself was born, shared his own name—"dexterous" or "fortunate" in Hebrew—with a son for whom he had entertained high hopes. A son who was as much a part of himself as his right hand, the hand that produced his art, giving rise to his immortal couplet:

> Rest in soft peace, and, asked, say, here doth lie
> Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.[3]

For Jonson, this trope was central to his humanist belief in the power of poetry to shape or fashion the self, as he explained more fully in his tribute to Shakespeare:

> . . . And that he
> Who casts to write a living line must sweat,
> (Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
> Upon the muses' anvil: turn the same
> (And himself with it) that he thinks to frame;
> Or for the laurel he may gain a scorn:
> For a good poet's made, as well as born.[4]

This metaphor captures the essence of Jonson's humanism, which was derived in part from Horace, Seneca's moral epistles, and ultimately Aristotle: by forging verse as well as his own character upon the anvil, the poet helped to create the morally superior people required to govern society. Good poets and good poems were *made* as well as *born*. Thus the possibility of human agency—of *making*—was strongly endorsed.

Since the young Henry Vaughan attached himself to the remaining Sons of Ben while in London in the early 1640s and imitated the work of Jonson (and certainly knew the antique poets who began this tradition), it is not surprising that he employed this trope himself. In both his early volumes of secular verse, he used it to accentuate the poet as maker or self-sufficient creator of poetic worlds. For instance, in "A Rhapsody: Occasionally written upon a meeting with some of his friends at the Globe Tavern, in a Chamber

painted over head with a Cloudy Sky, and some few dispersed Stars, and on the sides with Land-scapes, Hills, Shepherds, and Sheep," that was published in his *Poems* of 1646 and that pays obvious homage to the literary gathering favored by Jonson, he wrote:

> Drink deep; this cup be pregnant; & the wine
> Spirit of wit, to make us all divine,
> That big with sack, and mirth we may retire
> Possessors of more souls, and nobler fire;
> And by the influx of this painted sky,
> And laboured forms, to higher matters fly;
> So, if a nap shall take us, we shall all,
> After full cups have dreams poetical.
>
> *Let's laugh now, and the pressed grape drink,*
> *Till the drowsy Day-Star wink;*
> *And in our merry, mad mirth run*
> *Faster, and further than the Sun;*
> *And let none his cup forsake,*
> *Till that Star again doth wake;*
> *So we men below shall move*
> *Equally with the gods above.*[5]

As in Milton's *Elegia sexta* where the virtues of wine as an aid to the muses are extolled, the wine goblet is said to be *pregnant* with the *spirit of wit:* the pun here is on *spiritus vini* and the "spirit generative," to which Shakespeare alluded in Sonnet 129. Made *big with sack,* the poets at the Globe Tavern will then *labour* to produce *forms* of *higher matters* under the astrological influences or *influx* of the stars painted on the ceiling. And if the *pregnant* cup fail to produce poetic forms, it will at least lead to poetic reveries in the form of dreams in their post-prandial napping. Thus intoxicated with this creative force, the poets will move *equally with the gods above.*

Similarly, in his second volume, *Olor Iscanus* (1647), Vaughan played with the trope of the creative act in a Latin poem to his former tutor, which may also owe something to Jonson's tribute to his own schoolmaster, William Camden, as well as to the epigram to Jonson's son. It is titled *"Venerabili Viro, Præceptori suo olim & semper Colendissimo Magistro. Mathaeo*

Herbert" ["To the Venerable Mr. Matthew Herbert, Formerly His Tutor and Always His Most Cherished Friend"]. Rector of nearby Llangattock, Matthew Herbert had tutored both the Vaughan twins (and Thomas also offered several poems in his praise).

Quod vixi, Mathaee, *dedit* pater, *haec tamen olim*
Vita fluet, nec erit fas meminisse datam.
Ultra curasti solers, perituraque mecum
Nomina post cineres *das resonare* meos.
Divide discipulum: brevis haec & lubrica nostri
Pars vertat patri, *posthuma vita* tibi.

***

My father gave me life, Matthew, but this life will one day slip away, and the gift will not even be remembered. Skilfully you have made provision for me beyond this, and you enable that name, which would have perished with me, to re-echo after my death. Divide the life of your pupil in two: let this brief and fleeting part redound to my father's credit; to yours, my existence beyond the grave.[6]

Here, in what might be termed a paean to the poet's *two bodies*, Vaughan acknowledged that his father gave life to the mortal body, while his tutor gave him an immortal one. By nurturing his poetic gifts, the tutor has helped create a *name* that will *re-echo after his death* through the imperishable bodies of his poems.

Shortly after finishing *Olor Iscanus* (whose preface is dated 17 December 1647), Vaughan, as is well known, went through a spiritual crisis, either as a result of the death of his brother William, some illness of his own, or the general disruptions caused by the Civil War—when, for example, both his brother and his tutor were dispossessed of their livings by the Parliamentarian authorities. Whatever the cause, the result was Vaughan's *conversion* to the religious verse of George Herbert and all that this entailed. The emblematic title-page to *Silex Scintillans* 1650 shows the thunderbolt of *Jupiter tonans*, i.e., the hand of God, reaching out from the clouds to strike sparks and produce tears from the flinty heart of the poet. In the one-stanza dedicatory poem used in the first edition of *Silex*, "To My Most Merciful,

My Most Loving, and Dearly Loved Redeemer," he explained that the blood of Christ has re-vivified both his heart and his poetry:

> My God! thou that didst die for me,
> These thy death's fruits I offer thee;
> Death that to me was life and light,
> But dark and deep pangs to thy sight.
> Some drops of thy all-quickening blood
> Fell on my heart; those made it bud
> And put forth thus, though Lord, before
> The ground was cursed, and void of store.
> Indeed I had some here to hire
> Which long resisted thy desire,
> That stoned thy servants, and did move
> To have thee murdered for thy love;
> But Lord, I have expelled them, and so bent,
> Beg, thou would'st take thy tenant's rent. (ll. 1-14)

Before his conversion, his heart was as stony as the wicked tenants', who had killed the rightful heir to the vineyard in the parable from Matthew (21:33-41) to which he alludes. As a result of these transformations wrought by Christ's *all-quickening blood*, the poet can offer the *fruit* of this new life back to its rightful owner. For this spiritual growth to continue, as we learn from the final poem of *Silex I*, someone else's *hand* must first *wipe out* or blot the *sinful book* of his heart.

> King of Mercy, King of Love,
> In whom I live, in whom I move,
> Perfect what thou hast begun,
> Let no night put out this Sun;
> Grant I may, my chief desire!
> Long for thee, to thee aspire,
> Let my youth, my bloom of days,
> Be my comfort, and thy praise,
> That hereafter, when I look
> O'er the sullyed, sinful book,
> I may find thy hand therein
> Wiping out my shame, and sin.
> O it is thy only Art
> To reduce a stubborn heart,
> . . . .[7]

Vaughan's metaphor links the flinty heart, portrayed so memorably on the emblematic title page to *Silex*, with St. Paul's understanding of the new covenant, "written . . . not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Cor. 3:3 AV, discussed below). It affirms that God is the true author of this *book*.

When Vaughan published the second edition of *Silex Scintillans* in 1655, he added two more stanzas to this dedicatory poem, in which he made even clearer the fact that this new vein of poetry was a gift from God.

> Dear Lord, 'tis finished! and now he
> That copied it, presents it thee.
> 'Twas thine first, and to thee returns,
> From thee it shined, though here it burns;
> If the Sun rise on rocks, is't right,
> To call it their inherent light?
> No, nor can I say, this is mine,
> For, dearest Jesus, 'tis all thine.
> . . .
> I nothing have to give to thee,
> But this thy own gift, given to me;
> Refuse it not! for now thy *token*
> Can tell thee where a heart is broken.[8]

These flashes of light, these moments of spiritual illumination and poetic inspiration, belong properly to God. He had merely *copied* out the lines. And in a final coda to *Silex II*, he implores Christ to inscribe his law in mankind's hearts ("L'Envoy" ll. 50-58).

In Vaughan's devotional poetry, the metaphor of the poem as offspring or creation of the poet, which he had used to such effect in his secular poems, is conspicuous by its absence. It would be an over-simplification to contend that, following his religious conversion, he came to recognize that his own efforts were insufficient theologically and that God was the only sufficient author of all things. To strike nearer the mark we should examine how Vaughan's poetic master, Herbert, anguished over this same dilemma. The opening poem in the central section of *The Temple*, "The Altar," connects writing poetry with the transformation of the heart of stone into a fleshy heart as the foundation for the new temple. As I have argued

elsewhere, "The Altar" features the poet's desire to offer the broken pieces of his heart, framed ingeniously into the hieroglyphic altar, as a claim to merit.[9] The poet's desire to write—to create a personal account of the self—is an expression of his desire to offer something back to God as recompense, especially in the early sequence of poems introduced by "The Altar." These, I believe, are the "many spiritual Conflicts" Herbert on his deathbed described to Nicholas Ferrar. If I am correct in my reading of the last poem in *The Temple*, "Love (III)," even at the end of his journey, when in God's presence, he cannot let go of his desire to "serve," i.e., to justify himself through works. Herbert struggled to reconcile himself to the fact that true representation was possible only when he surrendered his personal story for the typological one that represented his true life's story. What he struggled to understand was that his own story had already been laid out for him in God's *writing*. As Åke Bergvall reminds us, Augustine held that the opening verse of the Gospel according to John ("In the beginning was the Word") also meant that the creation of the universe in Genesis was accomplished by the efficacious operative power of the *logos* and that this word was then made flesh. Consequently, the Scripture is more than just the record of God's chosen people and of the ministry of Jesus Christ; the efficacious power of the divine *logos* is still contained within.[10]

Nowhere, in my estimation, is Vaughan's indebtedness to Herbert more clear than in his respect for the power of the "word made flesh" (John 1:14) and his use of the master narratives of the Bible. Or, as he put it so succinctly, "Thy own dear people pens our times, / Our stories are in theirs set down."[11] These lines echoed Herbert's explicitly typological poem "The Bunch of Grapes" (l. 11) and made evident Vaughan's own understanding that Scripture tells the story of the Christian Everyman. In a sonnet praising the Bible as the "key that opens to all mysteries," he expressed the hope that Christ would write upon his stony heart so that its mysteries could be meetly expressed.

> Welcome dear book, soul's joy, and food! The feast
> Of spirits, heaven extracted lies in thee;
> Thou art life's charter, the Dove's spotless nest
> Where souls are hatched unto Eternity.

In thee the hidden stone, the *manna* lies,
Thou art the great *elixir*, rare, and choice;
The key that opens to all mysteries,
The *Word* in characters, God in the *voice*.

O that I had deep cut in my hard heart
Each line in thee! Then would I plead in groans
Of my Lord's penning, and by sweetest art
Return upon himself the *Law*, and *Stones*.
Read here, my faults are thine. This Book, and I
Will tell thee so; *Sweet Saviour thou didst die!*[12]

While this trope comes from Ezekiel and was a crucial text for St. Paul, Vaughan would have found it everywhere in the opening sequence to *The Temple*, especially "The Sinner":

Yet Lord restore thine image, heare my call:
And though my hard heart scarce to thee can grone,
Remember that thou once didst write in stone.[13]

In "Holy Scriptures," thus, Vaughan candidly acknowledges that the divine author of Scripture must also inscribe his heart in order for him to be able to offer something back to God—even his groans were "Of my Lord's penning."

For this reason, I believe, Vaughan began his 1655 Preface with an attack on those wits who produce vain trifles of the sort he had himself produced earlier:

> That this kingdom hath abounded with those ingenious persons, which in the late notion are termed *wits*, is too well known. Many of them having cast away all their fair portion of time, in no better employments, than a deliberate search, or excogitation of *idle words*, and a most vain, insatiable desire to be reputed *poets*; leaving behind them no other monuments of those excellent abilities conferred upon them, but such as they may (with a *predecessor* of theirs) term *parricides*, and a soul killing issue; for that is the Βραβεῖον, and laureate *crown*, which idle *poems* will certainly bring to their unrelenting authors.[14]

In these lines, as Alexander Grosart pointed out long ago, Vaughan echoed the sentiments of Robert Greene's *Groats-worth of Wit* (1596), who wished

to consign his "vain fantasies" and "lewd lines" to the fire lest they prove *parricides* by killing their father's soul.[15] Here we have an unmistakably negative use of the metaphor that helps clarify the fine line Vaughan hopes to tread. In his new mode of poetry, following the example of "the blessed man, Mr. *George Herbert*, whose holy *life* and *verse* gained many pious *converts*," he will make "a wise exchange of *vain* and *vicious subjects*, for *divine themes* and *celestial praise*."[16] Like Herbert, however, he knows that writing idle poems can undermine his efforts to submit to God's "writing."

> O! 'tis an easy thing
> To write and sing;
> But to write true, unfeigned verse
> Is very hard! O God, disperse
> These weights, and give my spirit leave
> To act as well as to conceive![17]

To write the *true hymns* to which he aspired meant that his own part in their creation was secondary to God's: so he asked God to make him *sufficient* for this task: to *give my spirit leave to act as well as to conceive*. While the verb *conceive* was usually associated with the feminine aspects of procreation in the sense of *to receive seed in the womb*, it could also mean *to beget*, "especially in expressions originating in the English version of the Creed" (*OED* I.1.b). This secondary usage accords well with the dominant role ascribed to the male in Aristotelian reproductive physiology (females were believed to be mere repositories and incubators for the largely male creative force). Just as Christ, in the formulation of the Apostles' Creed, "was conceived by the Holy Ghost," this same indwelling presence will make it possible for the Christian poet to act and to create.

The difficulties as well as the rewards of submitting to God's discipline were also made clear in "Disorder and Frailty," where he pleaded:

> Let not perverse,
> And foolish thoughts add to my bill
> Of forward sins, and kill
> That seed, which thou
> In me didst sow,

But dress, and water with thy grace
Together with the seed, the place;
And for his sake
Who died to stake
His life for mine, tune to thy will
My heart, my verse.[18]

Here, he entreated God to *tune* his heart so that his verse would be likewise *tuned*, echoing the sentiments of Herbert's "The Temper (I)": "This is but tuning of my breast, / To make the musick better." The poem following "Disorder and Frailty" in *Silex*, called "Idle Verse," appropriately took up the theme treated in the Preface, i.e., that secular verse was unfit employment for gifted poets.

Given the evidence already cited, it might seem plausible that, in regard to poetic creation, Vaughan believed that human agency was illusory, that God elects to use some as passive conduits, or mere amanuenses, for His own sacred verse. Jonathan Goldberg, in fact, believes Herbert to be a poet without a voice of his own and argues that *The Temple* is really a "representation of God writing, a (dis)owning which locates both God and the subject in a text that is always in quotation marks."[19] I cannot agree with his reading of Herbert, nor would I place Vaughan with the Puritans or Calvinists on the issue of free will. His scorn for those who pretended to an "inner light" that justified their overturning the traditional forms of worship, such as the Prayer Book he held so dear, is well documented.[20]

Nonetheless, as we have seen, Vaughan affirmed throughout *Silex Scintillans* that God was the *author* and he, merely the *copyist*. To understand what poets such as Herbert and Vaughan mean when they made such statements, we need to examine more closely the Pauline notion of the indwelling of Christ and the context of the lines from Corinthians quoted above, in which the nature of the new covenant is expressed by dramatic contrast with its biblical *type*, the tables of the Mosaic law written in stone. St. Paul's explanation here provided a cornerstone for his concept of the radical inwardness of Christianity itself by explaining the relationship of the Hebrew Bible to the New Testament.[21] In his letter Paul told the Corinthians that Christ had written this new covenant on their hearts, thereby transforming them into *sufficient* ministers of this new testament.

Through grace and the Holy Spirit, their stony hearts would be given new life. As he explained, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:5-6). The dilemma over the "authorship" of Vaughan's sacred poems, I think, can be resolved by the notion of *sufficiency* from Corinthians: God empowers the poet to write by giving his "spirit leave to act as well as to conceive," as he had hinted mysteriously in "Anguish" (ll. 13-18). Inspired and made *sufficient* by the Holy Spirit, Vaughan, through a cooperative process of authorship, can in turn beget the "true, unfeigned verse" he had hoped for in his Preface. In this way the poet can be said both to *conceive* and create because of the indwelling spirit. In the final analysis, then, Vaughan can describe the poet inspired by God as both *copyist* and as *author*.

Late in his life Vaughan offered a similar view of the source of the poet's inspiration in an anecdote about Welsh bards recounted for his kinsman John Aubrey, with whom he had begun to correspond when Aubrey was collecting biographical data for Anthony Wood's *Athenæ Oxonienses*. Ever pursuing antiquarian lore, Aubrey had apparently asked Vaughan to make inquiries about Welsh poets, both ancient and modern. In reply Vaughan offered a marvelous tale about the origins of Welsh *furor poeticus*, taken from John David Rhys's *Cambrobrytannicæ Cymbraecæue linguæ institutiones* (London, 1592):

> I received yours & should gladly have served you, had it bine in my power. Butt all my search & consultations with those few that I could suspect to have any knowledge of Antiquitie, came to nothing; for the ancient Bards (though by the testimonie of their Enemies, the Romans;) a very learned societie: yet (like the Druids) they communicated nothing of their knowledge, butt by way of tradition: w^{ch} I suppose to be the reason that we have no account left vs: nor any sort of remains, or other monuments of their learning, or way of living.
>
> As to the later Bards, who were no such men, but had a societie & some rules & orders among themselves: & severall sorts of measures & a kind of lyric poetrie: w^{ch} are all sett down exactly In the learned John David Rhees, or Rhesus his welch, or British grammar: you shall have there (in the later end of his book) a most curious account of them. This vein of poetrie they call Awen, which in their language signifies as much as Raptus, or a poetic furor; & (in truth) as many of

> them as I have conversed with are (as I may say) gifted or inspired with it. I was told by a very sober & knowing person (now dead) that in his time, there was a young lad[,] father & motherless, & soe very poor that he was forced to beg; butt att last was taken vp by a rich man, that kept a great stock of sheep vpon the mountains not far from the place where I now dwell. who cloathed him & sent him into the mountains to keep his sheep. There in Summer time following the sheep & looking to their lambs, he fell into a deep sleep; In w^{ch} he dreamt, that he saw a beautifull young man with a garland of green leafs vpon his head, & an hawk vpon his fist: with a quiver full of Arrows att his back, coming towards him (whistling several measures or tunes all the way) & att last lett the hawk fly att him, w^{ch} (he dreamt) gott into his mouth & inward parts, & suddenly awaked in a great fear & consternation: butt possessed with such a vein, or gift of poetrie, that he left the sheep & went about the Country, making songs vpon all occasions, and came to be the most famous Bard in all the Countrey in his time.[22]

It is tempting to read this anecdote as a not-so-veiled story about his own conversion: the young spiritual orphan who was adopted by a rich man and entrusted with his flocks; when the shepherd proved faithful, he was rewarded with a dream vision and then violently given the gift of poetry, thereafter becoming *the most famous Bard in all the Countrey in his time.* This story seems to be an original one: Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* does not list any analogue, though birds have long been used as symbols for the soul in the earliest Christian art, either with the Christ child holding a bird in his hands or holding one tied with a string.[23] In secular literature, such as the *Volsunga Saga* or Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde,* the hawk was associated with the nobility or symbolized the pleasures of the chase and temporal life as opposed to the cloister.[24] From his readings in hermetic literature, Vaughan may have encountered the hawk as a symbol for the Egyptian god Horus, used because of its fecundity and sharp sight.[25] One idea for which many parallels in folk-literature exist, ingesting a magical substance, may also owe something to the burning coal brought by a winged seraph to purify Isaiah's unclean lips (6:6).[26] The hawk may even represent the Holy Spirit, whose possession of the poet is reminiscent of the arm of God violently striking the flint to produce tears and poetry in *Silex Scintillans.* For a poet like Vaughan who was largely uninterested in the glories of his native Welsh countryside, it is more than curious that the dream messenger was a "green man," some tutelary spirit

of Nature, armed with arrows and crowned with greens. This anecdote, in any case, reinforces the scattered references in *Silex Scintillans* attributing "true, unfeigned verse" to some divine source.

Similarly, his twin brother Thomas—in both his published writings and his manuscript notebook (British Library MS. Sloane 1741)—attributed his greatest successes to someone or something beyond the veil. Like many alchemists, Thomas Vaughan believed success in the great work was always a *donum dei*. Success came, he confessed, "not by my owne witt, or labour, but by gods blessing." For example, on the very day his wife and research partner, Rebecca, was taken from him in death, he recounted how he was compensated with the memory of a formula long since forgotten:

> Memoriæ Sacrum.
>
> On the same Day my deare wife sickened, being a Friday, and at the same time of the Day, namely in the Evening: my gracious god did put into my heart the Secret of extracting the oyle of Halcali, which I had once accidentally found att the Pinner of Wakefield, in the Dayes of my most deare Wife. But it was againe taken from mee by a wonderfull Judgement of god, for I could never remember how I did it, but made a hundred Attempts in vaine. And now my glorious god (whose name bee praysed for ever) hath brought it againe into my mind, and on the same Day my deare wife sickened; and on the Saturday following, which was the day shee dyed on, I extracted it by the former practice: Soe that on the same dayes, which proved the most sorowfull to me, that ever can bee: god was pleased to conferre upon mee ye greatest Joy I can ever have in this world, after her Death.
>
> The Lord giveth, and the Lord
> taketh away: Blessed bee the Name
> of the Lord. Amen! T. R. V.[27]

Vaughan plainly regarded God's gift of the formula as recompense for losing his young wife.

Similarly he regarded two dreams that occurred on successive nights near the first anniversary of her death as gifts from beyond. On the evening of 8 April 1659, suffering from a "suddaine Heavines of spirit, but without any manifest Cause whatsoever," he related that before laying down to sleep he prayed contritely for pardon from his sins and to be reunited with

his wife. During the night he discovered that God had fore-ordained their marriage. In the dream he declared to his friends that his father had chosen a beautiful mate for him, with whom he immediately fell in love. In a marginal note Thomas clarified that "This was not true of our temporall mariage, nor of our natural parents, and therefore it signifies som greater mercie," which can only mean he believed that God had designated Rebecca for his eternal companion.[28] On the following night, "after prayers, and hearty teares," his wife again appeared in an enigmatic dream that hinted at the length of time before their reunion. She was arrayed "in greene silks downe to the ground, and much taller, and slenderer then shee was in her life time, but in her face there was so much glorie, and beautie, that noe Angell in Heaven can have more."[29] She appeared to him, that is, as the divine Thalia from his *Lumen de Lumine* (1651), who was attired "in *thin loose silks*, but so *green*, that I never saw the *like*, for the *Colour* was not *Earthly*."[30] Thalia, the attendant spirit at the Temple of Nature, guides Eugenius Philalethes (Vaughan's pseudonym and alter ego) in his search for the *prima materia* for the *magnum opus*. Because Eugenius had been her servant for so long, she offered him her love, admitted him to her Schola Magica to teach him its secrets, and gave him the privilege of publishing an emblematic representation of her sanctuary (which he did in *Lumen de Lumine*).[31] (In this dream she also took a reed he was holding; breaking it, she handed him the shorter piece, which he interpreted as a sign "I shall not live soe long after her, as I have lived with her.") For Rebecca Vaughan to be associated with the divine Thalia—be it for her spirituality or intuitive insights—was high praise indeed. The frequency and character of the dreams involving Rebecca suggest that theirs was an unusually close relationship, not only during the days of their married life but also after her death in her role as familiar spirit through the medium of his dreams.[32] Just as the young Welshman who dreamt of swallowing a hawk and was possessed with the gift of poetry, Thomas was given gifts from beyond that made possible his work. Similarly, Henry Vaughan located the source for his own *furor poeticus* in the *sufficiency* made possible by the indwelling spirit of God, rather than in his talents alone.

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NOTES

[1]Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern: A. Franke, 1948) 7.2.

[2]*The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed William A. Ringler (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962) 165.

[3]Ben Jonson, *Poems*, ed. Ian Donaldson (London: OUP, 1975) "On My First Son," ll. 9-10.

[4]"To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare, and What He Hath Left Us," ll. 58-64.

[5]All quotations are from Henry Vaughan, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Alan Rudrum (New Haven: Yale UP, 1981), "A Rhapsody," ll. 63-78.

[6]The translation of "*Venerabili Viro*" is Rudrum's, *The Complete Poems* 131.

[7]"Begging," ll. 1-14.

[8]"The Dedication," ll. 15-22, 43-46.

[9]See *The Fountain of Living Waters: The Typology of the Waters of Life in Herbert, Vaughan and Traherne* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1987) especially 82-98.

[10]Augustine, *De Diversis Quæstionibus LXXXIII*, vol. 40 of *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J-P. Migne (Paris, 1857-87), Quæstio 63, "De Verbo, col. 54; trans. David L. Mosher, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, vol. 70 of *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington D.C.: Catholic UP, 1977) 127. Bergvall's comments were made at the 1999 Colloquium in Halberstadt on "Poetry as Procreation" and were published as "'The Poets Deliver': Procreation, Communication, and Incarnation in Sidney and Wordsworth," *Connotations* 8.3 (1998/99): 283-93.

[11]"White Sunday," ll. 30-31.

[12]"Holy Scriptures," ll. 1-14.

[13]*The Works of George Herbert*, ed. F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1945) "The Sinner," ll. 12-14.

[14]"The Author's Preface to the Following Hymns," *Silex* 1655, 138. Βραβεῖον means "something awarded."

[15]See note in *The Works in Verse and Prose Complete of Henry Vaughan, Silurist*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (London, 1871) 1: 7.

[16]"The Author's Preface to the Following Hymns," *Silex* 1655, 141.

[17]"Anguish," ll. 13-18.

[18]"Disorder and Frailty," ll. 50-60.

[19]Jonathan Goldberg, *Voice Terminal Echo: Postmodernism and English Renaissance Texts* (New York: Methuen, 1986) 102.

[20]See James D. Simmonds, *Masques of God: Form and Theme in the Poetry of Henry Vaughan* (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1972) 12-14 and 85-137.

[21]See, e.g., the epistle to the Galatians: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"(2:20).

[22]Letter, Henry Vaughan to John Aubrey, 9 October 1694, from Brecon, Bodleian Library MS, Aubrey 13, fol. 340, in *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, ed. L. C. Martin, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957) 696.

[23]The *OED* lists a contemporary usage by Bishop Joseph Hall, *A Recollection of Such Treatises as Have Bene Heretofore Severally Published* (London, 1614) 161: "The Soule, like unto some noble Hauke, lets pass the crowes."

[24]See Beryl Rowland, *Birds with Human Souls: A Guide to Bird Symbolism* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1978) 60-63.

[25]*The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo*, trans. and ed. George Boas (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993) 45-46: "When they wish to symbolize a god, or something sublime, . . . they draw a hawk. A god, because the hawk is fecund or long-lived. And again, since it seems to exist as a symbol of the sun, beyond all other birds in the sharpness of its sight, because of the rays of its eyes. And for this reason the physicians use hawkweed for eye-trouble. And since the sun is the lord of sight, they draw him sometimes in the shape of a hawk. And sublime things, since the other birds, when they wish to fly upwards, proceed on a slant, it being impossible for them to rise directly. Only the hawk flies straight upwards."

[26]I wish to thank Liam Semler for making this connection at the 1999 *Connotations* Colloquium in Halberstadt.

[27]Sloane 1741, fol. 12^{r}; also in *Aqua Vitæ: Non Vitis: Or, The radical Humiditie of Nature: Mechanically, and Magically dissected By the Conduct of Fire, and Ferment* (British Library MS, Sloane 1741), ed. and trans. with an Introduction by Donald R. Dickson, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, vol. 217 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001) 30.

[28]Vaughan no doubt has in mind the meeting of Isaac and Rebekah: "And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master" (Genesis 24:14). I wish to thank Eleanor Cook for making this connection at the 1999 *Connotations* Colloquium in Halberstadt.

[29]Sloane 1741, fols. 104^{r}, 103^{r}, and 102^{r}; also in *Aqua Vitæ*, 236-37, 242.

[30]*Lumen de Lumine*, in *The Works of Thomas Vaughan*, ed. Alan Rudrum (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984) 305. Rudrum, in a note on p. 753, comments on this connection. See also his "Alchemy in the Poems of Henry Vaughan," *PQ* 49 (1970): 472.

[31]*Lumen de Lumine* 305-17. The emblem of the "Scholæ Magicæ Typvs," engraved by Robert Vaughan, is reprinted on 316.

[32]For a fuller account, see the introduction to my edition of *Aqua Vitæ*, xxv-xxxi.

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A Boy in the Listening: On Voice, Space, and Rebirth in the Poetry of Dylan Thomas

EYNEL WARDI

This essay addresses the relation between voice and space in the poetry of Dylan Thomas in terms of the desire for self-generation enacted in it.[1] Focusing mainly on Thomas's birthday poem, "Poem in October," the essay explores the thematic and the performative aspects of the poetic voice and the ways in which it constitutes imaginary spaces that accommodate its subject, locating him in, and in relation to the world. By distinction from those poems in which Thomas characteristically celebrates the sonorous intensity of the self-assertive and world-creating poetic articulation, "Poem in October" is primarily about voice in its auditory dimension, where listening proves to possess no lesser, if not greater, creative and regenerative properties. The analysis of the poem is preceded by a general introductory discussion of the phenomenon of voice in poetry and in Thomas's poetry in particular, and a short reading of Thomas's "Poem on his Birthday" as a paradigmatic example, which characteristically evokes the transformative practice of high-powered poetic articulation. The discussion of poetic listening in the quieter "Poem in October" concentrates, together with its attentive speaker, on the sensation of inhabitable spaces yielded by the listening, while pointing out Thomas's distinctive appeal to the most primary perceptual experiences creating the sense of spatial embodiment and relatedness that regenerate the speaking/listening subject of his poetry. A conceptualization of this effect follows in the last section of the essay, which introduces a psychoanalytic approach that regards voice and the acoustic spaces which it generates in early infancy as a crucial factor in the constitution of the individual as an embodied speaking subject.

The mystique of voice is as old and as various as the ancient myths of creation. With respect to poetry its aspects include some of the following

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elements, which even the modern imagination cannot repudiate. There is the empowering magic of the voice that projects worlds into being; voice opens an image—be it of wondrously fresh or reassuringly—or uncannily—familiar worlds. There are the imaginary scenes of new worlds, encapsulated in the comic-strip bubbles blown up by creative words that sustain their co-temporal creators' existence—at least for as long as they last. And then there are the mnemonic images opened up by the nostalgic voice, which invoke things past into palpable presence, thus restoring continuity to a life or a self fragmented by time and forgetfulness. But, perhaps even more effective in procuring the keen speaker's sense of "being" are the mental spaces that are projected by voice in its "oral-aural" dimension, as Walter Ong termed it in his modern version of the mystique of *The Presence of the Word.*[2] These are the acoustic, or acoustic-like spaces of poetic resonance that accommodate, or contain the speaking subject *in* his, or her, or somebody else's poem. Poems are, indeed, places to be in; they are habitable environments that *place* one *in* relation to the implied otherness which voice calls, or re-calls, into presence. Or, alternatively, they are (or may be) intermediary spaces that relate one to the world,[3] and this not only by dint of representing segments of it, but also by virtue of their indeterminate resonance, which opens one to the irreducible connotative infinity to which they point beyond themselves.[4] Beyond their representational signification, poems are indices to the world, which discloses itself to the attuned textual subject who opens himself to it. Indeed, it is precisely the non-specificity of the "world" which the indeterminate language of poetry indicates—or resonates—that ensures our openness to its presence. That presence, or resonance, as David Michael Levin suggests in his Heideggerian reflections on *The Listening Self,*[5] discloses itself to us as a *ground* for our being, and, as he adds (with Merleau-Ponty in mind), an *auditory* ground at that, which sustains our embodiment as listening beings. But the ground or space for being that is opened by effective poetry is, ultimately, beyond the perceptual or the imaginary, although it is created by these mental functions; it is, rather, a *psychic space,* which is to be associated with emotional centeredness as well as with the mental spaciousness we experience upon the reception of a voice that really speaks to us.

At the interface of the literal and the metaphorical, voice in poetry is both sound and style; it is both the material articulation of a poem—a projection of the body in time and into space—and the poet's identifying style or distinctive "voice." These fuse to figure in Thomas's extravagant self-mystifying dramatizations of the poetic act as the actual (pneumatic) projection of the poet-maker's own being into presence. Indeed, anyone who has heard Thomas's vibrant and theatrical "bardic" voice in BBC or other recordings may easily intuit his mystique of the poet's self-authenticating creative voice, whose incantatory magic would raise the dead and regenerate the depressed. That the ultimate object of this magical speech act is primarily its emergent agent is often testified to, in Thomas's poetry, by the very vibrancy of the utterance, whose obviously relished sensuousness suggests an adherence to the wishful prospect of being embodied in the oral and acoustic materiality of the words and in their relational gestures towards the world. But the resonant plenitude of that narcissistically invested materiality also invokes its anxiety-inducing antidote, namely, the void that fuels voice, and notably the modern voice: the melancholic hollow of non-being that haunts the de-centred subject of the utterance while at the same time serving as a sounding box for his wishfully eloquent yearning for being.

The poetry of Dylan Thomas energetically, if not obsessively, enacts what may be said to motivate much of modern poetry since the Romantics, namely, the wish for self-generation in and through the poetic utterance itself; the wish, that is, of a de-centred, or emotionally dissociated subject to speak him/herself into being—"one," and "there"—in a meaningful, embodied relation to the otherness of language and the world. The intensity of that wish in Thomas's work and its underlying existential anxiety manifest themselves in his self-reflexive preoccupation with the themes of genesis and creation and with birth and regeneration in the shadow of death and loss, as well as in his fascination with voice and the auditory at large. As a *topos* as well as an expressive medium, "voice" and its resonance in Thomas's work emerge as generative phenomena that yield an experience of being, momentarily creating in their subject (the speaker and/or the listener) a sense of temporal and spatial continuity that

constitutes the subjective ontology of the self. It is the voice that integrates the split self in the dimension of time—as in Thomas's birthday poems, "Poem in October" and "Poem on his Birthday," where the sense of the passing of time and its corrosiveness propels the poet-protagonist to give actuality to his birth-day by setting out on a symbolic journey in quest of his lost voice. Finding the muted voice in these poems generates in the speaker a sense of being one within himself by putting him in touch with his creative sources and resources—with "the long dead child" in him, in the "October" poem, and with his time-worn faith and desire in "Poem on his Birthday." In "Vision and Prayer," another poem about regeneration through renewed faith, the speaker's prayer to be reborn through union with his dissociated self, configured by a vision of Christ being born "in the next room," is actually realized in the course of his symbolic devotional gesture. This transformation is locally illustrated by the sequence, "In the name of the unborn / and the undesirers [. . .] One to / Be I pray," where the desiring "I" emerges as a result of the preceding articulation of the prayer. The efficacy of the poetic act as a whole manifests itself in the final line of the poem, where the poet is re-generated through a communion with the newly born Son which lends him an integrity of being and concomitantly, the magic force of his poetic word: "And the sun roars at the prayer's end."[6]

The "orphic" gesture of making the sun rise by dint of the poetic practice is a recurrent motif in Thomas's writing: "I pluck again / The sweet, steel strings," he wrote, "To bring the sun to life."[7] Manifesting his mystification of the poetic voice, this somewhat grandiose magic gesture also foregrounds the correlative intensity of the existential anxiety underlying Thomas's wishful self-generative poetry, as well as the spatial imagination that gives it shape. For indeed, although the ontological insecurity that seems largely to animate Thomas's fascination with voice is most notably expressed in his repeated concern with time in its destructive aspect and its fragmented experience, it is ultimately in the spatial imagery that he employs for troping this concern that the most effective expression of his yearning for being and its underlying predicament can be found. His markedly spatial tropology effectively expresses a great longing for

groundedness and self-embodiment, a longing that, moreover, is actually the cause, rather than the symptom, of the manifest temporal concern with which Thomas is so often preoccupied. A case in point is "Poem on his Birthday," a self-reflexive poem whose speaker, an "orphic" poet, sets out to overcome his melancholic anxiety in the face of time's destructiveness through a poetic gesture that regenerates his faith and self-confidence to the point of an ecstatic exaltation of the power of the poetic word. The "orphic" poetic gesture is metaphorically depicted in terms of two successive sea-journeys, a cathartic journey to an imaginary death in the dark and silent bottom of the sea, followed by an enlightened surface cruise in the newly risen roaring sun. In this poem, with its triumphant ending, the existential predicament underlying the "orphic" transformation is clearly evident—indeed, so evident that it almost undermines the magic of its poetic resolution.

"Poem on his Birthday" starts off "In the *mustardseed sun*," a figure reflecting the speaker's ontological insecurity in its condensation of the feeble light of the melancholic dawn of his birthday, on the one hand, and the initially wind-swept, bird-pecked and drowned mustard seed from the sower's parable in the New Testament, on the other.[8] The literal condition of the biblical seed, which represents faith, illustrates a situation of non-receptivity to Jesus's Word within a narrative that depicts the vicissitudes of a seed that *fails to find good ground in which to sprout*. Like the biblical mustard seed, the "mustardseed sun" in Thomas's poem is initially menaced by hostile environment. It is like a "wind turned" "thistledown," helpless "among beaks / And palavers of birds" that threaten to devour it, and it is placed "[b]y full tilt river and switchback sea" that eventually sweep it, or its equivalent, "the sandgrain day," into "the bent bay's grave," to set there before it has ever had a chance to rise. Significantly, the mustardseed sun configures not only the seed-like poet on his birthday, but also the space that contains him, his ground for being "*in* the mustardseed sun." The threat to the speaker's spatial bearings is also expressed in the eventual tilting and wrecking of his more obvious and, once again, both metaphorical and metonymical, habitat: as early as the end of the first stanza, his birdlike abode, "his house on stilts high

among beaks," turns into "driftwood," destining its tenant to join the drowned, "steeple stemmed" herons who "walk in their shroud" in the underwater. The herons' stemmed steeples also represent the poets-protagonist's yet again metaphorical and metonymical abode, a church steeple where "the rhymer in the long tongued room [. . .] tolls his birthday bell." The latter is also the bell of the Angelus and the mouth (or beak) of the poet, who "sings towards anguish" with a dispirited, "tumbledown tongue." Thus, the poem's connotative polyvalence draws the connection between the rising of the sun (and Son) on the poet's birthday and his capacity to make it rise so as to have a place to be and grow "*in*" the sun.

In the first part of the poem, the poet's orphic power seems to be doubted to the desperate point of his being tongue-tied by his birthday blues, which as it were drown him in a "cavernous [underwater] silence." The situation changes, however, in the course of the act of faith that is the poem: the poet-protagonist tolls and tolls his muted bell till he finds tongue to sing himself alive and the sun up to its triumphant zenith. His is an act of faith with no a-priori faith; a prayer that draws on the materiality of its motions: he "prays [. . .] *faithlessly* unto Him / Who is the [symbolic] light of old" made new, or newly relevant, however, by dint of the persistent incantation of the wishful voice. "Though I cry with tumbledown tongue," he "[counts his] blessings aloud" until they materialize and, moreover, "[t]o his nimbus bell cool kingdom come," its luminous plenitude invoked into such vibrant, luminous and musical presence that it overflows its bounds to fill the whole world with its audio-visual grace. The poem culminates with the sun high in sky and the poet's triumphant declaration that "the closer I move / To death [. . .] / The louder the sun blooms [like the Son who is both Word and Light] / And the tusked, ramshackling sea exalts" together with the "dew lark [that] sings" and the rest of the world that, "With more triumphant faith / Then ever was since the world was said, / Spins its morning of praise." At this happy point, the sea that initially threatened to drown the poet's "seed" of faith and creativity carries his ship on its tame elephantine back, while the wind blows its sail under the blossoming sun, now grown into a robust mustard-tree whose branches, as in the Sower's parable, are filled with the song of the now harmless birds that

reverberate the poet's sacramental song—or birthday toll: for indeed, the poet's devotional, "orphic" gesture turns the whole world into a huge bell, or sound box; a colossal Angelus whose acoustic space contains the speaker and gives him a ground in which to germinate and grow—not despite, but *in* time. In tolling his birthday bell the poet has created for himself a *space in time*—a space for being generated, precisely, by "telling" the time (as bells do) and thus tuning into it; a space for being *in* the loud sun, or its synaesthetic aura, created by the resonance of the poet's voice.

But there is, I feel, something hollow in the poem's culminating crescendo; something too loud, manic almost, in the vibrancy of the sun's loud bloom—or sonic boom—in its (i.e., the poet's) competition with death ("the closer I move to death [. . .] the louder the sun blooms") that betrays a sense of uneasiness, not to say despair. It sounds as though the poet were screaming at the top of his voice to silence death, or some terrible absence. Thomas confirms something of this sense in one of his last letters, where he describes his sea-faring "orphic" persona as "a manacles orator with a wet trombone" 'braying' his "brassy naught."[9] Thomas seems here to be trumpeting away the silence of a world that is not really there for him—*but* as an echo-box; a "said" sacramental world whose constitutive Word is ultimately the poet's, not God's, and which consequently lacks the autonomous reality and stability that might serve ontologically to ground him. To my profane ears, the condition of the seed in Thomas's Sower's parable remains somewhat precarious: I hear in the voice of the poet "on his Birthday" a tone of anxiety, that the minute he should stop singing, the sun might shrink back into the size of a mustard seed, and the seed fall into the beak of one of the malevolent birds that peck at the poet in his "slant, racking house" at the beginning of the poem, or be swept, weightless and helpless, down the drain of the waters of the bay. Indeed, the brassy orator with the wet trombone has here more in common, it seems to me, with Scheherazade than with Orpheus.

The speaker of "Poem in October," by contrast, is quite simply himself, with no mythological affinities. This birthday poem, which was written five years before "Poem on his Birthday," is on the whole free of anxiety and of the need to dispel it by grandiose gestures. The speaker of this

quieter but far happier poem enjoys enough security in his being in the world to be able not only to speak peacefully, but also to listen. Indeed, he can listen *while* speaking the poem, to the effect of finding his true voice as well as his space—rather than forcing them into being. Instead of seeking faith by means of a willed act of faith that suppresses its fundamental absence, this poem begins with the poet's faith in the world's being there for him, and in articulated good faith at that. The poet wakes up at the dawn of his birthday to the sound of voices urging him to celebrate it. His awakening is like a good, smooth birth into a welcoming world, populated, for a change, by friendly versions of the water and birds, which act as midwives in the easy labour:

> It was my thirtieth year to heaven
> Woke to my hearing from harbour and neighbour wood
> And the mussel pooled and the heron
> Priested shore
> The morning beckon
> With water praying and call of seagull and rook
> And the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall
> Myself to set foot
> That second
> In the still sleeping town and set forth.

By sharp contrast to "Poem on his Birthday," the auditory imagery here is of the world inviting the speaker to be born: the morning 'beckons,' the water is 'praying' and the birds are 'calling' him to emerge. Rather than having to assert his birth through a cry against a hostile world, the newborn 'wakes to his *hearing*' the world beckon to "[him]self to set foot" and "set forth." Even the friction and pressure of the actual birth is relieved here by the benevolent world, which takes the effort upon itself: again, the speaker *hears* his own foetal response to the world's invitation, in "the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall." That knock is in turn followed by his passive emergence as the object ("myself") of both the beckoning and the sentence, the main clause of which, significantly enough, lacks a subject ("woke to my hearing" has no subject). Only in the next stanza, after the invitation is repeated in

My birthday began with the water-
Birds and the birds of the winged trees flying my name

does the newborn emerge as an active subject:

And I rose
In rainy autumn
And walked abroad in a shower of all my days.

And in order to make that separation easier, the water and the birds graciously make way:

High tide and the heron dived when I took the road
Over the border
And the gates
Of the town closed as the town awoke.

This symbolic birth is the point of departure for the speaker's birthday walk in the country. Like the journey in "Poem on his Birthday," the walk lasts between a somewhat dreary dawn and a bright noon, passing through equally symbolic geographical sites that illustrate the traveller's changing perspective on his longer, life's journey: the day-tour takes place between "rainy autumn" in "the still sleeping town" and a sunny "summer noon" on a "high hill" overlooking "the town below," which lies "leaved with October blood" marking the poet's birthday (October 7th) as well as his mortality and its eventual realization in death—but at a distance. The journey is thus a bilateral one, moving towards the future and towards the past simultaneously. The future lies in the fallen bloody leaves and perhaps also in the torn leaves of the calendar, but also in its more optimistic prospect, suggested by the poem's opening reference to the greater journey's destination in "It was my thirtieth year *to heaven* [. . .]." The past lies in the reverberation of the poet's childhood in the landscapes and weather-scapes of his birthday walk, and then again, so does his future: for it is the return of the voice of the child he once was that makes for the poet's regeneration on his birthday by connecting him to his creative resources, which he presently taps to re-verberate the child's song in his

poem, hoping that it may "Still be sung / On this high hill in a year's turning" (stanza 7). Acoustically speaking, then, the bilateral journey dramatized in the poem is the journey of the *echo*, whose reverberation, as its transitive verb form suggests, moves both backwards and forward, spanning a life, as it were, between the past and the future of the resonant voice.

Following nature's luring sounds, which turn out to be echoes of his voice, the poet comes to meet and eventually unite with the child he once was—the child who is father of the Romantic poet,[10] who bears "the truth" of his heart and "joy" and is thus the poet's true, authentic "voice." The connection between the adult poet and the child is established by a synaesthetic dialectic of voice and space: the adult poet invokes his childhood landscapes (where "he walked with his mother"), the mnemonic geography of which in turn invokes the child's "voice," or creative perception of them. The places visited during the walk, as Matthias Bauer states in his essay on Thomas's return journeys, 'go on knowing' the dead child and 'preserve his voice'; "the poet ascends the hill [. . .] where he suddenly finds himself revisiting (or being revisited by) the country of his childhood and where the voice of the boy has been kept for him by the 'water and singingbirds' belonging to this place: 'These were the woods the river and sea / Where a boy / In the listening / Summertime of the dead whispered the truth of his joy / To the trees and the stones and the fish in the tide. / And the mystery / Sang alive / Still in the water and singingbirds.'"[11] But the origin of the whisper reverberated by the mystery is not recognized until rather late in the journey, in the greater course of which the poet follows the child's voice unawares. Indeed, the journey dramatizes a gradual process of recognition and identification with "the long dead child," moving from acoustic to visual perception of him and finally to the introjection of his creative sensibilities. After hearing, in stanza 4, the child's "tall tales" of "blooming" "spring and summer," without knowing who tells them, the poet comes to see their source in the following stanza: "And I saw [. . .] so clearly a child's / Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother / Through the parables / Of sun light / And the legends of the green chapels." Next, the child's imaginative gaze and

sensitivity become his own, as he literally incorporates their correlative organs in stanza 6, where, on seeing "the twice told fields of [his] infancy," "his [the child's] tears burned my cheeks and his heart moved in mine." This union with the "the long dead child" revived, whose "true / Joy" is heard singing in the sun in the final stanza, is the optimistic basis for the poet's culminating prayer that "*my* heart's truth [may] / Still be sung / [. . .] in a year's turning." By appropriating the child's song through its 'in-vocative' articulation, the poet integrates his inner child, whereby he regenerates himself as a poet. This oral-aural process of in-vocation, or 'voicing in,' creates the resonance of the ventriloquist poet's "song," and explains how the singing child comes to be father of the man.

But the return of the "long dead" child should not mislead us. The futurity of the nostalgic voice that makes possible the actualization (rather than mere commemoration) of the poet's birthday is guaranteed by the fact that childhood is a never-never land; its intense reality is that of a retroactive fantasy of ideal origins that sustains, according to the poet, the meaning of our present being with a face to the future. In other words, the nostalgic poet's bilateral mnemonic voice creates a future for him precisely because the object of his nostalgia never existed—as he represents it. The first to acknowledge this is, naturally, the father of the man. In his "Intimations of Immortality" ode, Wordsworth attributes the child's long lost creative perception to the inherently nostalgic childish imagination. The "simple creed of childhood" is based on intimations of a prior time immemorial, and "those first affections" accompanying it are associated with "shadowy recollections" within a nostalgic chain whose origin is not in the pre-natal immortality, but rather in the child's creative imagination, which is "*the fountain light* of all our day [. . .] the master light of all our seeing."[12] A similar kind of nostalgic chain unfolds itself in Thomas's "Poem in October," in the poet's audio-visual perception of "*the twice told* fields of infancy." The first to 'tell' these "fields" is the child himself, whose creative perception the poet re-assumes on re-calling "all the gardens / Of spring and summer," which reveal themselves to him "blooming in the *tall tales*" that are the child's old fibs literalized and visualized as trees. The child is the father of the poet, then, because he is the first to invent their shared nostalgic origins.

The literalization of the child's fictions is significant, because it is what makes it possible for the poet to enter and re-inhabit their spaces, following the child before him and yielding to his appeal. The child's stories grow like gardens and fields that beckon to the journeying poet, enticing him to come from "beyond the border" of his home town, where "pale rain" falls "over the dwindling harbour." Yet when the poet considers settling in these pleasant spaces—to "marvel [his] birthday away" there—"the weather [turns] round" like a metonymical weather-cock, re-directing the traffic in this geographic-atmospheric expedition, pushing the poet forward from one fictional space to another "down *the other air* and the blue altered sky": "And I saw in the turning so clearly a child's / Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother / Through the *parables / Of sun light* / And the *legends of the green chapels*."

The other "air" is a pun that foregrounds the oral-aural relation between "voice"—song, tale, legends, and, in this case, "tune"—and space, atmospheric in this case, to accommodate the symbolic changes of the weather reflected in the replacement of the cloudy autumn sky by "the blue altered sky" and the sunshine. The "parables of sun light" "*through*" which the imaginative child once "walked" suggests the full bilateral trajectory of the child's and the poet's shared song. They may well be imagined as a series of luminous spaces of transition (a kind of arcade?) between two suns, the one projected back into the hollow of a past immemorial to constitute the invisible "fountain light" from which the orphic voice draws its nostalgic resonance, the other projected into the future, fuelled by that same resonance of "the true / Joy of the long dead child," who sings "burning / In the sun" in the poet's "thirtieth year *to* heaven." The luminous passage-way between the two suns representing the bilateral scope of the nostalgic reverberation does more than create a continuity between the past and the future; it spans an infinite space for representation between its infinitely receding end terms, the projected solar origins of a creative imagination that sets its own horizons. The re-birth embodied in this image is, then, that of a subjectivity experienced as creative potency and, correlatively, as a sense of actual and potential psychic expansion.

A nostalgic chain structures the poem itself, which moves from the dramatized moment of composition back to childhood and, as is suggested by the evocation of more primary perceptual experiences and their context of birth imagery, further back to early infancy. These times are superimposed on one another in the poem's mnemonic figurative matrix. Thus, the child's perception obviously colours the poem (the product of the adult's recuperation of his voice) with its projections onto nature. This occurs from the very beginning, where nature echoes the child's "song" in the "morning beckon[ing]" to the birthday poet "[w]ith water praying and call of seagull and rook" to repeat his birth by "set[ting] forth" on his birthday journey. But the fact of the projection is only acknowledged towards the end of the poem, in stanza 6, where the acoustics of the natural scene is explicitly attributed to the child:

> These were the woods the river and sea
> Where a boy
> In the listening
> Summertime of the dead whispered the truth of his joy
> To the trees and the stones and the fish in the tide.
> And the mystery
> Sang alive
> Still in the water and singingbirds.

What the mystery sings alive through its sacramental connotations is the communion between nature and the child of which the adult now comes to partake. Thanks to the mnemonic spirit of the place and of his own song, the poet inherits the child's imaginative capacity for intimacy with the surrounding world, which is the gift of childhood's benign narcissism. What is benign about this state of narcissism is that it is not solipsistic, but relational: from the boy's subjective, but nonetheless other-oriented perspective, there is a true dialogue going on between himself and the trees and the stones and the fish, which do not only take in and remember what he whispers to them, but perhaps even initiate an enunciation of their own. This is suggested by the syntactic ambiguity created by the enjambments in "a boy / In the listening / Summertime of the dead whispered the truth of his joy." The break between the listening and its subject, the summertime

that listens to the child's whispering, creates the possibility that it is the summertime that whispers, while the boy is "In the listening," thus maintaining, within the "mystery" of semantic indeterminacy, a potential dialogue between nature and the child.

But even more important, I think, than this indeterminacy and the imaginary dialogue which its suggests are the implications of the isolated phrase, 'a boy in the listening.' Regardless of whether or not the world is actually saying something, the boy is listening out, imaginatively attuned to the world, open. This openness enables him to *be* in the listening, embodied in the acoustic space of it, rather than shout against his anxiety of annihilation. The boy can be *in* the listening of a narcissism that is disposed towards the world, rather than a narcissism that shuts or shouts it away. Moreover, his disposition of openness enables him to sustain the mystery of the communion with nature without reducing it to subject-object categories. Such "negative capability" is implicit in the enigmatic syntax of the line evoking the experience: just what "the mystery sang alive" remains, to some extent, a mystery, because the verb "sang" has no object, which suggests that the mystery sang *itself* alive, as a third, autonomous entity accompanying or generated by the encounter between nature and the child/poet.[13] Finally, the temporality of the singing is also indeterminate, due to the reference to its present performers, "the water and singingbirds." It is said that the water and the birds "still" sing here, in the country of the poet's childhood revisited, yet the "still" might also refer back to the duration of the poem itself, which begins with the water and the birds singing the poet awake at the dawn of his birthday, and echoing further back, perhaps, to the event of the actual birth which it commemorates.

The motif of the water and the singing birds and its modulations are woven into the associative texture of the poem so that they enhance its meaning both symbolically and at the concrete level of perception and sensation, thus illustrating the *topos* of voice as a transitional phenomenon between language and the body. While the first stanza resounds with noises of the water and the birds in the harbour assisting in the speaker's symbolic re-birth and its acoustic perception,[14] in the second stanza the newborn

is being baptized: "My birthday began with the *water*— / Birds and the birds of the winged trees flying my *name*." This Christening ceremony takes place thanks to the enjambment that separates between the water of the "water / Birds" on one side, and the birds and their name-giving colleagues on the other. These elements, in turn, also represent the conjunction of biology and semiosis respectively, in the advent of the newborn as a speaking subject, as well as in the poetic voice, with the material "flow" of its music and its adherence to the linguistic code. Indeed, the aerial (rather than watery) space where the voice flows is cleared by the separation between the water and the air, suggested by the distinction between the water birds and the birds of the winged trees, and by the transformation of the sea water in the poem into atmospheric humidity—clouds and rain—which the poet literally surmounts when climbing the sunny hill overlooking the rainy sea town below. That aerial space is cleared as the poet makes his mnemonic *verbal* way up the hill of his childhood through synaesthetic elaborations of the bird/water motif: he walks along "roadside bushes *brimming* with whistling"; he listens "To the rain wringing / wind," which the enjambment makes sound at first like the rain *ringing*; and he sees and hears the wrung "lark full cloud" which rains chirps and twitterings, till it disperses to clear the way for "the other air and the blue altered sky" of childhood.

The "other air" combines, as suggested earlier, the oral-aural aspects of the *atmosphere* of childhood and its *melody*, which is 'sung alive still' to reverberate the dead child's voice not only in the revisited geographic site of the water and the singing birds, but also in the verbal flow and imaginative flight of Thomas's poem. The aspect of childhood's "atmosphere" is clearly related to the poet's preoccupation with the more concrete, aerial sensations of atmospheric states and climates. "Poem In October" is a poem about the weather; the air in it conducts both sound—ultimately the child's voice—and the symbolic meteorological changes representing temporal changes as well as correlative transformations of mood in the course of the poet's journey towards restoring his childhood perception. Thus, his journey, conducted by the weather-cock (another bird!), takes route in the fickle October weather, whose changing

moments are magnified into seasons through which the poet moves till he finally reaches childhood's sunny "summertime." But the main significance of the weathers and seasons in the poem lies, I feel, less in the symbolic temporal dimension than in the concrete, spatial dimension of sensation. The latter consists in the atmosphere surrounding the traveler upon his return to the "fond climates" and the "other air" of his childhood, as well as in his actual experience of embodiment in space, suggested by references to the most basic aerial sensations. The effective evocation, in the poem, of such primary "haptic"—tactile and auditory—experiences of being *in* the musical and meteorological "air," gives body to the symbolic images of birth and post-natal states that extend the reach of and amplify the poem's nostalgic resonance.

The psychoanalytic literature that reflects on the formative role of the early "aerial" experiences in the emergence of the subject as an embodied speaking being throws light on the significance of the concrete images of re-birth in Thomas's poem in terms of the conjunction of body and language which they configure. In their attempt to imagine the development of the infant's basic sense of itself as a more or less unified being, authors like Françoise Dolto, Didiér Anzieu and Dominique Ducard imagine the evolution of a primary "body image" through the imaginative elaboration of respiratory, olfactory and notably auditory experiences of the "aerial" environment. In this context, and often guided by the belief that "the sonic space is the first psychic space,"[15] these authors postulate primordial acoustic or *"sonic spaces,"* which yield a body image that precedes the scopic, specular image of the "unified body" or the rudimentary self formed, according to Lacan and Winnicott respectively, during the "mirror phase" or the period of the maternal "mirroring function."[16]

This basic body image and the sonic environment of which it is an elaboration are described by the psychoanalytic authors in terms of the dual function of accommodating *space* and delineating form—a duality that brings to mind the simultaneously metonymical and metaphorical birdlike image of the poet "on his Birthday" and accounts, perhaps, for the spatial experience of subjective ontology which it reflects. The body image is, thus, both "the palpable place where the subject can maintain

[*tenir*] his self, or alternatively, his body," and "a form where the subject can represent and articulate himself:"[17] "here I am." [18]Succeeding a postulated primordial "foetal image,"[19] the acoustic image is maintained within the fluid aerial space—a fluidity which recalls the water-air pair in Thomas's "Poem in October"—of a "sonic placenta" (*"placenta sonore"*)[20] and "sonic bath" (*"bain sonor"*).[21] The function of these is to contain or provide a "holding environment"[22] for the infant so that the evolution of his body image and sense of wholeness may take place as it were "*in* the listening [. . .]." At the same time, however, the early acoustic spaces also introduce the infant with a sense of form that guarantees the formation of his/her identity through an eventual entry into the symbolic order of language. The primal body image is a *structured* auditory space, organized prosodically and melodically by the inscriptions of the body's rhythms as well as by speech intonations and rhythmic patterns that form an acoustic Gestalt.[23] Thus, the elaboration of the basic body image is founded not only on unmediated perceptions and other somatic functions, but also on *semiotic* representations of inter-subjective relationships. In other words, the primary acoustic space is not merely an aerial reproduction of the nostalgic, autistic comfort of the womb, but is also a *relational space* where "the image of the body refers the subject of desire to his pleasure, mediated by the remembered language of the communication between subjects."[24] The relational, form-giving aspect of the primary acoustic environment is configured in the notion of a "sonic mirror,"[25] which alludes to Lacan's analogous notion of the foundation of the infant's sense of the unity of his body in the "mirror phase." Even as Lacan's scopic mirror reflects the body's imaginary wholeness by identificatory adherence to the "gaze of the Other," so the (chronologically prior) acoustic mirror embodies a recognition, by way of attribution, of an "other" as the source of its form-giving voice (*"la voix-source"*).[26] (The abstracted origin of that originary voice finds its configuration in numerous myths of creation by song, breath and speech, including, of course, the biblical myth to which Thomas alludes in his sacramental invocation of the "said" world.)

By providing at once a sense of containing plenitude and of other-related form, the early acoustic space imagined by psychoanalysts constitutes,

in its heterogeneity, a conjunction of the biological and the semiological origins of the subject's identifying embodiment. This site is not unlike Thomas's in "Poem in October," where *water* and *name* converge in the fluid space of natural and codified sounds to generate a signifying subject "in the listening" (also) to an *other*. In this view, the experience of the "boy in the listening" is a reenactment of the archaic genesis of the speaking subject through entrance into the order of language—by listening to a voice that at once restores, in its materiality, the archaic unity of the "water" and designates its loss—by "flying its *name*."

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NOTES

[1]My reading of Thomas in terms of the poet's realization of a desire for self-generation through the poetic practice, as well as its theoretical premises, were developed in my *Once Below a Time: Dylan Thomas, Julia Kristeva, and Other Speaking Subjects* (Albany: State U of New York P, 2000). By distinction from the previous work, however, the orientation of the reading in this essay is not psychoanalytic, except for the last part, where new psychoanalytically oriented theoretical notions are introduced and brought to bear on a Thomas poem.

[2]Walter J. Ong, S.J., *The Presence of the Word* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1981) 2.

[3]On Winnicott's notion of intermediary, or "transitional" spaces, see D. W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," *Playing and Reality* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).

[4]Needless to say, perhaps, "one" here is not only the reader/listener, but also the poet as listener, who listens not only to his own speech, but also to the reverberation of language as "other" and to the being of others who participate in it.

[5]*The Listening Self: Personal Growth, Social Change and the Closure of Metaphysics* (London: Routledge, 1989).

[6]*Collected Poems: 1934-1952* (London: Dent, 1973) 129-40. Unless indicated otherwise, all the quotations from Thomas's poems in this paper are from this edition, and all the emphases in them are mine.

[7]*The Notebooks of Dylan Thomas*, ed. Ralph Maud (London: New Directions, 1967) 111.

[8]My reading refers to the sower's parable in Matthew 13 and Mark 4. "[. . .] A sower went out to sow, and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls

came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and [. . .] because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell upon thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them. But others fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit." (Matthew 13:3-18). The seed, representing the Word and its incorporation as faith, is specified as a *mustard* seed in Mark 4:31. Its drowning is projected—in my reading of Thomas's poem—by reference to the enactment of the parable later in the same chapter, where Jesus, having resumed his narration, tests the disciples' faith by a subjecting them to a didactic storm.

[9]Letter to Marguerite Caetani, in *The Collected Letters of Dylan Thomas*, ed. Paul Ferris (London: Dent, 1985) 915-16.

[10]"The child is father of the Man" is the concluding line of William Wordsworth's poem, "My Heart Leaps Up," and the opening one in the epigraph in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (*The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 7th ed., gen. ed. M. H. Abrams [New York: Norton, 2000] 2: 285 and 287-92).

[11]"But the Names Remain: Dylan Thomas's *Return Journey*," *Connotations* 8.1 (1998/99): 107-08.

[12]William Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," ll. 148-52.

[13]I am grateful to Leona Toker for pointing out the aspect of "negative capability" in Thomas's poem, in a comment she made on this reading of it at the *Connotations* Symposium in Halberstadt in August 1999.

[14]Listen for the */w/* assonance and the */k/ and /b/* consonance, and you might hear the rustle of an intra-uterine ultra-sound in "woke to my hearing [. . .] the morning beckon with water praying and call of seagull and rook and the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall."

[15]Didiér Anzieu, "L'enveloppe Sonore du Soi," *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* 13 (1976): 76, my translation.

[16]According to Lacan and Winnicott's views (synthesized), in the period between the ages of six to eighteen months, the infant experiences a primary sense of identity or identifying unity by dint of identification with an image which presents itself in the mirror of another, notably the mother's gaze. While Lacan emphasizes the formal aspect of the mirroring, which reflects the illusory image of a unified body—a "total Gestalt" that serves as a basis for the illusion of the ego, Winnicott refers more to the affective aspect of the mother's confirming response through facial expressions, which consolidates the infant's sense of identity and reality, or "self." See Jacques Lacan's "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I in psychoanalytic experience" *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London and New York: Norton 1977) 1-7, and D. W. Winnicott's "Mirror-role of Mother and Family in Child Development," *Playing and Reality* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).

[17]Françoise Dolto, in an interview with Juan David Nasio in *L'enfant du Miroir* (Paris: Editions Rivages, 1987) 13-14, quoted by Dominique Ducard in his essay, "Forme et Metaphore," *L'Esprit des Voix: Etudes sur la Fondation Vocale* (Paris: La Pensée Sauvage, 1990) 136, my translation.

[18]Or, more precisely and more faithfully with regard to the process of recognizing oneself in the mirror, "here-me-I": "*ici-moi-je*" (Ducard, "Forme et Metaphore" 136, my translation).

[19]Françoise Dolto, *L'image inconsciente du corps* (Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1984), cited by Ducard in "Forme et Metaphore" 135, my translation.

[20]Dominique Ducard, *La Voix et le Miroir: Généalogies de la voix et de la parole*, doctoral dissertation in semiology (U of Paris, 1989) 86-87.

[21]Didiér Anzieu writes about the formation of "the self [. . .] as a sonic envelopment [*enveloppe sonore*] in the experience of a bath of sounds" (*bain de sons*) in "l'Enveloppe Sonore du Soi" 173, my translation.

[22]Winnicott's term refers to the function of maternal care facilitating the development of the child's sense of self through the gradual imaginary elaboration of his/her psychosomatic reality.

[23]Dominique Ducard, "Forme et Metaphore," esp. 141.

[24]Ducard, "Forme et Metaphore" 135, my translation.

[25]Anzieu 162. See Ducard's elaboration of the term in, "Forme et Metaphore," and in *La Voix et le Miroir*.

[26]Ducard, "Forme" 134, my translation.

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Speaking for the Infant: On Yeats's "A Prayer for my Daughter"*

CHARLES LOCK

Leona Toker's defence of Yeats's "A Prayer for my Daughter" is advantageously placed in the context of a debate over "Poetry as Procreation." For it is in that context that such pejorative readings as Joyce Carol Oates's can be seen in the full measure of their triviality, and caught out in their very indignation. Trivial, that is, in the determination to read the poem as an autobiographical statement, as an ideological text, as anything but a poem. For how much longer are we expected to be shocked at the revelation that a modernist aesthetic conceals patriarchal and quasi-fascist ideological positions? As William Empson observed as long ago as 1965: "the weight of the charge is that Yeats was a fascist. Surely the first point to get clear is: 'So were all the great writers in English in the first half of this century, except Joyce.'"[1]

Toker's defence has much to do with prophecy, and it is worth contemplating the relationship between prophecy and fascism, between a language that lays claims on the future and a politics that would engineer the present. We could give a continuing validity to the sense of poetry as prophecy by thinking of prophecy as a critique directed against the epoch of its utterance, a critique, therefore, that anticipates the new era of its fulfilment, its realization, and its cancellation. To say that poetry contains, or even inheres in, ambiguity and contradiction, is to recognize the temporality of any poem, its lifespan, even its shelf-life. Every poem will be found to contain something offensive to some reader, even if only by that exclusion that operates as non-inclusion: a gendered or even a racial

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*Reference: Leona Toker, "W. B. Yeats's 'A Prayer for My Daughter': The Ironies of the Patriarchal Stance," *Connotations* 9.1 (1999/2000): 100-110.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debtoker00901.htm>.

exclusiveness can be deduced from a pronoun. This is liable to occur when the first-person pronoun is treated as a referent to the poet whom we know to be male, or white, or Irish, or old. And it is the prophetic element of a poem whose overlooking in any critical account usually brings down the charge of 'formalism'; for it is this, and only this, the prophetic, the scandalous, which gives any poem a purchase on future readings. It may, of course, be preferable to talk about prophecy rather than fascism, though the latter term will always tempt: we might say that a fascist is a prophet with political power; and that it is precisely in his own country that a prophet ought, for the good of all, to be without honour or power.

What routinely gets labelled and discounted as "the formalist approach" is often simply the reader's sense that a poem has a life and a meaning beyond all that ideological fiddle. To say that "My child" does not "refer" outside the poem to a biological daughter of William Butler Yeats, but functions within a system of tropes, may be taken as a copout, as an evasion of one's moral and political responsibilities as a reader. To such an anti-formalist challenge I would prefer not to respond. Rather than perpetuating that debate, by arguing on one side or the other, we would do better to acknowledge the constitutive necessity of such an irreconcilable division. Constitutive, that is, of any poem to be read more than once. The discrepancy between the formalist and the ideological reading is a measure of the poem's life, insofar as it foretells and enables another reading.

Whatever Leona Toker may mean by saying that "A Prayer for my Son" is the "weaker poem" of Yeats's two prayers for his offspring—let alone what we might agree about in that judgement—we can agree that "A Prayer for my Daughter" holds our attention; and that, by contrast, "A Prayer for my Son" seems contrived, little more than a companion-piece. Yet it is "A Prayer for my Son" that lacks ideological offensiveness. In being able to detect no fracture, no element whose exclusion from our reading might lead to a charge of "formalism," we are likely to consign "A Prayer for my Son" to its own time, without residue, without the prophetic note, the irritant of otherness. Yet this is not to imply that this or any disregarded poem will not have another moment, that in another age it might be upheld as a "strong poem": whatever that age will see, find, or take offence in,

we might not see now, or yet. Such mutability is, in Yeats's phrase—cited and qualified by Toker—the continual "making and un-making" in which the poet engages, and in which, willy-nilly, the poem is engaged.

Prophecy and procreation are linked by their common prefix, that *pro-* which may indicate a motion forward or outward, a time before or ahead, or "on behalf of" (*pro* rather than *contra*), or, most significantly in the present context, in place of, instead of. A prophet is not, etymologically at least, one who speaks beforehand, one who sees into the future, but rather one who speaks on behalf of another—in standard usage one who speaks in place of the Lord. Yeats was much concerned with prophecy, with voices detached, displaced, disembodied; and in "A Prayer for my Son" we find the Christ-child as an infant, without speech, the Word without a word, in T. S. Eliot's formulation ("Ash Wednesday V") drawn from Lancelot Andrewes's twelfth Christmas sermon: "Verbum infans, the Word without a word; the eternal Word not able to speak a word":

> Though You can fashion everything
> From nothing every day, and teach
> The morning stars to sing,
> You have lacked articulate speech
> To tell Your simplest want . . . .

The prophet speaks on behalf of another. Here, in the Nativity, that other, God, is Himself deprived of speech: the Verbum is infans, unworded.

One kind of prophet is an angel, the messenger who brings the word from the Word, who brings warning to Joseph in a dream (Matt. 2:13). One of the archangels is of course named Michael. "A Prayer for my Son" is a poem about protecting, a request for divine protection; it takes the angel as protector and figures this Michael as lying helpless, in need of human protection, just as the Divine Word is figured as a mute infant, in need of human love, to be spoken for by a human voice. As the Incarnation involves a parodic inversion of the divine order, so "my Michael" makes a parody of the angelic order: this is an angel for whom, on whose behalf, the poet must speak.

Procreation seems etymologically to waver between creation in advance and creation in place of. Is the act of procreation an act that both *is*, and yet only anticipates creation itself? Or is it, setting aside the temporalities of *pro-*, an act by which one creates one's own replacement? (The same ambiguity is present in the word *generation*, signalling both increase and substitution.)

Procreation as a metaphor for poetry involves that metonymic displacement by which the poet lives on, lives again, in his or her creations. This figure is turned and returned in Ben Jonson's great and diminutive elegy, "On my first Sonne":

> Rest in soft peace, and, ask'd, say here doth lye
> Ben. Jonson his best piece of poetrie.

By contrast, Yeats does not address his living child in the form of an apostrophe, as Jonson his dead son, but addresses Him to Whom prayers are customarily addressed—though it is only in the "Prayer for My Son" that "You" is invoked, the defining initial upper-case asserted. It is surely a remarkable feature of "A Prayer for my Daughter" that in a "prayer" of eighty lines the second-person pronoun is entirely absent. The prayer is framed within the narrative of an act of praying, most explicitly in the lines from the first two stanzas: "And for an hour I have walked and prayed," "I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour." The "Prayer for my Daughter" is, we might venture, a prayer precisely in order that it should not be an apostrophe. For everything that Oates objects to in this poem might well have been put directly, and no less offensively, as a father's advice, in the manner of Polonius.

Leona Toker argues interestingly that prayer is a form of metalepsis; that is, a figure that takes possession of what it describes, that puts one's own signature to what one has only described. Prayer does so by taking as its very premise the possibility of altering the world as given. Metalepsis works with the same temporal ambivalence as *pro-*, looking ahead, yet already there, as prolepsis works from here forwards. What is curious in Toker's terminology is that she should invoke metalepsis without a mention of prolepsis, though the two must be defined in each other's terms. A poem

always looks ahead to its future readers, so every act of writing involves prolepsis; reading is itself a kind, or even the very type of metalepsis, for metalepsis is present whenever a poem is surprised in the act of being read. Metalepsis is the fulfilment of prolepsis, its recognition, the completion of its circuit, its discharge. And it is the metaleptic appropriation of the poet's own voice, through the reader's voicing of the poem, that is liable to find, or take, offence in what that voice says.

The link between metalepsis and prayer is as clear as that which would almost equate prayer with prolepsis: a desire to change the world as given, and a desire to change the poem as found. Prayer is directed towards the future, as prolepsis; metalepsis lays claim to a text already there, while withholding assent from every detail of that text. Hence, in Harold Bloom's scheme of tropes, the need for a *clinamen*, a swerve or "strong misprision" or "deliberate misinterpretation," in every instance of metalepsis.[2] That with which we are in entire agreement is not worthy of our appropriation; the offence, the divergence, is alone and precisely what precludes redundancy, the mere iteration of vocal repetition. The reading of poetry necessarily and invariably presents us with the dilemma articulated by Socrates in the third book of Plato's *Republic*:

> But when the poet speaks in the person of another, may we not say that he assimilates his style to that of the person who, as he informs you, is going to speak? . . . And this assimilation of himself to another, either by the use of voice or gesture, is the imitation of the person whose character he assumes? (III, 393)

The poet's dilemma is (in the *Ion*) transferred to the rhapsode; should we imitate, give our voice to that which is beneath us, whether to the words of cowards or slaves, or to the irrational sounds made by animals or the wind (III, 396)? Socrates concludes that mimesis—the voicing of another's words—is appropriate when the one imitated is good and noble, but is not otherwise to be encouraged:

> the decent man . . . will not want seriously to liken himself to his own inferior, except momentarily, when he is acting well. He will be ashamed . . . he will feel disgust at modelling himself on, and inserting himself into, the patterns of the inferior. (III, 396)

And so it is with readers of poetry, who have no choice but to hear the poet's words in their own voices, who (to speak only for one self) enjoys his own voice in the rhythm supplied by Yeats, but who may hesitate to articulate within the patterns of the inferior. In voicing again, in speaking on behalf of another, we make ourselves present at the meeting of the prophetic and the mimetic, the confluence of Greek and Hebrew anxieties. That is why poetry must be read aloud, and why even its most fervent readers habitually play false to that injunction.

Those anxieties live on in the most familiar of all forms of metalepsis, interpretation, the figure by which the reader makes his or her own the meaning of a text, by claiming access to the original meaning or intention. And that "original meaning" must differ from the apparent, obvious meaning—or else there would be no need for an act of interpretation. "Original meaning" implies the temporality within which the differential of meaning can occur. Intention implies a spatial otherness in which, synchronically, difference has its being. Whether or not we admit to being practitioners of hermeneutics, we cannot elide the differential that makes a text worth reading: what makes a text worth reading is not only its pattern of superior sound, but also whatever "shames" or disturbs us in the reading aloud. The link to procreation hardly needs spelling: the Poem that the poet creates is recreated by the reader's voice.

Such observations as these pertain to poetry in general, to poetry as the conveyor not of voice itself, nor of a particular voice, but of that which can be vocalized. Yet it is hardly an accident that these thoughts are prompted by Yeats's "Prayer for my Daughter," which is also a plea for the good behaviour of future readers. The opening phrase—"Once more the storm is howling"—invokes the Socratic anxiety: "Rivers babbling? The roar of the sea? Thunder? Are [poets] to imitate this sort of thing?" (*Republic* III, 396). In the next stanza the poet has "heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower, / . . . and scream / In the elms above the flooded stream." The voice of the poet is silenced, subdued by the irrational noises produced by the wind. The half-rhyme of "wind" and "mind" stresses the loudness of the former, the mute inwardness of the latter. (The two words will rhyme again, in adjacent lines, in the seventh stanza, and once

more as the envelope of a quatrain in the eighth stanza.) And although the storm is not mentioned again after the first two stanzas, it remains as the surrounding sound of the prayer that commences in the third stanza with the implied second-person address: "May she be granted beauty . . . ."

To suggest that the storm has something to do with poetic inspiration is obvious enough: "Once more" echoes the opening of "Lycidas," and makes the storm no exceptional event, but a recurrence: less a summoning of inspiration than submission to the afflatus. The sleeping child is that which is to be protected from the storm, yet is also awakened, even brought to birth, by the breath, spirit, *pneuma, ruach,* a lexical cluster whose symbolic and theological imbrications are familiar (in a number of senses). We note that the child sleeps, or sleeps on, under two levels and kinds of covering, while it is the storm that is "bred" and that cannot be "stayed."

In the second half of the second stanza, the poet seems to be of a similar disposition as the storm:

> Imagining in excited reverie
> That the future years had come,
> Dancing to a frenzied drum,
> Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.

The frenzied drum mediates between the storm and the poet, the frenzy being transferred from a natural howling to a drum and dancing, subject to human agency. That transference is endorsed by the present participle "Dancing" which seems to modify either the "I"—congruent with Imagining'—or the future years. Rhetorically, the equivalent positions of "Imagining" and "Dancing" may lead one to suppose that "Dancing" also modifies "I." Grammatically, however, we must attend to the way in which "Dancing to a frenzied drum" does not follow a clause but interrupts it, and interrupts it in the middle of a phrasal verb: "come . . . out of." Such a clausal interruption requires that "Dancing" modify the future years and the way in which they come, and come out of.

"The murderous innocence of the sea" thus links the future years to the present storm "Bred on the Atlantic," and as the future years are those in which the daughter grows to womanhood, so daughter and storm are

"assimilated": the storm "Bred on"—where we might expect "bred in"—while "My child sleeps on." The abruptly registered temporality of "on"—"sleeps on" while or despite—mocks our expectation that a child sleeping under so much that is specified—"cradle-hood and coverlid"—might also have something—a cot, a mattress—to sleep on.

The prayer itself, filling the remaining eight stanzas, is concerned with the stilling of the storm, the calming of the wind, the rooting and growth of a tree where there is, now, only "Gregory's wood and one bare hill." It contests the storm, and though it displaces it, the storm has not been banished. The storm that is no longer described returns in the prophetic vision of all the storms ahead, as if that storm were an omen of a turbulent life. And it is the prophetic vision that makes this poem so extraordinary, so salient that no amount of reading can level it. For the poem's vision of its own future renders thematic future readings, and thus pre-empts the metalepsis of interpretation. To be engaged in an argument over this poem is only to form part of what the poet has prophetically seen, and, as a prophet, voiced: by an uncanny rhetorical twist, ours are the voices that have already been anticipated and appropriated. We do not interpret the words of this prophet: he has already appropriated our words, words that we had thought were yet unspoken.

The pre-empting of the reader's act of metalepsis entails the appropriation of the future by and at the present moment of writing. Among the most brazen of all such instances is in Matthew's Gospel, when we are told that Pilate was addressed by the chief priests and Pharisees in these words: "Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first" (Matt. 27:34; see also 28:13-15). Such a narrative device forestalls the very act of interpretation. One can only assent to such a narrative, in a repetition without misprision, for it allows no space, no future, in which it can be "read": any possible "misreading" of those events is already made present, given voice.

Yeats's poem makes no such claim as the Gospel passage, lays its readers under no such overwhelming obligation. But it does make its own voice

present at our re-voicing. My child sleeps on; and who are you to wake it? It is the father's (or parent's) absolute possession of, control over, responsibility for a sleeping infant that is being challenged by a reader's voicing. The moment that an infant ceases to be such, begins to articulate, is the moment of parental dispossession. As the child speaks, so the child ceases to be spoken for by the parent: the parent ceases to be the prophet for the child, as the last of the Old Testament prophets must be Simeon, holding in his arms the child over whom (or to whom) he pronounces "Nunc dimittis" (Luke 2:29-32). In the coincidence of Word and infant, there is no place for prophecy. The poet, his child sleeping still, speaks for her future which is necessarily, insofar as the father is speaking, and using prolepsis, a future in which the child remains silent. Joyce Carol Oates protests that "the poet's daughter is to be brainless and voiceless, *rooted*." Yet one cannot prophesy what another person will say, for that would be to contradict the very premise of prophecy as speech on another's behalf: the prophetic voice depends upon an other's voicelessness.

And how better to figure the voiceless than as the vegetal? Specifically as the laurel (in Greek, *daphne*) sacred to Apollo. Daphne escaped pursuit by Apollo only, in answer to her prayer, by being transformed into a tree. According to Ovid:

> Her prayer was scarcely ended when her limbs grew numb and heavy, her soft breasts were covered in delicate bark, her hair became leaves, her arms branches, and her swift feet were rooted into the ground, while her head became a treetop. Nothing of her was left, except her grace, her shining.
>
> Apollo loved her, even as a tree . . . . Then the god said, "Since you can never be my bride, my tree at least you shall be. The laurel will henceforth adorn my hair, my lyre, my quiver . . . ." (*Metamorphoses* I, 548-62)

Daphne prayed only to evade capture by Apollo, but not for a specific form of escape; this poet prays specifically that his daughter may be turned into a tree:

> May she become a flourishing hidden tree. . . .
> O may she live like some green laurel
> Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

One could argue that such rootedness is desired by the father for the daughter, not as a tyrannical form of aesthetic objectification, but as a means for her to avoid predatory men. This would bring out the wordplay in "radical innocence." A rooted fate is preferred over those fates, loose and willful, of Helen and Venus. The curse from which the father would spare his daughter is that of which the storm would be the auspice: Vulcan (or Hephaestus) is figured by metonymy as his own instrument or attribute—"an old bellows full of angry wind"—the vessel of a howling storm. The storm is still raging there, in the daughter's future, and the father prays that she shall remain protected, no longer by "cradle-hood and coverlid" but by her qualities. Given the absence of hatred and opinions, and in the presence of "radical innocence":

> She can, though every face should scowl
> And every windy quarter howl
> Or every bellows burst, be happy still.

When the mind/wind rhyme recurs, the mind is no longer the father's but the daughter's:

> If there's no hatred in a mind
> Assault and battery of the wind
> Can never tear the linnet from the leaf.

The same rhyme-pair in the following stanza is given to Venus/Aphrodite (herself named as storm-bred, or "bred on" the foam: an echo heard as "born out of" harks back to "come . . . out of"):

> Have I not seen the loveliest woman born
> Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn,
> Because of her opinionated mind
> Barter that horn and every good
> By quiet natures understood
> For an old bellows full of angry wind?

"Quiet natures" are not mute, not infant, but those which keep the mind protected from the wind. This tree is not mute, even under the figure of

a tree, for the tree is both flourishing and hidden, though the latter epithet is transferred from the linnets within it, which

> have no business but dispensing round
> Their magnanimities of sound . . . .

This laurel tree is to the poet as the bellows to Hephaestus, an attribute and a figure, metonymy and metaphor. For that which the poet wants to procreate is both another and more of the same: the poem as adjunct to the poet, and the poem as the poet himself, the poet in immortal guise, the poet as the one who makes space for no other.

Yeats wrote "A Prayer for my Daughter" in early 1919, in the wake of the set of Edward Thomas's "gift poems" that were published posthumously in *Poems* (1917), listed here by their first lines: "If I should ever by chance grow rich," "If I were to own this countryside," "What shall I give my daughter the younger," "And you, Helen, what should I give you?" It was their posthumous appearance that must then have been most moving, for each of these poems promises very little, and that, in two poems, is conditional on the clause of the opening lines. The third poem states baldly: "I shall not give her anything." The fourth poem plays with the modalities of should and could and would. What these poems so saliently give is nothing but themselves, all that remains of the poet, the father and the husband killed on Easter Monday 1917.

Also published posthumously, in 1918, is what might be called the mother of all poems-as-procreation, Gerard Manley Hopkins's "To R.B.," an agonized last poem in which the poet attempts to explain all the other poems, none of them published, which he has sent to his friend Robert Bridges. Here poetry is figured precisely as procreation, the mind as mother, and the inspiration, spur and fire, "the sire of muse," as the generative paternal principle:

> The fine delight that fathers thought; the strong
> Spur, live and lancing like the blowpipe flame,
> Breathes once and, quenchèd faster than it came,
> Leaves yet the mind a mother of immortal song.

This poem strains the bearable, and it does so with a metalepsis that defies and precludes the misreading not only of this poem but of all those that have preceded it. The sonnet limps to a close with the concession of its own weakness, relative to the earlier poems, but a concession explained in terms of its obligation to function as a key to those poems, as itself an explanation:

> O then if in my lagging lines you miss
> The roll, the rise, the carol, the creation,
> My winter world, that scarcely breathes that bliss
> Now, yields you, with some sighs, our explanation.

Has another poet, ever, deliberately concluded his entire corpus with so lame a word as "explanation"? After the harvest comes the winter yield, "yield" teetering on that semantic fence that holds "produce" apart from "surrender." We have not merely received the explanation: it has been yielded to us. Nothing more can, nor should, be demanded of the poet. Yet we can hardly find the explanation useful, if we can find it at all. The "explanation" is no explanation, but only the word: this is metalepsis of a high degree of coerciveness, whereby the reader is virtually inhibited even from declaring a lack of understanding. The mildest query will only elicit yet more sighs, in the endless enjambed "now"—the word bronchially expended not only after the line, but beyond the clause that would be complete without it—that must and will forever announce the time of each of our voicings, a time which no reading can move beyond.

Hopkins's "To R.B." is as extreme a case of metalepsis as any since Shakespeare's Sonnet 18, and quite without the latter's levity. Yeats's "Prayer" is not extreme, but is moderate even in the moderation that it celebrates. What most offends Joyce Carol Oates, and many others, is the final stanza with its consigning of the daughter into the care of a husband:

> And may her bridegroom bring her to a house
> Where's all accustomed, ceremonious . . . .

This may well be patriarchal, but it is also the moment at which the father, and the poet, relinquishes control, yields his voice to another, ceases to

pray and to prophesy, closes the poem, and silences our reading voices also. Given the ritual, the custom, that this poem celebrates and upholds, it would be strange for the father to do otherwise than to bestow his daughter on a husband. A father may prophesy for a daughter, and will always have a memory of her as infant; a husband may sometimes speak on behalf of his wife, but their two voices are distinct, and coordinated synchronically, not—as with father and daughter—diachronically. Our disapproval of certain customs and ceremonies should not obscure this fundamental distinction, at the discursive level, between a daughter and a wife.

This poem plays with the time-span of generation, with the discursive possibilities of the temporalities of procreation; it ends before, that is to say it stops short of, the discursive synchronicity of marriage. The synchronic displaces the diachronic, the time of procreation and prophecy which may be the time of poetry itself. And yet the poem, like the spreading laurel tree, stands free of the poet, created yet autonomous, metonymic yet not only an attribute, as an infant who has found speech, who has (she might say, for nobody else can) her own words now. And even the reader most solicitous, or most indignant, whether on behalf of the daughter or of the poem, finds herself with no role to play, no speech to voice, but that which has already been assigned—to the bridegroom.

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NOTES

[1]"A Time of Troubles," *New Statesman*, 23 July 1965, repr. in William Empson, *Argufying: Essays on Literature and Culture*, ed. John Haffenden (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987) 344.

[2]See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: OUP, 1973) 43.