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ARTICLES and DISCUSSION

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The Vertue of Spectacle in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*[*]

DANIEL KANE

I

In *Connotations* 6.2, Anthony Brian Taylor provides us with an excellent reading of Lucius as "the severely flawed redeemer" in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. Taylor helps the modern reader to reassess Lucius as a character who (unwittingly?) makes farce out of a conventional narrative etiquette that insists a wise ruler may finally impose order on tragic chaos. Additionally, Philip Kolin's reply to Taylor certainly—and thankfully—complicates and updates *Titus Andronicus*, if only through Kolin's praise of recent criticism that "privileges ambiguity, indeterminacy, and complexity in the script" (95). However, despite these and other fascinating discussions of *Titus Andronicus* published in *Connotations* 6.2, 6.3, and 7.1, I found myself getting oddly frustrated with what I felt was the semi-conscious refusal of all involved to read *Titus Andronicus* outside the familiar binaries of 'great art' and 'colossal failure.'

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[*]Reference: Anthony Brian Taylor, "Lucius, the Severely Flawed Redeemer of *Titus Andronicus*," *Connotations* 6.2 (1996/97): 138-57; Jonathan Bate, "'Lucius, the Severely Flawed Redeemer of *Titus Andronicus*': A Reply," *Connotations* 6.3 (1996/97): 330-33; Maurice Hunt, "Exonerating Lucius in *Titus Andronicus*: A Response to Anthony Brian Taylor," *Connotations* 7.1 (1997/98): 87-93; Philip C. Kolin, "'Lucius, the Severely Flawed Redeemer of *Titus Andronicus*': A Reply," *Connotations* 7.1 (1997/98): 94-96; Anthony Brian Taylor, "Lucius, Still Severely Flawed: A Response to Jonathan Bate, Maurice Hunt, and Philip Kolin," *Connotations* 7.1 (1997/98): 97-103.

In neither of these essays was a new aesthetic for the play to be found, one that might simply begin with a discussion of Lucius in order to more significantly suggest the possibility that young Shakespeare may have developed *Titus Andronicus* primarily as an experimental and resolutely anti-narrative *spectacle* as opposed to a carefully-plotted and reference-rich tragedy. Though Taylor could have easily provided the desired new aesthetic in the context of his argument, he did not overtly suggest Lucius was developed and *used* by Shakespeare in part to rupture or at least threaten the associations and expectations one might bring to a reading of a "tragedy." Indeed, even Kolin, who recognized the "ambiguity" and "indeterminacy" in the text, nevertheless safely maintained the status-quo dividing "great art" from "exploitation" in his insistence that *Titus Andronicus* was an "aggressively problematic political play rather than a spectacle of violence an early Shakespeare served up to gore-happy Elizabethans" (95). The division between the yahoos and the erudite is maintained in Kolin's analysis, and Shakespeare survives with his genius intact.

I want to suggest that *Titus Andronicus* completely undermines both the solidity of tragedy-as-high-genre and the intellectual divisions that are assumed to distinguish those in the peanut gallery from those in the box seats. This kind of aesthetic was in some ways hinted at (especially by Taylor) but not satisfactorily developed in earlier critical work. I am not going to defend *Titus Andronicus* from naysaysers such as the widely quoted T. S. Eliot, who almost succeeded in burying *Titus Andronicus* by describing it as "one of the stupidest and most uninspired plays ever written, a play in which it is incredible that Shakespeare had any hand at all" (67). Nor would I insist that *Titus Andronicus* is great art, as, for example, Jonathan Bate has suggested when he describes *Titus Andronicus* as "one of the dramatist's most inventive plays, a complex and self-conscious improvisation upon classical sources, most notably the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid" (3). Instead, I rather agree with Jacques Petit, a Gascon servant whom Anthony Bacon had lent to Sir John Harington as a French teacher for his young son. Petit tells of how he found "le monstre" (the spectacle) to

be the best part of Shakespeare's play: "on a aussi joué la tragédie de Titus Andronicus mais le monstre a plus valu que le sujet" (quoted in Ungerer 103).

Petit provides us with the only known record of a performance of *Titus Andronicus* before the Restoration, a performance that occurred during Shakespeare's life (1 January 1596), and was probably performed by Shakespeare's Chamberlain's Men at "the household of Sir John Harington at Burley-on-the-Hill in Rutland" (Bate 43). Bate describes Petit's reaction as valuing "the visual spectacle ('le monstre'), not the narrative substance ('le sujet')." However, in the context of Bate's attempt to prove *Titus Andronicus* as "one of the dramatist's most inventive plays," his tone regarding Petit's review is potentially patronizing. That is, Bate wants us to see how *Titus Andronicus* is as terrific as *Othello* or *Hamlet*, so if we focus on the gore (à la Petit), we miss the greatness characteristic of everything Shakespearean.

Moving away from the bind Bate and other critics have placed us in of having to justify *Titus Andronicus* via a comparison to Shakespeare's other established works, I will argue that what makes *Titus Andronicus* effective is precisely what so many critics have pointed to when dismissing the play. The play's uninhibited and sexualized use of chaotic violence and a roster of characters who are either insane, inane, immoral, amoral, perverted, or an ambiguous mixture of the above transforms *Titus Andronicus* into an anti-narrative, an extended roar, an anticipation of Artaud's Theater of Cruelty.

Titus Andronicus serves as a play that meets Antonin Artaud's requirements of a "spectacle":

> I want the theatrical performance to take on the aspect of a devouring hearth where action, situation, characters, images will reach a degree of implacable incandescence: I also want the audience when viewing my spectacle to be plunged in a bath of fire, agitated by the action and encircled by both the spectacular and dynamic movement of the work (quoted in Knapp 113). [1]

The violence in *Titus Andronicus* is so extreme that the play becomes a confrontation as opposed to an unfolding narrative. The dislocative shock attendant to witnessing *Titus Andronicus* can, if all action is

performed as Shakespeare sensationalistically designed it, supercede the individual intellectual response to the language of the play itself. After all, there are a dozen gruesome deaths performed for the sake of spectacle, and those are seasoned liberally with additional scenes of rape and cannibalism unequaled in terms of sheer number elsewhere in Shakespeare. Such an excess of viscera allows us to forget the story as we are overwhelmed and transformed by the alogical spectacle.

As director Julie Taymor recognized in her film adaptation *Titus*, the play is valuable primarily for its violent excess, its rupture of generic rules, and its sensual confusion. A review of Taymor's film properly places *Titus Andronicus* (both in terms of its screen adaptation and its life as a play) in the company of other contemporary highbrow exploitation films including Peter Greenaway's *The Cook,The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* and Jonathan Demme's *Silence of the Lambs*:

> [...] there's probably a good reason this play has never been done as a major movie before, while the Bard's confection *A Midsummer Night's Dream* shows up in multiple version: *Titus* is as gruesome as a live bullfight, filled with lopped-off hands, hacked-out tongues, rape, murder, and severed heads. The climax, which plays like *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Will Shakespeare,* finds Hopkins in full Hannibal Lecter mode as he finds a cannibalistic way to attain revenge on his foes (Daly 43).

The "gruesome" nature of both *Titus* and the other films Daly mentions exists primarily for the viewer's visual and emotional excitement—after all, no one wants to pay $9.50 to be bored. Of course, the more excessive and spectacular the violence in a given text, the more the narrative of that text gets pushed to the margins. The desire for shock takes precedence over the need for a compelling story line.

Indeed, the word "desire" is crucial here for understanding the causes for the cautious but growing acceptance of *Titus Andronicus* as worthwhile theatrical event. Desire for spectacular excess—for an abundance of violence that undermines and mocks the relevance of story—neatly parallels contemporary critical culture's increasing recognition and appreciation of the slipperiness of the signifier, the new realism of the poetic fragment, and the moral bankruptcy of

rationalism. "Desire is what exceeds the signifier. And since desire's imperatives are absolute, it also exceeds the Law, which is orthodoxy, propriety and, above all, the order of meaning" (Belsey 86). In *Titus Andronicus*, all the ramifications of what Belsey refers to as "desire" become apparent. Sexual and blood-lust determine all action in the play, from the moment when Lucius calls for the dismemberment and burning of Alarbus—"Give us the proudest prisoner of the Goths, / That we may hew his limbs, and on a pile / *Ad manes fratrum* sacrifice his flesh" (I.i.95-97)—to the obscene cannibalistic feast that comically echoes the soon-to-be "cooked" prisoner demanded earlier by Lucius: "Why, there they are, both baked in this pie, / Whereof their mother daintily fed, / Eating the flesh that she herself hath bred" (V.iii.60-62). Desire, as it is manifested (always) violently, becomes Shakespeare's alternative organizing principle in opposition to the Wizard of Oz-like delusions of conventional narrative and moral order. In *Titus Andronicus*, we do not have the tragic ending of *Romeo and Juliet*, or the comic ending of *All's Well that Ends Well*, or the stabilizing influence of the King Henry plays. Rather, a violent desire has won out, and made a mess of things.

The logically "believable" development of discreet individual characters within the play becomes overwhelmed by the enactment of unlegislated desire. "Chiron and Demetrius's glee when they rape and mutilate Lavinia is at odds with their initial protestations of love for her. Chiron's wish to 'serve' and 'deserve' Lavinia at the beginning of Act 2 contrasts dramatically with his fiendish delight at the sight of her maimed body . . ." (Ray 32). Violent spectacle transforms characters like Chiron and Demetrius into conflicting and fundamentally contradictory sites that conflate pleasure and pain, sense and nonsense, laughter and scream. Practically every character commits or assists in rape, murder, and/or torture. Even Lavinia (albeit for reasons of revenge) 'falls' when she, playing the role of perverse and fabulist young housewife, assists Titus in the killing and food-preparation of her rapists. It is this unabashed, inherently frenzied revelry in/of violence that makes *Titus Andronicus* different from all

of Shakespeare's other plays, and this is what makes relatively conservative critics agitated, especially those critics who wish to maintain Shakespeare's reputation as "the greatest." *Titus Andronicus* is Shakespeare as arch-pornographer, seducing an audience despite the fact that what is being witnessed has no convincing moral counterbalance to what is essentially a laundry list of graphic rape/murders. *Titus Andronicus* embodies what Anthony Burgess would, in the twentieth century, come to term "ultra-violence" (Burgess 2).

If we are going to read *Titus Andronicus* as a text with structure, we might conclude that what "logically" justifies the play's chaotic composition is Titus's decision to kill Alarbus, Tamora's son. However, keeping that single murder in mind as the only cause for the subsequent action, it is not hard to see why Thomas Ravenscroft said, in 1687, that "'tis the most incorrect and undigested piece in all his works. It seems rather a heap of rubbish than a structure" (quoted in Waith 1). After all, while Titus showed unimpressive leadership skills by killing a prisoner of war over the protestations of that prisoner's own mother, the results that follow are completely disproportionate to the original crime. The spectacular nature of the graphic violence—its very showiness in staging, which calls for practically all pain incurred to be explicit—tends to overshadow and devour the one scene that initiates the action. Jacques Petit appeared to share the same view of the play when he praised the spectacle over the substance.

Eugene Waith writes, "recognition of (*Titus Andronicus*'s) merits and of its close ties with other works by Shakespeare was slow to come. It has been more characteristic of the twentieth than of preceding centuries" (4). Waith's comment might suggest that *Titus Andronicus* was ahead of its time, in that it aestheticized and foregrounded violence at the expense of a developed narrative. Late twentieth and early twenty-first century audiences are now accustomed to representations of stylized violence for their own sake, particularly when the given "story" ends on a note not of resolution but of ambiguity. This type of aesthetic practice, if it has a point at all, most successfully serves as a theatrical *glamorization* of a nihilistic world-view, where violence

begets violence either without any denouement or without 'good' being done. For example, in Quentin Tarantino's film *Pulp Fiction*, atrocities are committed for a variety of barely articulated reasons, and time itself is subverted when characters we thought dead unexpectedly reappear in unannounced and unarticulated flashback sequences. The 'point' in *Pulp Fiction* seems to be pure stylization, where violence is presented as spectacle without an underlying moral message. Ultimately, *Titus Andronicus* shares in this celebration of style over substance, its style—extreme violence—proving more memorable than the story that hovers on the margins.

However, despite the apparent modernity of Shakespeare's violent theatricality, Shakespeare certainly had precedents for such an aesthetic. As has been widely noted, debts were owed to Seneca and Ovid, both for their use of extreme violence in their texts as well as for their actual story lines. As Waith writes, "Philomela's revenge would surely have recalled Seneca's *Thyestes*, where Atreus kills his brother's sons and serves them to their father at a feast of reconciliation" (36-37). The Senecan cannibalistic feast of *Thyestes* is echoed at the end of *Titus Andronicus* when Titus serves up Tamora's sons as a main course. Offended literary critics object to this excess of violence whether it is related to *Titus Andronicus* or *Thyestes*. F. L. Lucas dismisses *Titus Andronicus* in half a sentence, "Titus Andronicus, which Shakespeare probably at least worked over." Then he hits *Thyestes*: "[E]veryone is limned in the same crude oleograph colours, with the same melodramatic exaggeration. His heroes are megalomaniacs, his virgins viragos so it goes on: but we, thank Heaven, need not. The revolting sufficiently intensified becomes the ludicrous" (63). Ultraviolence as an overriding aesthetic within a text becomes a problem in the mind of a critic searching for a more sublime aesthetic experience.

The aesthetic of frenzy is maintained up until the very end of *Titus Andronicus*. We see Titus murdered shortly after he murders his own child Lavinia. Lucius is implicated as a barbarian due to his judicial decision regarding Aaron's fate:

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

Aaron himself, despite teasing us with a vision of humanity through his desire to keep his child alive, claims bombastically, "If one good deed in all my life I did / I do repent it from my very soul" (V.iii.188-89),[2] and is then promptly stuck waist-deep in mud and left to die.

Some may claim that there is resolution in *Titus Andronicus* due to the fact that Lucius becomes Emperor and secures moral retribution through the murder of Aaron. In defending Lucius against Taylor's reading, Maurice Hunt has suggested that Lucius is akin to a "gracious Christian governor" whose methods of punishment would not be at odds with his position as maximum moral leader:

> Elizabethans understood that gracious Christian governors, such as they imagined their Queen was, routinely applied death penalties for homicidal treason, often in a way that mirrored the crime. They at least would not have questioned Lucius' justice—as Taylor does (144)—in ordering Aaron to be set breast-deep in the earth until he starves to death. Shakespeare has made the notion of earth swallowing her own increase a symbolic motif of *Titus Andronicus* (e.g., V.ii.190-91), and Lucius' decorous punishment for man-killing Appetite positively concludes it (92).

In this case, Shakespeare apparently attempts to 'tie up' the play generically by providing this measure of retribution for the violence that preceded Lucius's ascension. But Lucius has been such a weak character throughout the play that there is no clear sense of how he will successfully carry out his promise to "heal Rome's harms and wipe away her woe" (V.iii.147). While Lucius is one of the few people who attempt to offer a moral alternative to the madness, he is presented in the text as, well, a kind of *wimp*. He does not commit what might be interpreted as justifiable patricide when Titus kills Mutius, Lucius's own brother. Instead, Lucius protests meekly, "My lord, you are unjust, and more than so, / In wrongful quarrel you have slain your son" (I.i.293-94). While Mutius is dead because he was willing to

put his life on the line to ensure Lavinia's happiness, Lucius only challenges Titus verbally, and weakly at that.

Lucius continues to assert allegiance to Titus throughout the play, despite the fact that Titus has killed a number of Lucius's brothers and Lucius's sister Lavinia. Additionally, Anthony Brian Taylor has noted that, beyond his failure to stand up to Titus, Lucius commits what amounts to an extensive catalog of barbaric acts throughout the play. As Taylor points out when discussing Lucius's pleasurable description of the stench of burning flesh—"Alarbus' limbs are lopped, / And entrails feed the sacrificing fire, / Whose smoke like incense doth perfume the sky" (I.i.143-45)—Lucius has displayed an excessive relishment of savagery that drags him down to the level of the other characters:

> What kind of brutal and coarse mentality is it, one wonders, that allows a man to compare the smell of burning human entrails with "incense." Moreover, the butchery Lucius is so savouring also sets a cycle of savagery in motion. Alarbus' "lopped" and "hewed" limbs signal the entry into a dramatic world where hands are chopped-off, a tongue torn from a girl's mouth, heads severed, throats slit, and events rise to a macabre crescendo when, in a bloody banquet, a mother unwittingly devours her murdered sons. (142)

Indeed, in his critique of the established readings of Lucius as a benevolent hero, Taylor rightly recognizes the near-comic anti-heroism and inherent dissonance embodied by Lucius: "It is one of the many ironies afforded by *Titus Andronicus* that it is the saviour figure who introduces the savage theme of dismemberment into the play" (142). As a result, any possibility of a peaceful and hopeful transfer of power seems ludicrous at best. That is, beyond his apparent ineffectuality as a leader, Lucius of course also has his vicious side. Sure that there will be no repercussions, Lucius kills flamboyantly under cover of righteous royal ascension. Lucius "is not merely dispensing justice: he is once again inflicting pain and agony with calculated *relish*" (Taylor 144, my italics).

Though it would, in all probability, be futile to look for a consistent political theory or for a convincing development of 'characters' in

Titus Andronicus, there are 'reasons' for the violence in this play. Again, the original act that initiated what was to become the cycle of blood, rape and terror was Titus's decision to kill Alarbus, "the noblest that survives, / the eldest son of this distressed queen" (I.i.102-03) despite Tamora's plea:

> Andronicus, stain not thy tomb with blood.
> Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?
> Draw near them then in being merciful;
> Thrice-noble Titus, spare my first-born son. (I.i.116-20)

Here we have a setup that on the surface could lead the reader/theater-goer to think "O.K., Titus is bad, Tamora is probably good, especially since she's a worried mother, so Titus will probably get his comeuppance somehow for being such a vicious victor." This prediction is certainly established, but then *Titus Andronicus* ceases to be a 'Shakespeare' play in Eliot's sense, and becomes instead a catalogue of death, rape, and dismemberment that exists for/because of itself, for its own visceral thrill. This reading is supported in a later section of the text when we see how Tamora loses all semblance of humanity. Her maternal instincts disappear due to her blood-lust as she organizes the rape and dismemberment of Lavinia:

> Remember, boys, I pour'd forth tears in vain,
> To save your brother from the sacrifice;
> But fierce Andronicus would not relent;
> Therefore, away with her, and use her as you will,
> The worse to her, the better loved of me. (II.iii.163-67)

Additionally, Tamora attempts to convince Aaron the "barbarous Moor" (II.iii.78) to kill her own child, the product of their miscegenation.

According to Bate, Titus presumably "learns (some)thing about love" when Lavinia is maimed (2). Bate is determined to insist that "to understand *Titus Andronicus* thus is at once to perceive its proximity to *King Lear* and to apprehend the difference between a slasher movie and a tragedy" (2). But Bate is again assuming clear objective differ-

ence between the structures of sensationalism and 'high art,' thus idealistically positioning *Titus Andronicus* as one of Shakespeare's 'Great but Misunderstood' dramas. However, he tends to neglect it as an unbelievably disturbing and effective piece of ultra-violence. Titus certainly did not learn "anything about love" in terms of his relationship with Lavinia—after all, he killed her. And he did this not out of some benevolent duty to save her from the horrors of living as a cripple, with the shame of rape coding her every move. Rather, Lavinia's death was necessary for the sake of style, to complete the list of perversions underpinning the final orgy of violence by adding infanticide to Titus's relationship with his daughter.

II

When *Titus Andronicus* is willfully sensationalistic—then where is the evidence that Shakespeare himself wanted the play to be considered in such a light? Perhaps, examining *Titus Andronicus* as a work of wholly sadistic (and historically progressive) pornography may help to answer this question.

In *Titus Andronicus*, allusions to nature as a whole serve to center our gaze on violent enactments of genital sex. This occurs not just through action—i.e., the outdoor rape of Lavinia—but through more discreet language such as Marcus's insistent use of nature-metaphors to describe the violent results of Lavinia's rape:

> [...] Why dost not speak to me?
> Alas, a crimson *river* of warm blood,
> Like to a *bubbling fountain* stirred with *wind*,
> Doth rise and fall between thy *rosèd* lips (II.iv.22-24, my italics)

as well as "Blushing to be encount'red with a *cloud* (II.iv.32), "those *lily* hands" (II.iv.44), and so on. Cloud, flower, water, wind—pastoral tropes are co-opted into ironic gothic horror-show jokes.

In *Titus Andronicus*, as in *As You Like It* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare uses the forest as a metaphor where nature's

'wildness' contaminates the actions of the characters. However, where in the above-mentioned plays 'wildness' is exhibited mostly by humorous confusion over shifting gender identity and an increased awareness of sexuality,[3] the forest in *Titus Andronicus* is precisely a space where "desire can be acted out: Tamora comes to make love to Aaron, Chiron and Demetrius rape Lavinia" (Bate 7). The forest is not potential playground but scene of horrors. As Titus recognizes, the forest is "Patterned by that the poet [i.e. Ovid] here describes, / By nature made for murders and for rapes" (IV.i.57-58), and, as Marcus bemoans, "O, why should nature build so foul a den, / Unless the gods delight in tragedies?" (IV.i.59-60).

This use of nature as pornographic and violent performative space had its origins in myth. The main allusion in the love scene between Tamora and Aaron is to Dido's hunting and lovemaking in *The Aeneid*. Additionally, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* shares with *Titus Andronicus* "hunting scenes (that) meticulously parallel scenes of seduction" (Wilbern 164). Nevertheless, Shakespeare's use of nature was far more exploitative, obvious, and shocking compared to his literary predecessors. Sexuality variously evokes or is invoked by violent fantasies. For example, when Tamora meets Aaron in the grove, she tells Aaron

> We may, each wreathed in the other's arms,
> Our pastimes done, possess a golden slumber,
> While hounds and horns and sweet melodious birds
> Be unto us as is a nurse's song
> Of lullaby to bring her babe asleep (II.iii.25-29)

The "hounds and horns" that Tamora speaks of relate to the hunt that they are ostensibly in the forest for in the first place. Blood-sport and bird twitter are transformed into synonymous phrases evoking sexual pleasure:

> Hunting and sexuality are traditionally connected in myth and literature, as well as by the common word "venery." These sexual undertones are intensi-

> fied by the fiendish plans of Tamora's sons, whose hunt is not for the usual game: "Chiron," Demetrius tells his brother, "we hunt not, we, with horse or hound, / But hope to pluck a dainty doe to ground" (Willbern 164-65).

As we can see, the metaphoric language of *Titus Andronicus* is unmistakably carnal, providing Elizabethan audiences with pornographic allusions free from legislative control. This language involves everyone in *Titus Andronicus* on a primarily violent—and wholly sexualized—level. Indeed, what characterized Elizabethan pornography was "a language not of lascivious delight but of sexual scatology—of slime, poison, garbage, vomit, clyster pipes, dung, and animality—that emerges connected to images of sexuality in the vocabulary of Iago and his brethren" (Boose 193). *Titus Andronicus* fits into what Boose's description of Elizabethan pornography is, not by presenting explicit sexual acts on stage—which would have been censored—but rather through a highly metaphorical use of language centered on gruesome *violent* acts, particularly the language describing the Pit.

The sexual metaphors related to the Pit (II.iii) are so obvious as to be almost comical—the scenes in and around the Pit perform a by-now-typical contemporary repositioning of violence as oddly funny. *Titus Andronicus* names the Pit/woman's genitals in the grossest terms:

> a 'subtle hole', 'Whose mouth is covered with rude-growing briers / Upon whose leaves are drops of new-shed blood', 'the swallowing womb / Of this deep pit' where the dead Bassianus lies 'bathed in maiden blood.' 'This detested, dark, blood-drinking pit', 'this gaping hollow', 'the ragged entrails of this pit': the language becomes darkly obsessive, evocative not only of death and hell but also of the threatening female sexuality that is embodied in Tamora. There is a suggestion of Lear's disgust at what he calls the 'sulphurous pit' of women's genitals (Bate 8-9).

The metaphor of the vagina as disgusting and dangerous, taken to an extreme in Shakespeare's faux-disguised description of the Pit, advocates a horrific *and* attractive vision of female sexuality that continues to resound in pornographic texts today. For example,

phone-sex services with ad-copy including "My Wet Twat Can Take Any Cock!" or "I'm Open and Waiting For You" serve as contemporary examples of attaching pleasing/horrific associations—one is both welcomed into the Pit and consumed by it—to the vagina.[4] These associations are clearly set up by Shakespeare in his characterization of the Pit/vagina as a monstrous, all-consuming object into which men disappear.

As the genitals demarcate the center of our bodies (i.e., they are in the "middle" area between torso and legs), so the Pit is both physically and psychologically in the center of the text. "The dark forest with the pit at the center becomes a major dramatic symbol upon which the play turns" (A.C. Hamilton, quoted in Willbern 170). When Lucius sees Lavinia after she has been raped, "he is understandably frightened by her. She presents a grim image of the dangers of sexuality, and a constant visual reminder of the bloody pit at the deepest core of the play" (Willbern 170). The Pit, and its attendant meaning as vagina, is the main attraction. A spectacular female ogre swallows up all order (narrative, moral, and rational).

The only crime *not* visibly staged in *Titus Andronicus* is the rape of Lavinia. After Bassianus is murdered and thrown into the Pit, the stage directions read *"exeunt Chiron and Demetrius with Lavinia"* (II.iii.186). Only after Titus and Saturninus arrive at the Pit and after Tamora successfully lays the blame for the murder on Titus's sons do we see the three characters again: *"Enter the Empress' sons, Chiron and Demetrius, with Lavinia, her hands cut off, and her tongue cut out, and ravished"* (II.iv). This is, in a sense, the most sexual part of the play. Sex and violence come together so seamlessly in the act of the *implied* off-stage rape that the on-stage action around the Pit becomes a sexualized prelude and addendum to the rape itself. Every movement hints at what we as spectators were not allowed to see. *Titus Andronicus* becomes a tease, a radical and gory strip-show.

Even before her actual rape in the woods, Lavinia endures a more benevolent abduction when she is taken by Bassianus from Saturninus and her father. Titus later refers to this incident as a "rape," and Bas-

sianus replies, "Rape you call it, my lord, to seize my own" (I.i.404-06). This incident "not only prefigures Lavinia's actual ravishment; it also suggests the unconscious equation of marriage and rape, sexuality and violence, which permeates the play" (Willbern 163). Again, the violent sexuality in *Titus Andronicus* is suggested, arousing the audience-members while not wholly satisfying them due to the play's legal inability to stage rape.

The techniques of titillation continue after the rape when Lavinia's uncle makes her put a stick in her mouth, which, besides alluding to a penis, also serves to continue the perverse tease; in a slow and agonizing manner, Lavinia uses the stick to write the word *stuprum* (rape). Moments like this—at one point Lavinia puts Titus' hand in her mouth, which is "as wounded as her genitals" (Bate 36)—seem "to reenact her rape in a way that oppressively reinscribes her absence from the sphere of articulation and action" (Rowe 282). Lavinia is a "speechless complainer but a bodily presence. Her body is at the centre of the action, as images of the pierced and wounded body are central to the play's language" (Bate 36). Her rape is manifested repeatedly for our horror/pleasure. Over and over again, we are given the opportunity to imagine what we cannot see.

Titus Andronicus echoes both the current highbrow exploitation flick as it conforms to Artaud's desire for a Theater of Cruelty that is a populist "mass spectacle," a "total theatrical experience," which "must furnish real subjects which emanate from man's dreams: crime, eroticism, desire for utopia, cannibalism" (Knapp 113). It is not surprising that as the twentieth century progresses into the twenty-first century, productions of *Titus Andronicus* increase in both their number and their willingness to stage horrors *realistically*. As Alan Dessen writes, "an age that takes for granted violence and brutality on television and in the cinema may finally be ready for the tragedy of blood" (1-2). In the place of 'great meaning,' Shakespeare gives us a pornographic spectacle that has the potential to complicate conceptions of the Bard as Deity, as exemplar of high intellectual taste and, ultimately, of the very values we attach to the definition of 'great art.'

Titus Andronicus becomes a play to revel in, to throw up over, and to be seduced by.

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NOTES

[1]All Artaud quotations are found in Knapp.

[2]Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent references from the play are taken from Waith's Oxford Shakespeare edition.

[3]In *As You Like It*, the Arden forest serves as a room for cross-dressing, and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the forest leads to human identity itself being usurped, i.e. Bottom turning into an ass, sexual affection readministrated, intimations of bestiality between the fairy queen Titania and the ass.

[4]Ads found among the back pages of *Penthouse* Magazine (June 1995).

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Verse Satire: Its Form, Genre, and Mode

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My view of genre does not allow me to classify what is often called satire as a genre; rather it is verse satire (or prose satire) that is a genre. Genre implies a form (or structure) in which a work of literature is presented and a set of compositional (or constituent) characteristics which distinguishes it from some other genre.[1] The term "genre" implies both genre and subgenre, the former simply being the bigger umbrella for various kinds of subgenres, though we call them simply genres on occasion. At times, of course, an example of a subgenre may take on some of the characteristics of another subgenre. For example, for Milton's sonnets to Edward Lawrence and to Cyriack Skinner the genre is lyric, the subgenre is sonnet, and these specific sonnets take on some of the earmarks of the verse epistle, although they should not be classified generically as verse epistles. A pertinent example to clarify these distinctions between the genre verse satire and a poem that is satiric but *not* of the genre verse satire is the beast fable. When we talk of the beast fable, we are implying a narrative of one main episode employing animal characters and pointing a moral; often it is stanzaic. Because of its characters it may impinge upon the supernatural or at least the improbable. The best fable may be satiric, but it is not a verse satire; nothing cited just now applies to verse satire, which is not narrative, does not employ animal characters, does not point a moral although a moral lesson may be inferred, and is usually not stanzaic. The satiric in the beast fable may arise from its use of irony or ridicule, and it probably exhibits a critical attitude on the part of the author. The critical attitude may be directed against a single person, a community of people, a physical action by a person or a community,

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an attitude or pattern of thought of some person or some community. Unfortunately, however, the word "satire" has been used for such literary works as the beast epic that are satiric only, becoming, thus, for most literary critics, a generic term. But this label is erroneous as genre if it does not partake of a specific form (and structure) and a specific set of compositional characteristics. It would be less confusing to use the term "verse satire" or "prose satire" for the genre (rather than just "satire"), which as Alastair Fowler has reminded us, is always substantive, and the term "satiric" for the mode, which is always adjectival.[2]

Something like the beast fable or an epigram is not a verse satire, though they may be satiric, because they do not take a specific form of verse satire, no matter how variously that form may be viewed, and they do not take on its compositional characteristics. Rather the major compositional characteristic of each is not associated with verse satire; that is, the use of animals as characters for the beast fable and the compression of thought into a terse statement for the epigram are not associated with the genre verse satire. While the authorial stance of a verse satire offers a critical attitude, it does not load the poem as *genre* to lead the reader to a predetermined conclusion, as argument (often found in something like the beast fable) does. Rather it may exonerate the recipient of the criticism (person or community), it may condemn the recipient, it may imply desired change (or reform), or it may imply the futility militating against change. The author of a poem that is a verse satire presents substance from a critical, questioning position. Once that author has loaded the poem to create an argument siding one way or the other, a mode has been established. The satiric mode, common but not always in evidence in verse satire, aims at a certain effect from its reader and may define the author's siding with one belief or another. The intention of verse satire is to raise a question from a critical point of view and even at times with a jaundiced point of view, but the poem deals only with issues and offers that substance to be evaluated by the reader. The satirist, like any literary artist, does control and direct that evaluation: while the author may pretend to be

giving objective factual information, what is included and what is not included and the arrangement of contents will always de-objectify and misrepresent that information. Unless the satiric has entered by way of authorial direction by exaggeration, understatement, or distortion, the verse satire has not taken on a satiric mode. None of this is subtle, for the poet and the reader agree that the representation is not factual. There cannot, then, be a moral lesson or a desirable alternative to the condition criticized in the poem inherent in the genre: the moral lesson and the desirable alternative may be inherent in the substance presented, but until the question is skewed—that is, until the modal enters—the poem as verse satire has not forced their acceptance by the reader.

My remarks will be clearer in looking at some specific examples. The distinction I am advancing may seem oversubtle, but I think it goes to the heart of the problem of how to read and evaluate specific poems and authors and to the heart of the problem of definition, which then becomes the basis for critical evaluation. My remarks agree with Northrop Frye's basic comment on verse satire:

> Second-phase satire shows literature assuming a special function of analysis, of breaking up the lumber of stereotypes, fossilized beliefs, superstitious terrors, crank theories, pedantic dogmatisms, oppressive fashions, and all other things that impede the free movement of . . . society.[3]

But what I am urging is a distinction from what James Sutherland called "satire," by which he clearly meant the genre, and "the satiric," which is what he was actually talking about:

> The satirist, for his part, is putting a case, and to put it effectively he magnifies, diminishes, distorts, cheats: the end with him will always justify the means. Satire is not for the literal-minded. It exists on at last two levels, the overt and the implied.[4]

Sir Thomas Wyatt's verse satire, entitled in *Tottel's Miscellany* in 1557, "Of the Courtier's Life Written to John Poins," has no stanzaic divisions in the first printed text.[5] The issue raised is the difference

between the court life and the country life, an active life with engagement of political maters and a noninvolved sedentary life. It is a very common theme both before and after Wyatt wrote. While the I is Wyatt and the poem would seem to have been written when he was in exile in Kent after having been in prison (perhaps around 1537), it sets forth the two modes of existence without necessarily urging one or the other on Poins, or his reading audience. We may discern regret with his not being able to lead the active courtier's life and thus some forced view of the goods which the country existence can provide, we can interpret a critical stance in the I's unhappiness with what the usual court association entails, but the poem is not loaded to make Poins reject court life for himself, nor to try to persuade him to leave and follow a country life. The relationship of the poem with the *beatus ille* theme (that is, "the happy place") is certain, but it is different from that in a number of ways, in this regard by raising the criticism of the court life. That critical stance is one element that removes this poem from lyric; the I's *sæva indignatio* ("raging indignation" over something) in his epitomes of court life is clear. Wyatt has controlled and directed the reader by his choice of materials and their arrangement, but he has not unbalanced the case in any strong display of satiric mode. We see what is wrong with the courtier's life, but if we take the I's position we would pursue it if these vicious situations were changed or if we are able to sublimate them (as apparently Poins can), or we understand what can be happy in the country life, if we pursue or even are forced to pursue that existence. The poem is not, that is, particularly satiric, even though it is a verse satire.

Its form as a verse satire is a series of terza rima stanzas, which could have ended before they did or which could have continued on with additional stanzas. It proceeds through a relational or logical arrangement of one item (one comment, one point of discussion) following another. It has a linear structure without definitive length. It deserves the label "satire" because it fits the etymological description afforded by *satura*: the basket of fruits or such implies the artifact of the poem which is filled up with a mixture of items, all related by

some category of subject. As genre it does not illustrate Frye's further analysis that two things are essential to satire: wit or humor founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd; and an object of attack. These do not impinge on Wyatt's poem except in what can be inferred as unhappiness with the kind of court life that existed under Henry VIII. What Frye's analysis defines is the satiric, the mode. Nor does it fit Gilbert Highet's comment (better applied to late seventeenth-century examples of the satiric): "Satire becomes the art of finding crushing or piercing antithetical contrasts."[6] While the antitheses are there in Wyatt's poem, the nature of the treatment of those antitheses avoids the satiric.

Wyatt's poem, as is well known, is a contemporized paraphrase of Luigi Alamanni's tenth satire, "A Thommaso Sertini," written in terza rima. The Italian sixteenth-century authors who wrote verse satires are numerous, and their verse form was usually either terza rima or ottava rima. Alamanni (1495-1556) wrote thirteen satires in terza rima; Lodovico Ariosto (1474-1533), seven satires in terza rima; Francesco Berni (1497?-1535), thirty-two satires (or Capitoli) in terza rima: Lodovico Paterno (perhaps born in 1560), seven satires in terza rima, four in ottava rima, and five in unrhymed alexandrines.[7] In the poem which Wyatt follows, Alamanni rejects "le gran Corti homai" and "l'alte soglie" with less implication than Wyatt that he feels regret; rather he seems happy to follow "le lunghe uoglie / Con le mie Muse in solitario loco." Only here can he find "pace uera" without "Avaritia, e livor."[8] While the political and religious life of the world of Rome may offer rewards, avarice and envy are so great that he is glad to be in Provenza where ignorance and fear are held in check. There is criticism here, but there is no attempt at persuasion; there are further illustrations of corruption that could be made, we feel sure, had the author continued, as well as further country joys. The verse satire is satire, but it is not particularly satiric.

In his third satire to Annibale Malagucio, Ariosto also explores the courtier's life with Duke Alfonso of Ferrara, but concludes that he is better off here for "life at court . . . is slavery alone," not "something

grand." He does not wish to travel to Scythia or India or Ethiopia; he has been throughout Italy and "Questo mi basta" ("these are enough for me"). He makes clear that were he in Rome the Pope, a former close friend, would advance others, relatives, or would exhibit a short memory or even if the Pope gave him all he has deserved "tanti anni i' sparsi" ("for his many years, spread over time"), would he then be satisfied? The poem is certainly a verse satire, but it is even less modally satiric than Alamanni's: while Ariosto presents contrastive lives, making neither continuingly attractive, he has offered justification for his decision with vituperation, without raging indignation. The form and structure and critical stance categorize the poem as verse satire, but the satiric element is not strong.

On the other hand Berni's caustic capitoli have brought forth their own adjective, Bernesque, implying anti-Petrarchan verse through their realistic images. Petrarch is also satirized, poked fun at. One of the capitoli to Ieronimo Frascatoro, for instance, parodies Petrarch's lines in *Trionfo d'Amore*—rejoicing in beasts rather than the court, whereas Petrarch rejoices in what he sees; and addressing "il prete grazioso, almo e gentile," and noting that a bedspread makes a tower of another bed, exclaims, "Come fortuna va cangiando stile!" in allusion to Petrarch's poetry.[9] The ridicule introduced and the parody provide another characteristic often common to the satiric mode, though they are not an element in the verse satire.

Edward Hake's "Newes Out of Powles Churchyarde" is "a dialogue between Bertolph and Paul as they walk in the aisle of the cathedral, overheard by the poet," in eight verse satires. The setting is specific and open to view; the walking down the aisle is in accord with taking up this subject and then that subject, as the verse satire proceeds linearly; the dialogue could have begun before Bertolph and Paul began walking down the aisle, and it could have continued except that they have come to the altar rail. Among the topics pursued (titles of the various individual but continuingly related poems, which together supply some of the "newes" that people have been gossiping about) are "Tricks and practices of physicians," "Protest against using

Paul's as a place of Assignation," "Against covetousness and usurers." The verse form is poulter's measure, linearly presented as one item leads to another, with the author making remarks and quoting the dialogue. The first satire on "Sir Nummus [who] has taken up with bishops and deans, rather then industrious and conscientious ministers" sets up the frame of location and situation. The subject of the satire is the discrepancy between men of religion, the prelacy engaged in "fraude and filthy wyle," and true ministers of the people, poor but dedicated. This contemporary issue of the reformed church was to continue and be a main cause of its sectarianism; the universal issue of venality is seen not only through the superiors of the church but in the person of Sir Nummus, whose name means a coin or money. "He lodgeth ofte with Marchauntmen / and eke with men of Lawe."[10] The first satire begins:

As late I walked vp and downe,
in Powles for my repast,
And then (as many woont to doo)
About the Church had traste
Long tyme alone to view the rowte,
And great confused noyse,
With pleasaunt chat (a world to see)
At length I heard a voice.

It ends with Paul speaking:

And thou therefore didst promise mée
thy silent eare to giue.
And yet thou interruptst my tale.
Howe should I thee beleue?
Of friendly faith attende a while,
And marke me as the ende:
Then shalt thou thinke that I disclose
To thee as to a friende.

And so the second satire starts with Paul continuing, "As promise presseth me to show / my minde to thee at large," and he turns to impugn the corruption and partiality of judges and the cupidity of

attorneys. In all, Hake's satires illustrate well what I describe as verse satire; they also contrast strongly with Wyatt's three satires in their satiric mode. Hake is forcefully indignant about "Abuses of apothecaries and surgeons, etc.," and the effect he wishes from his reader is wariness of apothecaries and surgeons, and recognition of the fraud they may perpetrate on their clients for financial gain. The "newes" from St. Paul's tends toward the sermonic with the last satire in the voice of the author only. It looks back on covetousness and usurers, and warns of the way in which time is infected with sin and "the raumping Serpents guile," "Sathans force." As a marginal gloss contends in a variation of St. Paul's well-known admonition: "the canker of couetousness is cause of all evill."

As Hake says in a preliminary poem on "The Noueltie of this Booke": "now no daye doth passé without / some new devised crime." The underlying sense of what would be praised is the only fictive reform to be drawn from these poems. Peter Medine has shown the rhetorical pattern of *laus* and *vituperatio* that underlies satiric impulses.[11] Where Hake stresses *vituperatio*, we infer what is praiseworthy (its opposite). That same kind of *laus* can be drawn from Alamanni's and Wyatt's poems, although their displacement of the vicious life by the good life reduces the kind of satiric invective found in Hake.

In contrast is the work of Thomas Lodge. In *A Fig for Momus*, published in 1595, he offers five satires in the Horatian manner, but with content and detail drawn from Juvenal and occasionally from Persius. He was one of the first to use the Latin satirists as models, although Thomas Drant had written about Horace and employed him in *A Medicinable Morall* in 1566,[12] and Wyatt had employed Horace's sixth satire from the second book in "Of the meane and sure estate written to John Poins" and perhaps the fifth satire from the second book in "How to use the court and him selfe therin, written to syr Fraunces Bryan." Lodge's poems rest on observation. He observes folly but without *sæva indignatio*; though he gives words of counsel, they are not didactic, but forensic.[13] They set up a dialogue of one, an I, but he

is not Thomas Lodge and his addressees are really fictions. Further, he employs the iambic pentameter couplet as form. The form becomes the standard for such satirists as John Donne, Joseph Hall, Everard Guilpin, John Marston, and thus their descendents in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In his first satire, "To Master E. Dig" (that is, Digbie), Lodge opens with:

> Digbie whence comes it that the world begins,
> To winke at follies, and to sooth vp sinnes?
> Can other reason be alleadged then this,
> The world sooths sinne, because it sinfull is?

The I of the poem is not reacting to some personal situation that has touched him: he is observing only that "wicked men repine their sinnes to hear, / And folly flings, if counsaile tuch him neare." The author's lack of directing his audience and ignoring of reform are seen in lines near the close:

> What ere men doe, let them not reprehend:
> For cunning knaves, will cunning knaves defend.

His fourth satire to a "deere friend lately given over to couetousnesse" is also not personal, citing such reports as "They say one horse may beare thy houshold stuffe, / Where for thy coyne three carts are not enough" or "They say thy wives cast kertle is become / A paire of breeches to enskonce thy bum." Lodge moves to direct counsel ("If these be true, reforme them; if vntrue, / Take them for warnings what thou shouldst eschue"), but the aim and expectation is not reform. He has left "decision" up to his reader-jury. His satires are devoted to their existence as artifacts, not as indictments. They offer jaundiced observations of life, which can be balanced by "A lowlie life" and "A mind that dreads no fal, nor craues no crowne."

Formal verse satire, then, has a form—in Italian of the sixteenth century it is usually terza rima, in English of the later sixteenth century it is usually the heroic couplet; a structure—a linear progression of items presented seriatim with loical or topical relationship, although

is concerned with the evaluation of the verse satire against the work of others on the basis of the first four suggestions for an aesthetics noted just before, primarily the fourth; the craft. When the displacement between the poet and the poem is lessened, as in John Donne's fifth satire, the result may be less successful and less satiric. When the critic expects a dominance of the satiric to imbalance the poem and lead to a clearly didactic moral statement (a false expectation), the verse satire may be judged inept, as Donne's first satire has been—although I emphatically disagree about the interpretation of that poem.[14] It is manifest that I am in total disagreement with such a statement as Wesley Milgate's "The great defect of so-called formal satire is that it is not a form at all, but a mode of approach; the satirist is encouraged to stray at random from one topic to another."[15] The correction of such misguided statements lies in recognizing the form, genre, and mode of Renaissance (as well as later) "verse satire."[16] The slant on satire presented in this discussion—the generic and the modal—should lead to rereadings and reevaluations of such as Donne's second satire, which is not bifurcated into two topics; such as his third satire, which should not have the couplet (96-97) concerning four people important to religious affairs of the sixteenth century pulled out of position to epitomize the whole; and such as his fourth satire, which, while long, is not disorganized.[17] At the same time, this differentiation of generic and modal indicates that Donne's "Upon Mr. Thomas Coryats Crudities" is satiric but not a verse satire, even though it is written in heroic couplets: here we have wit and humor and an object of attack.

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NOTES

[1]See John T. Shawcross, *Intentionality and the New Traditionalism: Some Liminal Means to Literary Revisionism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1991) esp. 26-31, 57, 148-49.

[2]See Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982).

[3]Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957) 233.

[4]James Sutherland, *English Satire* (Cambridge: CUP, 1958) 20.

[5]*Tottel's Miscellany (1557-1587)*, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, revised ed. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1966), vol. 1.

[6]Gilbet Highet, *The Classical Tradition* (New York: OUP, 1949) 317.

[7]See Luigi Alamanni, *Versi e prose*, ed. P. Raffaelli (Firenze: le Monnier, 1889); Ludovico Ariosto, *Opere Minorie*, ed. Cesare Segre (Milano: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1954); *Opere di Francesco Berni, Nuova edizione reveduta e corretta* (Milano: Edoardo Sonzogno, 1877); *Rime di M. Lodovico Paterno, Distinte in qvattro parti* (Venetia: Appresso Giovan' Andrea Valuassori, 1560).

[8]Rough translations of the Italian: "he great courtier's life," "the eminent court," "the distant longing in solitude with only my Muse," "true peace," "avarice and envy."

[9]Rough translations of the Italian: "the charming priest, kindly and noble," "just so does fortune accompany changing writing style!" For Francesco Petrarca, see *Rime, Trionfi e Poesie Latine*, ed. F. Neri, G. Martellotti, E. Bianchi, N. Sapegno (Milano: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1951).

[10]This is the fourth satire; lines 2 and 7 accuse them directly of "hooking" Nummus, who appears also in the sixth poem, to their hands. But Paul, as the poem ends, is clear that "protesting styll / I touch no good man héere, / . . . For sure I am that many just, / and men upright remaine." See *Newes out of Powles Churchyarde. Now newly renued* (London: [1579]).

[11]Peter Medine, "Praise and Blame in Renaissance Verse Satire," *Pacific Coast Philology* 7 (1972): 49-53.

[12]*The Complete Works of Thomas Lodge* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), vol. 3, reprint of *A fig for Momus* (London, 1595), and Thomas Drant, *A Medicinable Morall, That is, the Two Books of Horace his satyres, Englyshed* (London, 1566), reprinted by Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints (Delmar, NY, 1972). For Horace, see *The Complete Odes and Satires of Horace*, ed. Sidney Alexander (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999). See also Drant's *Horace His arte of Poetrie, pistles, and Satyres Englished* (London: 1567). In "Priscus Grammaticus de Satyra," he writes: "A *Satyre* is a tarte, and carping kinde of verse, / An instrument to pynche the prankes of men, / And for as much as pynching instruments do perce, / Yclept it was full well a Satyre then. / . . . The Satyrist loues Truthe, none more then he, / An vtter foe to fraude in ech degree." Drant's translations of Horace's satires are in poulter's measure (fourteeners).

[13]By "forensic" I mean a case is presented against a person or idea (persons or ideas) for the reader-jury to adjudge favorably or disfavorably. Action is past and is to be weighed by the evidence presented (that is, each item presented seriatim); future action (such as reform) is not its aim.

[14]It involves a débat between body and soul, pleasure principles and serious intellectualism; see "All Attest His Writs Canonical: The Texts, Meaning and Evaluation of Donne's Satires," 245-72 in *Just So Much Honor,* ed. Peter A. Fiore (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP,1972).

[15]*John Donne: The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters,* ed. W. Milgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) xxiii-xxiv.

[16]Comparison, for example, of E. E. Cummings's satiric sonnet "Next to of course God America" (which lampoons politicos on the stump seeking election) and his verse satire "Poem, or Beauty Hurt Mr. Vinal" manifests the significance of differentiating verse satire and the satiric, and recognizing the form and linear progression of items presented one after the other (emphatically *not* randomly) in the latter poem. It shows *sæva indignatio* towards the kind of effete poetry and poetical aesthetic that Harold Vinal represented in the 1920s in his own poetry and especially in his moribund anthologies. The truly "beautiful" in poetry is rejected, Cummings is accusing Vinal and his ilk of doing, because "according / to such supposedly indigenous / throstles Art is O World O Life / a formula." Cummings's scatological labeling of such formula-ridden verse underscores his aesthetic evaluation but allows the reader to decide whether *his* poetry (even in its "vulgar" images—in both meanings) deserves poetic consideration. See E. E. Cummings, *Complete Poems 1904-1962,* ed. George J. Firmage (New York: Liveright, 1991) 228-29.

[17]It is based on Horace's "Ibam forte Via Sacra," *Satires* I, 9.1.

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The Turn of the Screw, King Lear, and Tragedy

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Discussion of Henry James's *Turn of the Screw* remains stubbornly inconclusive, and recent criticism has turned away from traditional disagreements about the story (the question of whether the ghosts are real, for example) towards the view that James's novella is a deliberate trap for exegetes, a work which "uses its blanks to undermine all attempts to establish relations and to join references into a coherent pattern."[1] James did write stories in his late period which seem to defy stable interpretation—*The Spoils of Poynton* and *The Sacred Fount* come to mind—but he wrote many more throughout his career in which careful reading allows us to judge the reliability and the integrity of the narrator or point-of-view character, and *The Turn of the Screw* is in this latter category. A previously unnoticed allusion in the novella provides valuable clues about the theme and the function of the frame narrative in James's famous ghost story.

Late in the novella, when the governess has determined that Miles took and opened her letter to his uncle, there occurs this curious exchange:

> I felt that the cause was mine and that I should surely get all. "And you found nothing!"—I let my elation out.
> He gave the most mournful, thoughtful little headshake. "Nothing."
> "Nothing, nothing!" I almost shouted in my joy.
> "Nothing, nothing," he sadly repeated.[2]

Even if we grant the governess's excited state and James's fondness for antiphonal repetition, this is a remarkable passage: six "nothings" in four lines of dialogue. It seems clear to me that this exchange is

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meant to remind the reader of another, more famous dialogue full of pregnant "nothings."

> *Lear:* . . . What can you say to draw
> A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.
> *Cordelia:* Nothing, my lord.
> *Lear:* Nothing?
> *Cordelia:* Nothing.
> *Lear:* Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.[3]

On the face of it, there is little in common between the situation of Miles and the governess and that of Cordelia and Lear. The play depicts a family and political conflict, while the novella does not; the sexes of adult and child are reversed; the immediate issue is quite different; and the governess is delighted by Miles's response, while Lear is enraged by Cordelia's. But on closer examination there are a number of ways in which *The Turn of the Screw* parallels *King Lear* quite closely, and I believe that James makes the allusion to suggest those parallels. The narrative impetus of *Lear*—what James would call the "spring"—is Lear's desire to be the sole object of his daughters' love, and his inability to accept the fact that Cordelia loves him according to her bond, "no more nor less" (I.i.93). The central drama of *The Turn of the Screw* is essentially the same: the governess's desire to be assured of Miles's and Flora's love and the destructive effects of her obsession, effects which leave her, in the last scene, clutching Miles's dead body much as Lear, in the last scene of Shakespeare's play, holds the body of the daughter whose death is ultimately his fault.

This view of the story, in which the reality of the ghosts is essentially beside the point, has as its focus the governess's attempt to "possess" Miles and Flora, to own them emotionally, and sees her fears of ghostly "possession," of haunting, as those of someone who fears a rival. The governess has, of course, always had her critics. In 1966, for example, Gorley Putt argued that Miles and Flora "could live with bad memories, or even with bad ghosts, but not with her. She is

no protectress, but a vampire. She is the most dangerously self-deluded, and Miles the most pitiful victim, of all James's long list of emotional cannibals."[4] It is not fashionable to put the case so bluntly, but Putt's brief reading, less than two pages in its entirety, focuses persuasively on the theme of emotional tyranny or engulfment, one of James's perennial concerns. The statement that the governess is "the most dangerously self-deluded" of James's characters, however, requires some qualification. That she is self-deluded at the time of the story's events cannot be questioned; even if the ghosts are real, the governess is deluded about her motives in "protecting" the children. But it seems clear that she *subsequently* attains a very full realization of what she has done, and that this realization is implicit both in her narration of past events and in the frame which James's narrator provides for her story. Here, again, *King Lear* becomes a valuable model in our reading.

The elaborate narrative frame of *The Turn of the Screw* is one of the most complex in English fiction since *Wuthering Heights.* What we hear is an unnamed narrator's report of a week spent at a country house, in the course of which a man named Douglas, after describing his boyhood relationship with the governess, reads the narrative which she wrote years after the events at Bly and confided to him before her death. What we hear, then, is coming to us third-hand, and it is necessary to ask why James—who, so far as I know, never employed the device again—constructed so complex a setting for his story.

The most significant feature of the frame narrative is Douglas's description of the governess as "'a most charming person,'" "'the most agreeable woman I've ever known in her position . . . worthy of any whatever'" (636-37; Prologue). It is apparent, unless we suppose Douglas to be unreliable because of his confessed love for her, that the governess was a different woman after leaving Bly. Oscar Cargill, one of the few critics who has attempted to explain the frame narrative, suggested in 1963 that the governess, fearing a return of her madness,

wrote her account to explain to Douglas why she could not return his love.[5] This is indeed a plausible explanation, but it is important to be clear about what the madness of the governess is: it is not seeing ghosts which do not exist, as Cargill suggests, but an inability to control her emotions once they are aroused, and a consequent tendency to destructive possessiveness in her relationships. Her highly emotional nature is apparent in her interview with the children's uncle, "such a figure as had never risen, save in a dream or an old novel, before a fluttered, anxious girl out of a Hampshire vicarage" (639; Prologue). With the uncle, her feelings are kept in check by the social difference between them, her awe of him, and his stipulation that she not trouble him about anything; but at Bly, where she is accountable to no-one, her desire for love and her possessiveness quickly assume pathological proportions.

As Douglas approaches the story itself, he reveals that the governess had been in love, and another guest, Mrs. Griffin, asks, "'Who was it she was in love with?'"

> "The story will tell," I took upon myself to reply.
> "Oh, I can't wait for the story!" [said Mrs. Griffin.]
> "The story *won't* tell," said Douglas; "not in any literal, vulgar way." (637; Prologue)

The clear implication is that the story *will* tell about the governess's love, but in an indirect and unvulgar way, as we would expect from a Jamesian heroine. The uncle, her employer, does not figure in the governess's own narrative, and it is logical to conclude, there being no other candidates, that she was in love with the children. She implies as much in her first descriptions of Flora, "the most beautiful child I had ever seen" (642; I) and the "incredibly beautiful" Miles, whom she sees "in the great glow of freshness, the same positive fragrance of purity . . . in which I had . . . seen his little sister" (650; III).

The frame narrative suggests that she writes the story to convey to Douglas, who is ten years younger than she and the age Miles would have been had he lived, her knowledge that she is incapable of ma-

ture, non-possessive love. A genuine tragic heroine, she has achieved enlightenment and self-awareness at a terrible cost, and is reintegrated with the moral world whose order she has violated. *King Lear* not only provides a clue about the theme of James's story, then, but a framework for interpretation of it as a classic tragedy of belated insight. Lear, restored to sanity after a period of madness, recognizes his former demand for all of Cordelia's love as unreasonable and renounces the world, imagining his and Cordelia's prison as a monk's cell (V.iii.8-19). The governess, after Miles's death, experiences a similar recovery and recognition. She renounces any hope of marriage and ultimately explains to Douglas, though not in any "literal, vulgar way," that there are greater obstacles between them than the differences in age and social class.

Unlike Lear, she has the opportunity to tell her own story, and in the telling of it she provides many indications that she is well aware of what actually happened at Bly. Because the governess's narrative is retrospective, it is crucially important to recognize the double perspective at work in it. Even at the time of the story she is aware of her excessive hunger for the children's love, but conceals from herself its full extent and its effects on her behaviour. In retrospect, knowing the consequences of that hunger, she judges herself far more harshly for her actions. With very few exceptions, critics have been unwilling to acknowledge the possibility that the governess might be deluded at the time of the story and clear-sighted at the time of writing; they have consequently been unable to see the frequent shifts of perspective in her narration. Here, for example, is an instance of her awareness at the time of the story:

> There were moments when, by an irresistible impulse, I found myself catching them up and pressing them to my heart. As soon as I had done so I used to say to myself—"What will they think of that? Doesn't it betray too much?" (679-80; IX)

At other points in her narrative, the governess gives us her more severe and anguished self-appraisal at the time of writing, without

any indication that it occurred to her at the time of the story, as when she says, "I was like a gaoler with an eye to possible surprises and escapes" (699; XIV).

Particularly as she writes the last sections of the story, her feeling is quite candidly that she and Miles were opponents, fighting in effect for the boy's soul. The name Miles derives, of course, from the Latin *miles* (soldier), and part of the horror of the story is that a child of ten should be forced to fight for his life. Referring to the stolen letter, the governess says, "I can't begin to express the effect upon me of an implication of surrender even so faint" (734; XXIII), and she characterizes herself and Miles as "fighters not daring to close" (735; XXIII). In the next section, she exults in "the desolation of his surrender" when he confesses why he was expelled from school, and describes herself as "blind with victory" (738; XXIV). The word "surrender" occurs a third time in the climactic paragraph of the story when Quint has appeared and Miles is unable to see him. After first guessing that the governess is seeing Miss Jessel, Miles says, "'It's *he?*'"

> I was so determined to have all my proof that I flashed into ice to challenge him. "Whom do you mean by 'he'?"
>
> "Peter Quint—you devil!" His face gave again, round the room, its convulsed supplication. *"Where?"*
>
> They are in my ears still, his supreme surrender of the name and his tribute to my devotion. "What does he matter now, my own?—what will he *ever* matter? *I* have you," I launched at the beast, "but he has lost you forever!" (740; XXIV)

Miles's "supreme surrender of the name"—that is, his submission to the governess's demand to hear it—is the final victory of her personality over his, and quite naturally also the moment of the boy's death. The chilling vocabulary of ownership ("'My own,'" "'*I* have you'") reinforces the horror of the scene, as do Miles's last words. It is obvious that he still cannot see Quint, and his words "'you devil!'" are addressed to the governess, a last protest and indictment before he dies. The governess faithfully records, years later, his implied accusation that she attempted to "possess" him as a devil would, and the fact

that the effort of resisting her is what killed him: "We were alone with the quiet day, and his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped" (740; XXIV).[6]

Knowing what she has done, the governess sees herself retrospectively as monstrous in her attempts to control the children and coerce their love. When Miles confesses that he wants to be "'let [...] alone,'" the governess drops to her knees beside his bed and seizes "once more the chance of possessing him" (712; XVII). The choice of word after the fact, here and elsewhere in her narrative, is not accidental, and it is fitting, then, that the governess should see herself as the real ghost in the story, the being who truly haunts the children's lives. She has no real awareness of this at the time, and is appalled when Flora says to Mrs. Grose, "'Take me away, take me away—oh, take me away from *her!*'" (721; XX). But in retrospect she herself draws attention to the fact that at four points in the narrative (in IV, XV [twice], and XX) she takes the place of one of the ghosts or vice versa.[7] In the first of these scenes, the governess's vision of Peter Quint outside the dining-room window is immediately re-enacted when she pursues him, stands where he stood, and frightens Mrs. Grose.

> She saw me as I had seen my own visitant; she pulled up short as I had done; I gave her something of the shock that I had received. She turned white, and this made me ask myself if I had blanched as much. She stared, in short, and retreated on just *my* lines, and I knew she had then passed out and come round to me and that I should presently meet her. I remained where I was, and while I waited I thought of more things than one. But there's only one I take space to mention. I wondered why *she* should be scared. (659; IV)

The last sentence concludes the section, and is rather like a teacher's leading question in class. The governess, a true Jamesian as well as a teacher, will not state the obvious conclusion outright, but seeks to lead Douglas to it, as James seeks to lead us to it. The ghosts in the story represent the unacknowledged evil of the self, a fragment of the perceiver's personality, like the shadow-self that Spencer Brydon encounters in James's story "The Jolly Corner."

Another clue of the same type occurs in section XVIII when Miles plays the piano for the governess. "David playing to Saul could never have shown a finer sense of the occasion," she comments (713). It has been noted by some commentators that in the biblical passage alluded to (1 Samuel 16:14-23), Saul is possessed by an evil spirit, usually glossed as madness.[8] What is far more telling is the fact that the governess, a clergyman's daughter, could not make such an allusion casually; she is fully aware in her retrospective narrative of what she is saying about her mental state at the time. She is also aware that Saul makes repeated attempts to kill David, and does in fact slaughter the priests of Nob (1 Samuel 18-22).

These indirect self-indictments are replaced, later in the story, by more overt suggestions of the governess's depravity. In the last scene, having determined that what Miles did at school—the reason for his expulsion—was perhaps not so terrible after all, she asks herself a question which is again directed to Douglas by the governess, and to the reader by James:

> I seemed to float not into clearness, but into a darker obscure, and within a minute there had come to me out of my very pity the appalling alarm of his being perhaps innocent. It was for the instant confounding and bottomless, for if he *were* innocent, what then on earth was I? (738-39; XXIV)

The answer, by this point, should be obvious, and if we need something more than the governess's own apprehension that Miles is innocent, it is surely to be found in the fact that Douglas, four days after first mentioning the story on Christmas Eve, finally reads it on December 28th, the Feast of the Holy Innocents.[9] This highly indirect allusion (the feast is not mentioned by name) is James's reinforcement of the governess's sense of her own role. The feast day not only suggests the children's innocence, but also associates the governess with the tyrannical Herod, who fears displacement by another king as the governess fears displacement by the ghosts, and who is responsible for the Innocents' deaths. Like the governess's reference to herself as a Saul-like figure, this parallel implies that she is a murderess.

The stages of the governess's degeneration are as subtly conveyed as we would expect in a work by James. The story's twenty-four sections trace the changes in her perception of the children. Phrases like "angelic beauty" (643; I), "the deep, sweet serenity . . . of one of Raphael's holy infants" (644; I) and "they were like . . . cherubs" (657; IV) appear with regularity in the first half-dozen sections, contributing to our sense of the governess's enthusiastic character in the religious terms which come naturally to her. Her capacity for religious analogies, however, is part of her undoing, for she comes to conceive of herself as the children's saviour. Her messianic delusions begin in section VI:

> I had an absolute certainty that I should see again what I had already seen, but something within me said that by offering myself bravely as the sole subject of such experience, by accepting, by inviting, by surmounting it all, I should serve as an expiatory victim and guard the tranquillity of the rest of my companions. (665; VI)

When it becomes clear that the children do not particularly want her protection, she decides that they have been won over by the enemy; as she says to Mrs. Grose in section XII, "'Their more than earthly beauty, their absolutely unnatural goodness. It's a game . . . It's a policy and a fraud'" (692; XII). It is surely a sign of the governess's disordered mind that beauty and goodness can now be seen as evidences of depravity. This is the central section of the novella (the thirteenth of twenty-five sections, counting the prologue), and here the die is cast; from this point onwards the governess will not really see the children at all, but a kind of Manichaean symbolic drama in which she, as "expiatory" Christ, will redeem the souls of the wholly corrupted children, whether they want to be saved or not. In section XVIII—this element in the story seems to proceed by sixes—she has no qualms about leaving Miles alone and exposed to the possible apparition of Quint. "'I don't mind that now,'" she says to Mrs. Grose (715), and she doesn't mind because her conscious plan to save the

children is, by this point, simply a pretext. The would-be protector and saviour has become the master and jailer in a Sade-like struggle of wills which is enacted, appropriately enough, in a country house.

The climax of the story in section XXIV brings together the various threads of imagery and theme which have been discussed. When Peter Quint appears, the governess compares him to "a sentinel before a prison" (736); she, of course, is the guard within, and has earlier referred to herself as a "gaoler with an eye to possible surprises and escapes" (699; XIV). It is now that she obtains Miles's "supreme surrender of the name," now that she cries "'*I* have you,'" and now that Miles dies, the victim of his self-proclaimed protector.

Let us suppose that we have by this point a coherent reading of James's novella which sees it as a tragedy of possessiveness, emotional manipulation, and the protagonist's eventual recovery. This reading makes sense of the frame narrative and of the allusions to 1 Samuel and the Feast of the Holy Innocents in the tragic context suggested by the allusion to *King Lear;* it is, moreover, consistent with James's view of human relations and his horror of those who use people, consciously or unconsciously, for their own ends. This is a theme which unites stories and novels as different as "The Pupil," "The Beast in the Jungle," "The Aspern Papers," *The Bostonians* and *The Wings of the Dove.* What this reading does not do, of course, is to settle the question of the ghosts' existence. I have already indicated that this is not the focus of James's interest, but it remains an issue in the story even if we see the ghosts as the governess's doubles and rivals. Within the narrative, one piece of evidence argues most strongly for the objective reality of the ghosts—the fact that the governess, who has never heard of Peter Quint, is able to give Mrs. Grose a description of the male apparition which the housekeeper recognizes immediately as that of the dead valet (662; V). Critics who argue that the governess is seeing things can dispute even this evidence, but to the common reader it is fairly convincing.

There are three ways of getting at the ghosts' reality which go beyond the novella itself. The first is to look at James's use of ghosts in other stories. James in fact wrote quite a number of ghost stories—Leon Edel's edition of them is a good-sized volume—and the ghosts in these stories are generally real. They obviously serve symbolic and thematic functions, like the ghost of Spencer Brydon as he might have been in "The Jolly Corner," but they are also real ghosts, a fact which suggests that the spirits of Quint and Miss Jessel are genuine, too. The second approach is through James's notebook entries on *The Turn of the Screw* and his preface to the story in the New York Edition.[10] Both make clear that James thought of the ghosts as quite real, though "anti-ghost" critics argue, predictably, that James's phrasing is ambiguous.

The third, and certainly most ingenious, argument was put forward by Donal O'Gorman in an exhaustive article on James's possible sources.[11] Looking at the name "Peter Quint," O'Gorman sees it as meaning just what it says: Peter 5. There are two epistles of Peter in the New Testament, but 2 Peter can be eliminated because it only has three chapters. The eighth verse of 1 Peter 5 is the famous injunction, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (KJV). O'Gorman connects this with the "devilish" description of Quint that the governess provides (peaked eyebrows, red hair, etc.) and to James's admission in his preface that Quint is more than a ghost, *i.e.* that he is a goblin or demon.[12] The somewhat *recherché* thesis of O'Gorman's article is that the governess is possessed by the Devil.[13] O'Gorman helps to establish the reality of Quint, but unfortunately misses the real point of the allusion to 1 Peter 5; it is not that she is possessed by the Devil, but that she is Devil-like in her attempt to possess the children, and projects that attempt onto the ghosts. It seems clear, too, that the *whole* of the chapter is relevant to our reading of *The Turn of the Screw.* The second verse, for example, reads thus: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by

constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." The governess has certainly been willing—all too willing—to supervise the spiritual welfare of her charges, and the verse suggests her devotion to the absent uncle, God the Father to her self-appointed Christ. The fifth verse also seems chillingly apposite in its reminder of the governess's demand for Miles's "surrender": "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder." It is part of the governess's tragedy that she did not heed the warning in the rest of the verse against authoritarianism, the admonition to "all of you" to "be clothed with humility." If she can take comfort from anything in 1 Peter 5, it is the suggestion in the tenth verse that her recovery is permanent: "But the God of all grace . . . after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you"—a passage which brings us back to Douglas's assertion that the governess when he knew her was "'worthy of any [position] whatever'" (636-37; Prologue).

The governess's survival is in fact the principal feature of *The Turn of the Screw* which sets it apart from Shakespearean tragedy, in which the protagonist dies in the catastrophe he has precipitated. The most obvious reason for this difference is that the religious and political assumptions of the Renaissance were no longer applicable at the end of the nineteenth century, but I believe that James spared the governess for another reason. In Shakespeare's major tragedies, the protagonist's self-recognition comes quickly towards the end of the play and is soon followed by his death. James was aware that self-recognition is not always this immediate, and that the consequences of dire acts and self-awareness are not invariably fatal. In *The Turn of the Screw,* James allows the governess to do what Shakespeare's protagonists never can—to tell her own story—and to give her readers, both Douglas and ourselves, a remarkable double picture of herself at two periods in her life. In doing this, James makes her not only the protagonist of the story proper but the real heroine of the frame narrative, who performs a renunciation characteristic of his late fiction. While retaining many of the features of traditional tragedy, James re-defines

it for his purposes here as a drama of developing consciousness with ultimately positive results for the governess.

To summarize: James's allusion to *King Lear* is important as a clue to the thematic, situational, and structural parallels between *The Turn of the Screw* and Shakespeare's play: the genesis of the plot in the desire for exclusive love, its tragic issue in the death of a child, the protagonist's eventual recovery from the madness of "possession," and her achievement of mature self-knowledge. A recognition of the parallels between play and novella helps to correct the errors of previous criticism and reinforces other evidence within the story—evidence which makes clear that the governess, as retrospective narrator, is writing a carefully crafted indictment of her earlier self and actions.[14] James's interest here, as always, is in human relationships rather than ghostly machinery. Quint and Miss Jessel are real (or, as James might say, real enough), and they may, as Freudian critics have argued, "menace" Miles and Flora with information about sexuality—information which threatens the pre-adolescent world of the nursery and the governess's hold over the children. But Quint and Miss Jessel are no more the subject of James's novella than river navigation is the subject of *Heart of Darkness.*

The word "nothing," with which we began, recurs with obsessive frequency throughout *The Turn of the Screw.* Some critics of James's novella have argued that the word signals the non-existence of the ghosts: there is "nothing" in her narrative but her own delusory imaginings. Recent criticism views the word as evidence of the story's radical inconclusiveness: nothing is certain, all is self-deconstructing interpretation, and James is a postmodern writer. As I mentioned at the beginning, there are works by James which prefigure the postmodern, but *The Turn of the Screw* is not one of them. It is perhaps the supreme ghost story in literature, and gains an added dimension of horror when we see the children menaced not by the ghosts but by their self-appointed guardian. It is also a brilliant example of the mystery story—the more brilliant, we might say, for leaving the

mystery entirely to the reader to solve or not to solve. In his 1908 preface to the story, James says that his story is "a piece of ingenuity pure and simple, of cold artistic calculation, an *amusette* to catch those not easily caught (the 'fun' of the capture of the merely witless being ever but small), the jaded, the disillusioned, the fastidious."[15] Those not easily caught, but caught nevertheless, include most of the novella's critics for a hundred years.

It seems likely that James, in repeating the word "nothing" throughout *The Turn of the Screw*, was echoing *King Lear* as he did in referring to the play's opening scene. In Shakespeare's tragedy, the word "nothing," which occurs throughout the play in various contexts, anticipates and finally symbolizes Lear's experience of chaos during his madness on the heath. Having violated the laws of nature by dividing his kingdom and disowning Cordelia, Lear as "unaccommodated man" must face and finally understand the void he has opened up (III.iv.101). In *The Turn of the Screw*, the governess must endure a similar experience of vacancy, a dark night of the soul, in order to come to self-knowledge. It seems wholly appropriate that Henry James, writing his own tragedy of egoism, possessiveness, and recovery, should have referred in so many ways to *King Lear*, the greatest treatment of the theme in our language.

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NOTES

[1]T. J. Lustig, *Henry James and the Ghostly* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994) 116. Extracts from Lustig and other critics are reprinted in Deborah Esch and Jonathan Warren, eds., *The Turn of the Screw: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1999). Other recent critics who take the same line as Lustig include Tzvetan Todorov (Esch and Warren, 193-96) and Shoshana Felman (Esch and Warren, 197-228).

[2]Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*, in *Complete Stories: 1892-1898* (New York: Library of America, 1996) 737; section XXIV of the story. Since so many editions of the novella are in use, subsequent references will include the section number as well as the page reference to this standard edition. The first, unnumbered section will be referred to as the Prologue.

[3]William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (I.i.85-90) in Alfred Harbage, ed., *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969). Subsequent parenthetical references are to this edition.

[4]Gorley Putt, *Henry James: A Reader's Guide* (Cornell: Cornell UP,1966) 398-99. Cf. Marius Bewley: "There is nothing more pathetic in James's works than the way the children make a valiant but foredoomed attempt to escape her tyranny." *The Complex Fate: Hawthorne, Henry James and Some Other American Writers* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1952) 107.

[5]Oscar Cargill, "*The Turn of the Screw* and Alice James," *PMLA* 78 (1963): 238-49. Leon Edel also attempts to explain the frame narrative in *The Psychological Novel, 1900-1950* (New York: Lippincott, 1955).

[6]As Putt points out, James's story "The Pupil" ends with a similar death; Morgan Moreen, faced with impossible tensions in his relationships with his parents and his tutor, "can only make the ultimate withdrawal of himself in death" (348).

[7]Juliet McMaster has drawn attention to this repeated reversal of locations and its relation to images of reflection—physical and mental—in the story. "We may think of the glass either as a transparent medium through which real ghosts can be seen, or as a mirror in which the governess sees, essentially, only her own reflection." McMaster concludes that the ambiguity of the story is "total and deliberate." See Juliet McMaster, "'The Full Image of a Repetition' in *The Turn of the Screw*," *Studies in Short Fiction* 6 (1969): 377-82.

[8]Cargill was the first critic to note this detail.

[9]Robert M. Slabey points out the use of the feast day in "The Holy Innocents and *The Turn of the Screw*," *Die Neueren Sprachen* 12 (1963): 170-73, but does not draw out its implications regarding the governess. There is a possible ambiguity in the chronology; the narrator says that "the manuscript . . . reached him [Douglas] on the third of these days and . . . he began to read to our hushed little circle on the night of the fourth" (638). If we count days from the beginning of the story on Christmas Eve, Douglas begins to read on the 27th, but it seems clear that we are to count from the day mentioned in the first sentence of the paragraph—the 25th. In either case, Douglas's reading takes more than one evening (641) and includes the 28th.

[10]Henry James, *Literary Criticism: French Writers; Other European Writers; The Prefaces to the New York Edition* (New York: Library of America, 1984) 1173-91; see especially 1181-89.

[11]Donal O'Gorman, "Henry James's Reading of *The Turn of the Screw*," *Henry James Review* 1 (1980): 125-38 and 228-56.

[12]James, *Literary Criticism* 1187.

[13]See O'Gorman 241.

[14]In a letter to Caroline Tate (9 November 1952), Flannery O'Connor seems to anticipate this line of interpretation: "I've also just read *The Turn of the Screw* again and to me it fairly shouts that it's about expiation." *Collected Works*, ed. Sally Fitzgerald (New York: Library of America, 1988) 899-900.

[15]James, *Literary Criticism* 1184-85.

Connotations
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A Response to "*Dracula* and the Idea of Europe" by Eleni Coundouriotis*

CAROL A. SENF

While I don't agree with everything that Professor Coundouriotis says about *Dracula* in her essay, I am deeply appreciative of the fact that her reading of the novel within the context of the Eastern Question initiates a new way of reading Stoker's multi-faceted and enigmatic novel. All students of the novel will eventually owe her a debt of gratitude for a reading that both builds on existing criticism of *Dracula* and opens a new way of exploring the novel. The first generation of psychoanalytic readings opened up *Dracula* to serious scholarly attention and were continued by both feminist responses and science studies readings.[1] Somewhat closer in spirit to what Coundouriotis is doing here are interpretations that examine the novel as a response to colonialism or to the sensational trial of fellow-Dubliner Oscar Wilde.[2]

Although she is not the first to refer to the Eastern Question,[3] Coundouriotis is the first to center her reading of *Dracula* on this issue. Quoting Michael Valdes Moses, who observes 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"[4] Coundouriotis concludes her essay—correctly I might add—by noting that her reading "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" (153).

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*Reference: Eleni Coundouriotis, "*Dracula* and the Idea of Europe," *Connotations* 9.2 (1999/2000): 143-59.

Building on existing criticism, Eleni Coundouriotis develops a comprehensive reading of Dracula in terms of "the Eastern Question" and provides yet more grist for the *Dracula* mills that now seem to have almost as many incarnations as does the practically immortal count himself. She opens her essay by pointing out that our contemporary "interest in the politics of *Dracula*—whether they pertain to Ireland, class conflict, gender, or empire—acknowledges the historical relevance of the novel" (142) and by referring to her research into the problem. She recognizes that readings of *Dracula* "should not overlook the significance of eastern Europe" because Stoker's notes indicate that "he always had Eastern Europe in mind" (144).

Examining material in Stoker's life, Coundouriotis suggests a variety of reasons that Stoker would have been interested in Eastern Europe. Among these is his admiration for English Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone, who wrote a pamphlet in 1876 on the Turkish massacres of Christians in Bulgaria, a pamphlet that reminded its readers of history. A second is the experiences of his brother George who served as a medical officer in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78. Perhaps most obvious, however, is the ongoing discussion of British policy in the decades preceding the publication of *Dracula*, a discussion that Coundouriotis summarizes for readers who ignore it because their orientation is toward Western Europe and the Western Hemisphere rather than toward the East. All of this information is important not only for our understanding of Stoker's novel but also because it demonstrates Stoker's awareness of a region that the West continues to ignore at its peril.[5]

Among the obvious strengths of the essay is the author's awareness of the historical situation that confronted England during the years immediately before Stoker wrote *Dracula*. She goes on to argue that the "actual historical context of the novel informs its discursive delegitimation of history" (144), an argument that she bases largely on Stoker's depiction of Dracula. It is at this point that I would like to suggest a slightly different direction or at least one that "reads" Dracula in a different way. Rather than identify the vampire as a

hybrid "both Christian and Ottoman" and therefore "monstrous and ultimately incoherent, a source of history that . . . needs to be silenced" (144), I suggest that readers also look at Dracula as a remnant of a primitive and warlike past that was being replaced during Stoker's lifetime with something more scientific and democratic. Coundouriotis opens her essay with a quotation from *Dracula* (". . . and the glories of the great races are as a tale that is told") but ignores the passage that precedes it:

> The warlike days are over. Blood is too precious a thing in these days of dishonourable peace; and the glories of the great races are as a tale that is told. (29-30)

Her essay also ignores numerous references to a past that seems entirely alien to the multiple narrators of *Dracula*. For example, Jonathan Harker's diary reminds the reader that Dracula is the paradigmatic hunter whose raised hand calms the wolves, and the civilized Harker describes the pleasure that Dracula takes in the hunt and in shedding blood, behaviors that are indicative of a more primitive culture. Indeed, Harker describes Dracula's dwelling as a "vast ruined castle" (14), a tangible relic of the distant past.

In addition, Coundouriotis's reading depends too much on drawing an "analogy between Dracula and the idea of Europe" (152) when it is unclear exactly how much Stoker actually knew of the historical Vlad.[6] Coundouriotis also draws an unnecessarily specific connection between Dracula and a single historical figure "Grand Vizier Abdul Aziz who ruled from 1861 until May 1876 when he was deposed" (154) because he committed suicide after being deposed and folklore presents vampires as suicides. There are, however, numerous causes of vampirism, and Emily Gerard, one of Stoker's sources, lists a number of them:

> More decidedly evil, however, is the vampire, or *nosferatu*, in whom every Roumenian peasant believes as firmly as he does in heaven or hell. . . . The living vampire is in general the illegitimate offspring of two illegitimate persons, but even a flawless pedigree will not ensure anyone against the intru-

> sion of a vampire into his family vault, since every person killed by a *nosferatu* becomes likewise a vampire after death.[7]

There is no mention here of suicide.

My few quarrels with Professor Coundouriotis are not meant to detract from her interesting and informative essay, however, nor to deny that she has turned over a new leaf in scholarship on the novel. Certainly both her interpretation and the extensive bibliography on which it is based should encourage all readers of *Dracula* to consider the degree to which Stoker was influenced by the Idea of Europe when he wrote the novel.

Indeed, looking at the rest of Stoker's oeuvre confirms that Stoker was deeply concerned with Eastern Europe, an area to which he returned in *The Lady of the Shroud* (1909).[8] The settings of *Dracula* and *Lady* are unlike the settings of his other novels in that they are not based on locations with which he was intimately familiar.[9] While the majority of Stoker's fiction depends on his careful depiction of the geography and the cultural history of places where he had traveled or lived, such is not the case with the two novels set in Eastern Europe. Widely traveled in the United States, Western Europe, and the United Kingdom, Stoker had never been to either Romania or Albania.[10] The two novels are thus anomalous works in many ways, their settings based not on close observation but on library research and imagination.

In *The Origins of Dracula*, one of the most informative studies of the research that Stoker put into *Dracula*, Clive Leatherdale observes:

> Stoker never went to Transylvania. All the information on that country that appears in *Dracula* can be traced to the notes he made from the handful of books on his source-list. These books, in the main, were written by British official servants—soldiers, administrators, or their wives. The portraits they present share many features: implicit belief in British superiority; irritation at minor inconveniences; a patronising desire to effect change; and a degree of racism—particularly anti-semitism—that might take the modern reader by surprise. (97)[11]

It is clear from his notes on *Dracula* that Stoker was thinking of Eastern Europe when he wrote the novel, and I am grateful to Arata for being the first to reveal to me the immediate political context, a context that I find far more relevant to *Lady* than to *Dracula*. In fact, I am inclined to agree with Judith Wilt's observations about *Dracula*:

> It is interesting to think of *Dracula* as a kind of subterranean comment on, presentiment about, "The Eastern Question" in the last Victorian decades. But the truth is that *Dracula* is far more about religion and sex than about politics. (622-23)

Moreover, the Eastern Europe that Stoker imagines in *Dracula* is not the region of his own day. Instead, it is a mysterious region—an embodiment of the past, more mythic than real.[12]

Twelve years later, however, Stoker presents a markedly different picture of Eastern Europe, a picture that conforms more closely to Arata's analysis of *Dracula*. While *Lady* opens with another vampiric figure, the novel rapidly abandons Gothic mystery to explore a technological Utopia complete with airplanes, submarines, armored yachts, and the most recent methods of wresting wealth from the earth. Ultimately, the novel concludes with the hopes for a Balkan Federation, which, if it had actually materialized, would have solved a number of the problems associated with that troubled region at the turn of the century and would have prevented the "Powder Keg of Europe" from erupting into World War I. Indeed *Lady* seems overwhelmingly committed to a vision of a technologically and scientifically sophisticated future, as Harry Ludlam noted in his biography of Stoker.[13]

Even more important to his vision of a progressive Eastern Europe than the technological marvels is Stoker's political vision. For example, he makes Rupert a Constitutional monarch,[14] a decision that may have been determined by his familiarity with the United Kingdom and its monarch, Victoria.[15] While it remains for Rupert, as Constitutional monarch, to bring about a better future, Stoker reminds his readers of the region's immediate past. In fact, a letter from Roger

Melton to Rupert specifically mentions the "Balkan struggle" of '90 (32)[16]:

> Greece, Turkey, Austria, Russia, Italy, France, had all tried in vain. . . . Austria and Greece, although united by no common purpose or design, were ready to throw in their forces with whomsoever might seem most likely to be victor. Other Balkan states, too, were not lacking in desire to add the little territory of the Blue Mountains to their more ample possessions. Albania, Dalmatia, Herzegovina, Servia, Bulgaria, looked with lustful eyes on the land, which was in itself a vast natural fortress, having close under its shelter perhaps the finest harbour between Gibraltar and the Dardanelles. (33)

The Land of the Blue Mountains is, of course, Stoker's ficionalized utopia, literally a "nowhere" but a nowhere that incorporated many of Stoker's hopes for the future. In fact, Glover notes that *The Lady of the Shroud* presents "Stoker's liberal utopia in its fullest, most developed form" (52). Glover also places *Lady* into the context of other fin-de-siècle literary utopias (53), suggesting that the difference in the two novels may be due to literary influence, with *Dracula* being a Gothic tale and *Lady* a utopian, a distinction that is confirmed by the fact that *Dracula* is shrouded in magic and mystery while *Lady* is full of technological detail.

Although Stoker may well have been influenced by other literary works, it is equally possible to assume that the differences in the two novels also stemmed from his political vision. There are, for example, remarkable similarities between Stoker's Ireland and Eastern Europe at the turn of the century. Just as Ireland had been dominated by England, Romania (and the rest of Eastern Europe) had been dominated by more powerful expansionist empires, including the Ottomans, Czarist Russia and the Hapsburg Empire. Like Ireland, Romania also differs from her near neighbors, being the only descendant of the Eastern Roman stock; the Romanian language, together with French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, is of course one of the major heirs of the Latin language. And both regions had suffered great violence over the centuries at the hands of their powerful neighbors.

For example, Dracula describes to Jonathan Harker the world of medieval Transylvania:

> Why, there is hardly a foot of soil in all this region that has not been enriched by the blood of men, patriots or invaders. In old days there were stirring times, when the Austrian and the Hungarian came up in hordes, and the patriots went out to meet them—men and women, the aged and the children too—and waited their coming on the rocks above the passes, that they might sweep destruction on them with their artificial avalanches. (21)

In *Lady*, Roger Melton writes to Rupert, explaining that the Land of the Blue Mountains had been subject to similar invasions:

> For centuries they had fought, with a fervour and fury that nothing could withstand or abate, attacks on their independence. Time after time, century after century, they had opposed with dauntless front invading armies sent against them. This unquenchable fire of freedom had had its effect. One and all, the great Powers knew that to conquer that little nation would be no mean task but rather that of a tireless giant. Over and over again had they fought with units against hundreds, never ceasing until they had either wiped out their foes entirely or seen them retreat across the frontier in diminished numbers. (33-34)

Such conflict between a small invaded territory and a larger invading one is similar to the relationship between Britain and Ireland as it is described, for example, by Arata (119). Well aware of the differences between his primitive homeland and his technologically advanced adopted country, Stoker suggests in *The Snake's Pass* that English financial backing and technological sophistication could correct the damages done by previous invasions. In *Dracula*, invasions are brutally suppressed while *Lady* suggests that invasions are largely a thing of the past because the tiny Land of the Blue Mountains is capable of using technology to protect itself. Having repulsed the Turkish invaders, Rupert emphasizes the promise of a Constitutional Monarchy and a democratic federation, made even more progressive by advanced science and technology. Thus, unlike *Dracula*, where past and present are constantly at war, *Lady* presents the union of past and present, which is demonstrated in both the individual and the nation.

For example, if Dracula embodies the primitive past, Rupert St. Leger manages to combine what is best from the past with the best of the present. This union is especially clear in his abilities as a warrior. Rupert manifests "the Berserk passion which he inherited from Viking ancestors, whence of old came 'The Sword of Freedom' himself" (149) and bears "himself as a Paladin of old, his mighty form pausing for no obstacle" (153).

Furthermore, instead of hoarding everything for himself and oppressing those who are weaker, as Dracula is inclined to do, Rupert plans to share both wealth and technological power:

> My own dream of the new map was to make 'Balka'—the Balkan Federation—take in ultimately all south of the line drawn from the Isle of Serpents to Aquileia. There would—must—be difficulties in the carrying out of such a scheme. Of course, it involved Austria giving up Dalmatia, Istria, and Sclavonia, as well as part of Croatia and the Hungarian Banat. . . . Each of these integers would be absolutely self-governing and independent, being only united for purposes of mutual good. I did not despair that even Turkey and Greece recognizing that benefit and safety would ensue without the destruction or even minimizing of individuality, would . . . come into the Federation. (240-41)

Thus, *The Lady of the Shroud* ends with the promise of a brighter future and an image of an Eastern Europe that is freed of its primitive, warlike past.

Stoker's return to Eastern Europe in *The Lady of the Shroud* confirms that Eleni Coundouriotis is absolutely correct in focusing her reading of *Dracula* on the Idea of Europe, and that is a reminder that readers of *Dracula* should consider more carefully the social and political context of Stoker's world. I am grateful to her solid reading of the novel and to her exploration of the history of Eastern Europe in Stoker's day.

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NOTES

[1]Psychoanalytic readings include Joseph S. Bierman, "*Dracula*: Prolonged Childhood Illness and the Oral Triad," *American Imago* 29 (1972): 186-98 and Phyllis A. Roth, *Bram Stoker* (Boston: Twayne, 1982). Feminist studies include Stephanie Demetrakopoulos, "Feminism, Sex Role Exchanges, and Other Subliminal Fantasies in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," *Frontiers* (1977): 104-13; Gail B. Griffin, "'Your Girls That You All Love are Mine': *Dracula* and the Victorian Male Sexual Imagination," *International Journal of Women's Studies* 3 (1980): 454-65; and Carol A. Senf, "*Dracula*: Stoker's Response to the New Woman," *Victorian Studies* 26 (1982): 33-49. Studies of science and technology in *Dracula* include Troy Boone, "'He is English and Therefore Adventurous': Politics, Decadence, and *Dracula*," *Studies in the Novel* 25 (1993): 76-91; John Greenway, "Seward's Folly: *Dracula* as a Critique of 'Normal Science,'" *Stanford Literature Review* 3 (1986): 213-30; Rosemary Jann, "Saved by Science? The Mixed Messages of Stoker's *Dracula*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 31 (1989): 273-87; and Jennifer Wicke, "Vampiric Typewriting: Dracula and Its Media," *ELH* 59 (1992): 467-93.

[2]Studies of *Dracula* as a response to imperialism include Stephen D. Arata, "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization," *Victorian Studies* 33 (1990): 621-45; Patrick Brantlinger, "Imperial Gothic: Atavism and the Occult in the British Adventure Novel, 1880-1914," *ELT* 28 (1985): 243-52; Cannon Schmitt, *Alien Nation: Nineteenth-Century Gothic Fictions and English Nationality* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); and Judith Wilt, "The Imperial Mouth: Imperialism, the Gothic and Science Fiction," *Journal of Popular Culture* 14 (1981): 618-28. Examining the relationship between Stoker and Wilde is Talia Schaffer, "'A Wilde Desire Took Me': The Homoerotic History of *Dracula*," *ELH* 61 (1994): 381-425.

[3]The first to do so is Arata, who reminds readers that Eastern Europe was on the minds of Stoker and his contemporaries: "Transylvania was known primarily as part of the vexed 'Eastern Question' that so obsessed British foreign policy in the 1880s and 90s. The region was first and foremost the site, not of superstition and Gothic romance, but of political turbulence and racial strife. Victorian readers knew the Carpathian Mountains region largely for its endemic cultural upheaval and its fostering of a dizzying succession of empires. By moving Castle Dracula there, Stoker gives distinctly political overtones to his Gothic narrative. In Stoker's version of the myth, vampires are intimately linked to military conquest and to the rise and fall of empires. According to Van Helsing, the vampire is the unavoidable consequence of any invasion." *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996) 113.

[4]Coundouriotis 156.

[5]Misha Glenny opens *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers, 1804-1999* (New York: Viking, 1999) by accusing Tony Blair of being more familiar with *Dracula* than with contemporary geography: "'Kosovo,' the British Prime Minister . . . informed his public in early April 1999, 'is on the doorstep of Europe.' Yet no geographer would consider Kosovo and its neighbours part of Asia. If neither in

Europe nor in Asia, where does the Balkan peninsula lie? Perhaps Mr Blair has been influenced by Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in which the Balkans occupied 'the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool', where 'every known superstition in the world is gathered.' For many decades, Westerners gazed on these lands as if on an ill-charted zone separating Europe's well-ordered civilization from the chaos of the Orient" (xxi).

[6]Although Coundouriotis even mentions that Stoker may not have known "the sobriquet 'impaler'" and observes that "he never uses it in the novel" (152), her argument seems to assume that Stoker was aware of the historical figure.—A number of studies examine Stoker's sources, including Clive Leatherdale, ed., *The Origins of Dracula* (Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex: Desert Island Books, 1995). There is perhaps no better analysis of what Stoker knew and did not know than Elizabeth Miller's who dispels many of the arguments that Stoker was aware of the historical Vlad. In *Dracula: Sense and Nonsense* (Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex: Desert Island Books Ltd, 2000), Miller carefully sifts through Stoker's sources and reminds credulous readers that *Dracula* is fiction.

[7]Emily de Laszowska Gerard, "Transylvanian Superstitions," *The Nineteenth Century* (July 1885): 128-44. Included in *The Origins of Dracula* 124.

[8]The comparison of the two novels has been developed in a paper for The Second World Dracula Congress ("Dracula 2000") in Poiana Brasov, Transylvania, Romania; I hope that readers will indulge me for summarizing that argument here largely because it confirms the validity of the line of thinking contained in Coundouriotis's essay.

[9]For example, two early books are set in his native Ireland—*The Duties of Clerks of Petty Sessions in Ireland* (1879) and *The Snake's Pass* (1889); two more—*The Watter's Mou'* (1894) and *The Mystery of the Sea* (1902)—take place in Cruden Bay, Scotland, where Stoker and his family spent numerous holidays; two are set entirely in the United States, another region where Stoker traveled extensively—*A Glimpse of America* (1886) and *The Shoulder of Shasta* (1895); three are set entirely within England—*Miss Betty* (1898), *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903), and *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911); and the largest group, by far, takes place in a variety of locations that Stoker had actually visited—*Snowbound: The Record of a Theatrical Touring Party* (1899), *The Man* (1905), *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* (1906), *Lady Athlyne* (1908), and *Famous Impostors* (1910).

[10]Stoker locates the Land of the Blue Mountains on the Adriatic Sea and provides it with "the finest harbour between Gibraltar and the Dardanelles"; *The Lady of the Shroud* (Dover, N.H.: Alan Sutton Publishing, Inc., 1994) 33. He also indicates that it is in danger of being annexed by Albania, Dalmatia, Herzegovina, Servia, and Bulgaria. Future references to *The Lady of the Shroud* will be to this edition and will be included in the text.

[11]Leatherdale's appendix to *The Origins of Dracula* includes the full list of Stoker's sources for *Dracula*; they can be grouped into the following categories: the bulk are books on folklore and superstitions; books about Transylvania and the Carpathians; book on scientific subjects, e.g. Sarah Lee's *Anecdotes of Habits and Instincts of Birds, Reptiles and Fishes* (Philadelphia: Lindsay Blalmston, 1853),

Herbert Mayo, *On the Truths contained in Popular Superstitions—with an Account of Mesmerism* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1851), Thomas Joseph Pettigrew, *On Superstitions connected with the History and Practice of Medicine and Surgery* (London: John Churchill, 1844), F. C. and J. Rivington, *The Theory of Dreams*, 2 vols. (London: 62 St. Paul's Churchyard, 1808), and Robert H. Scott, *Fishery Barometer Manual* (London: H.M.S.O., 1887). While books on geography and history do not constitute the bulk of the works that he read in preparation for writing *Dracula*, it is evident from his research that Stoker wanted to get his details straight.

[12]Once again Miller is useful in distinguishing history from Stoker's creative assimilation of numerous materials: "By the time Stoker began work on *Dracula* in 1890, Transylvania was already well established as a suitable setting for supernatural tales. But the literary Transylvania was an imaginative construct rather than a realistic representation" (146).

[13]"*The Lady of the Shroud* was published in 1909. It was only in the last months of the previous year that the Wright brothers had made their most successful flights; and only as the book was published did Bleriot successfully fly the Channel. But Bram, looking far ahead, had already given his Land of the Blue Mountains a royal air force" (159). David Glover, whose study places Stoker within the British Liberal tradition, examines Stoker's belief in science: "Like many advanced Liberals, Stoker looked to scientific growth as the key to modernization, and in an article he published in *The World's Work* in May 1907 one finds an account of Ireland's developmental potential that closely mirrors his Scottish-Balkan utopia" (13). Actually, Stoker wrote two articles for *The World's Work* in 1907, and both extol the wonders of science and technology. The first article, "The World's greatest Ship-Building Yard," *The World's Work* 9 (Special Irish ed., May 1907): 647-50, focuses more on commercial efficiency than it does on actual technological developments, but such commercial success was indeed based on technological expertise. The second article, "The Great White Fair in Dublin," *The World's Work* (Special Irish ed., May 1907): 570-76, celebrates Ireland's entry into the industrial age, and Stoker waxes eloquent on the "wonderful things are being done to start the island upon a new career of industrial progress, aside and beyond affairs political" (571).

[14]It is interesting to note that Romania did institute a constitutional monarchy in 1866 after the abdication of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, who had united the assemblies of Moldavia and Wallachia. Cuza initiated a reform program that attempted to transform Romania into a modern state. For example, he provided for the abolition of serfdom and granted their land to them, made primary school tuition free and compulsory, and established universities in Iasi and Bucharest. Forced out by conservative forces in 1866, he was replaced by a constitutional monarch, Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, who was declared king on May 10, 1866 and took the name of Carol I. A relative of the royal family of Prussia, Carol was supported by Napoleon III and Bismarck. According to Tim Burford and Dan Richardson, *Romania: The Rough Guide* (London: Rough Guides; New York: Viking Penguin, 1995), Carol became a true king in 1881: "In 1877 yet another Russo-Turkish war broke out, and Carol personally led a Romanian army into Bulgaria

to help the Russians, suffering huge losses in taking Pleven and the Shipka Pass. Rumania declared its independence on May 9, 1877; the Treaty of Berlin, ending the war in 1878, forced Turkey to Recognize this and to cede Northern Dobrogea to Rumania, and Carol became a fully fledged king in 1881, with an iron crown made from a gun captured at Pleven" (349).—It is interesting to note that Stoker's brother George served on the opposing side and wrote an account of his experiences in Turkish-controlled Bulgaria, published as *With "The Unspeakables": or, Two Years' Campaigning in European and Asiatic Turkey*. Miller observes that all three of "Stoker's biographers suggest that Bram may have helped George with his book" (211). Thus, Stoker had some knowledge of conditions in Eastern Europe through his brother.

[15]On the other hand, Raymond P. Wallace, who discusses *The Prisoner of Zenda* and a number of other adventure novels that were popular in England and the United States at the turn of the century observes that their plots often revolve around a threat to a rightful monarch. Wallace, "'Cardboard Kingdoms,'" *San Jose Studies* 13 (Spring 1987): 23-34.

[16]While no specific struggle united the Balkan nations in 1890, Stoker may well have been thinking of the meeting at Narva of William II of Germany and Alexander III of Russia. During the period that lasted from the Crimean War to World War II, there was always the threat of war between the great powers, a threat that would have involved all of Europe. Moreover, the reactionary Alexander was entirely comfortable containing any threat of revolution or nationalistic movement by violent means.

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Wuthering Heights for Children: Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*

SUSAN E. JAMES

English children's author, Frances Hodgson Burnett, was two years old[1] when Emily Brontë's novel, *Wuthering Heights*, was published in 1847, shocking critics, the public and her sister, Charlotte. In 1910, sixty-three years after the book's publication, Burnett published a story for children, entitled, *The Secret Garden*. A detailed examination of this work seems to demonstrate in its text a close reading of *Wuthering Heights* and certain similarities between the two books, particularly in the characters and their relationships with each other, indicate that Burnett may indeed have been influenced by the earlier work. The fact that she was writing for children necessitated for her a softening of Brontë's sterner fictional imperatives and led Burnett to the image of the hidden garden as a sanctuary protected from the grimmer grandeur of Brontë's Yorkshire moors.[2] Burnett, herself, seems to point to a connection between the two books through an insistence in her text on the verbal link word "wuthering."[3] Her principal character, Mary Lennox, is fascinated by the word and its meaning, and such an emphasis might be considered at least one explicit authorial pointer to the title of Brontë's earlier work. This article seeks to examine the connection between Burnett and Brontë, and to identify particular aspects of setting, plot, character, language and symbolism in Burnett's novel which appear to have been inspired by the earlier template of *Wuthering Heights*, as well as instances where the later novel differs from Brontë's work.

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debjames01001.htm>.

Connections between Burnett and the Brontës

Frances Hodgson Burnett was born in Manchester, some twenty-six miles, as the crow flies, from Haworth, on 24 November 1849, two years after the publication of *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Agnes Grey*, and some eight years before the posthumous publication (1857) of *The Professor*. Her father, Edwin Hodgson, was a Manchester businessman who, like Patrick Brontë, wrote small prose pieces, poetry, and many letters to local newspapers under the pseudonyms "Pro Bono Publico," "Cives" and "Irate Citizen."[4] He may also have been, although this has as yet to be confirmed, a kinsman of William Hodgson,[5] Reverend Patrick's curate from 1836-7. According to Burnett, her mother, Eliza Boond Hodgson, was a great admirer of Harriet Martineau,[6] sometime friend of Charlotte Brontë.[7]

By 1853, young Frances, although only four years old, was already an avid reader. According to her son, Burnett's father "had been a bookish man, and small Frances, sooner than most children, began to take advantage of her 'literary surroundings.'"[8] Romances became her passion.[9] As they had on other impressionable young girls, the romances of the sisters Brontë had a tremendous impact on Burnett. As one of her biographers noted: "Principal themes in the fiction of Frances Hodgson Burnett were forecast in seven books published within two years of her birth . . . (and) the authors of these works would be among the most important in shaping her fiction—[these included] Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), and Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1849-50) . . . ."[10] Born during Charlotte Brontë's lifetime to parents keenly aware of the contemporary literary scene, daughter of father who may have been related to one of Patrick Brontë's curates, young Frances spent the first fifteen years of her life less than thirty miles from Haworth reading romances. More than one scholar has identified and described "the echoes of *Jane Eyre* in *The Secret Garden*"[11] but the contribution of *Wuthering Heights* has been less recognized.

Differences and Similarities of Setting

Both *Wuthering Heights* and *The Secret Garden* take place in Yorkshire. Yet while Brontë portrays that shire as a vast, mysterious, nearly mystical place, Burnett sketches her own concept of the shire's mystical aspects in brief descriptions related to Mary Lennox by Mrs. Medlock and Martha and Dickon Sowerby. Both novels incorporate elements of the supernatural, where the voice of the lost beloved (Catherine Earnshaw and Lilias Craven) of the adult male protagonist (Heathcliff and Archibald Craven) speaks to the living. The principal events in each work happen, however, in significantly diverse environments. Brontë's plot leans heavily on the gloomy, looming presence of the Yorkshire moors. For her, the moors were as unpredictable as human nature, at once majestic and tormenting, liberating and destructive. Burnett, on the other hand, seems uneasy with the very wildness that so fascinated Emily. ". . . it's just miles and miles and miles [her heroine, Mary Lennox, is told] of wild land that nothing grows on but heather and gorse and broom, and nothing lives on but wild ponies and sheep . . . . It's a wild, dreary enough place to my mind, though there's plenty that likes it . . . ."[12]

For Burnett in *The Secret Garden*, the moors are a place described but never experienced first-hand. Her central character, Mary Lennox, crosses the moors at night and never during the course of the story ventures out upon them again. The chief reason for this may be that unlike Emily Brontë, Burnett had only a limited working knowledge of the Yorkshire moors. Instead, she creates a safer environment for her child readers, surrounded by but separate from the wilderness of the unknown moors. This was an environment with which she, herself, was familiar, an enclosed garden, wild and overgrown but an oasis contained in a way that the moors could never be. Significantly, Mary Lennox has the momentary illusion of sailing on the sea as she drives across the moors in the dark. This image of the moors as a vast, unpredictable ocean reinforces the subsequent image of the garden as an island of refuge not only from the unpredictability of the 'outside'

natural world but from the unpredictability of adult human emotions which in both books are mirrored in natural events.

Although she diverged from Brontë by refashioning her exterior setting, Burnett kept untouched the mouldy mystery of her novel's interiors, a gloomy old house haunted by the passions of the past. Yet Burnett's great, gloomy pile of Misselthwaite Manor seems to owe more to Charlotte Brontë and *Jane Eyre*'s Thornfield Hall than to either the ancient farmhouse of Wuthering Heights or the more affluent manor of Thrushcross Grange. Certainly the plot device common to both books, that of the young female stranger hearing wild human sounds behind locked doors and thick walls in forbidden parts of the house, seem closely related. But if Burnett appears to have borrowed from Charlotte Brontë the pattern for the ancient house in which she set her story, it was Emily Brontë's work which appears to have had the greater influence on Burnett's characters and principal points of her story.

A Comparison of Characters

For *The Secret Garden*, Burnett has created a cast of characters, each of which appears influenced by one or more of the characters in *Wuthering Heights*. Both books begin with the arrival of a child into, what is for them, the alien environment of Yorkshire. There are similarities as well as differences between these two children—Mary Lennox and Heathcliff. Like Heathcliff, Mary is an orphan, irascible and sullen. She was, according to her creator, "the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen . . . [with] a sour expression . . . [and] as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived."[13] Burnett makes the orphaned Mary at nine years old roughly the same age as the orphaned Heathcliff when he first arrives at Wuthering Heights. She comes to Yorkshire from the 'outside,' an English child raised in India, home of the gypsies, as foreign to Yorkshire as is the gypsy boy Heathcliff. Both speak words the locals cannot understand—Heathcliff, Romany and Mary,

Hindi—although Mary has the advantage of speaking English as well. Just as it is the appearance on the scene of the self-willed Heathcliff with his ungovernable passions which initiates the action in *Wuthering Heights*, so it is the appearance of the self-willed Mary Lennox and her equally uncontrolled nature which precipitates the action in *The Secret Garden*. Yet the two authors take their protagonists in different directions. Heathcliff grows from a surly, violent boy into a surly, violent man. Mary, like the garden which comes to obsess her, metamorphoses into a civilized, sympathetic human being with a concern for the opinions and welfare of others. She sheds her original selfish egocentrism as the garden sheds its weeds beneath her hand. Unlike Heathcliff, who mirrors the destructive aspects of nature, Mary, within the context of the garden, comes to embody the constructive aspects which nurture life.

Mary's uncle, Archibald Craven, tall, dark, morose and brooding, is prey to the same passions as the adult Heathcliff. Although shorn of Heathcliff's deliberate malice, Craven is still possessed of a soul-destroying obsession centered on his lost wife. This obsession brings destruction and despair to himself and to those around him. Burnett describes Craven as a man who "poisoned the air about him with gloom. Most strangers thought he must be either half mad or a man with some hidden crime on his soul."[14] He certainly seems Heathcliff's soulmate. Craven's lost beloved and permanent fixation is his beautiful deceased wife, Lilias. Gravely hurt when a tree branch breaks under her, she, like Heathcliff's Cathy, subsequently dies in childbirth. Craven blames the loss of his wife both on the garden where the accident occurred and, again like Heathcliff, on the child whose premature birth hastened her untimely death. Craven takes his revenge by locking up the garden, confining the boy at Misselthwaite and then abandoning both. Heathcliff's revenge includes the confinement of his own son, Linton, and of Cathy's daughter, Catherine Linton, at Wuthering Heights.

Mary Lennox is for Burnett both the chief protagonist in *The Secret Garden* and the catalyst which begins the action. In the early chapters,

as a catalyst, she stands in relationship to her own story where Heathcliff stands in relationship to his. Yet there are marked differences between them. Heathcliff is introduced into an apparently happy family which he is instrumental in breaking apart. Mary is introduced into an unhappy family which she is instrumental in bringing together. Her role as the story progresses seems increasingly to emulate the role played by the young Catherine Linton in *Wuthering Heights*.[15] This is not as contradictory as it might appear given the dramatic alteration in Mary's character within the context of the action. The same stubborn streak of sullen rebellion which pits the will of Heathcliff against that of Catherine Linton in the second half of *Wuthering Heights* is reflected in the sullen streak of stubbornness that is part of the character of Mary Lennox. Yet Mary later learns to use this stubbornness to good purpose in her dealings with her cousin Colin, just as Catherine's stubborn animosity toward Heathcliff leads her to initiate a relationship with her cousin Hareton which proves to be the salvation of them both. Other similarities exist between Mary and Catherine. Both are strongly attracted to 'nature boys,' rough illiterates at home on the moors. Both boys are shown to be superior in character to the two male cousins of the girls' own class. Dickon, the boy from the moors, who plays a pipe like Pan and charms animals, fits the structure of *The Secret Garden* like a minor woodland god. He seems to be Burnett's version of Hareton Earnshaw, the cousin who marries Catherine Linton after Heathcliff's death. Hareton like Dickon is a man of the soil and is good with animals. Dickon's character in *The Secret Garden* is the one most in touch with the Divine, and seems to take its cues from Brontë's Hareton, whose own deep-rootedness in the Yorkshire moors is the natural balm that, despite circumstance, keeps him whole.

The third characters in these younger generational triads within the two stories are Linton Heathcliff and Colin Craven. They appear to grow from the same rootstock created by Brontë, but in *The Secret Garden*, Colin's life moves toward a different resolution. Colin lives

and flourishes while Linton withers and dies. Yet both are introduced by Brontë and Burnett in nearly identical terms.

Wuthering Heights

A pale, delicate effaminate boy . . . [with] a sickly peevishness in his aspect . . . . he was no sooner seated than he began *to cry afresh*. . . . [My master] had been greatly tried during the journey, I felt convinced, by his *fretful ailing charge*.[16]

The Secret Garden

. . . on the bed was lying a boy, *crying fretfully* . . . . [He] had a *sharp delicate face the color of ivory* and he seemed to have eyes too big for it. . . . He looked like *a boy who had been ill*, but he was crying more as if he were tired and cross than as if he were in pain.[17]

Archibald Craven's loathing for his son, Colin, reflects Heathcliff's loathing for his son, Linton, and for much the same reason. Both fathers see their sons as weaklings, unlikely ever to grow into strong men, an embarrassment rather than a source of pride. Craven (the choice of his name must surely have been deliberate) is not as malevolent as Heathcliff but his courage fails at the thought that this sickly, temperamental son will grow up like his father, to become the same physical and emotional cripple that Craven fears himself to be. For Heathcliff, these negative feelings are colored by his overmastering contempt for Linton's late mother, Isabella, and by Linton's striking likeness to her. For Archibald Craven, his repulsion toward his son is also intensified by Colin's striking physical resemblance to his late mother, but the difference between them is that Craven loved Colin's mother and the resemblance intensifies his grief rather than his anger.

This relational dynamic of physical resemblance intensifying feelings of love and loss appears, too, in Heathcliff's feelings for Hareton. He is both repulsed and agonized by Hareton's likeness to Cathy. His anguish at this constant reminder of his loss is described movingly by Brontë: ". . . if I could do it without seeming insane [Heathcliff tells Ellen Dean], I'd never see him again. . . . his startling likeness to Catherine connected him fearfully to her . . . . The entire world is a dreadful collection of memoranda that she did exist, and that I have lost her!"[18] For Archibald Craven, nearly identical emotions run unbeara-

bly deep and stamp his entire existence. "The first time after a year's absence he returned to Misselthwaite and the small miserable looking thing [Colin] languidly and indifferently lifted to his face the great gray eyes with black lashes round them, so like and yet so horribly unlike the happy eyes he had adored, he could not bear the sight of them and turned away pale as death."[19] For Linton and Colin and for Hareton, their resemblances to their mothers (or aunt) create nearly insuperable gulfs between themselves and their fathers or, in Hareton's case, surrogate father.

Exposure to the Yorkshire air works an identical change in both Linton and Colin. For Linton, these are only temporary; for Colin, they appear to be permanent. When after much time, young Catherine first beholds Linton and Archibald Craven first beholds Colin, their responses are much the same.

Wuthering Heights

He had grown tall of his age, still wanting some months of sixteen. His features were pretty yet, and *his eye and complexion brighter than I remembered* them .... 'What Lincoln!' cried Cathy, kindling into joyful surprise at the name. *'Is that little Linton? He's taller than I am! Are you, Linton?'*[20]

The Secret Garden

. . . Colin look[ed] an entirely different boy. . . . *The faint glow of color which had shown on his face and neck* and hands when he first got inside the garden really never quite died away . . . Colin was standing upright . . . and *looking strangely tall* . . . . It was the eyes which made Mr. Craven gasp for breath. *'Who—What? Who!' he stammered. . . . 'Father,' he said, 'I'm Colin.'*[21]

The relationship between the first cousins, Linton and Catherine, is repeated in *The Secret Garden* in the relationship between the first cousins Colin and Mary. Temperamental, high-strung, over-indulged and accustomed to having their own way, Catherine and Mary dominate at first the equally temperamental but physically weaker boys. The petulant interchanges between both sets of extremely spoiled children in the initial stages of their relationship echo each other in the two books.

Wuthering Heights

The invalid complained of being covered with ashes; but he had a tiresome cough, and looked feverish and ill, so *I did not rebuke his temper*. 'Well, Linton,' murmured Catherine, when his corrugated brow relaxed, 'Are you glad to see me? Can I do you any good?' *'Why didn't you come before?* He said, 'You should have come . . . .'[22]

The Secret Garden

'What is the matter?' [Mary] asked. 'What did Colin say when you told him I couldn't come?' 'Eh!' said Martha, 'I wish tha'd gone. *He was nigh goin' into one o' his tantrums. . . .*' This was a bad beginning and Mary marched up to him with her stiff manner. 'Why didn't you get up?' she said. 'I did get up this morning when I thought you were coming,' he answered, without looking at her. '. . . *Why didn't you* come?'[23]

Brontë, with her plot that covers three generations, takes Linton and Catherine's relationship to its ultimate conclusion when Heathcliff forces Catherine into marriage with her cousin. Burnett, with her much briefer time frame, lets the question of Mary and Colin's future relationship go unanswered for, unlike Linton, Colin appears destined to live to adulthood.

Similarities of character development are also noticeable between Brontë's irascible, Bible-thumping farmhand Joseph and Burnett's irascible, curmudgeonly gardener Ben Weatherstaff. Both serve hard masters, but Burnett has given the surly local a softer edge as well as a measure of grace in his loyalty to the garden and to the son of the late Lilias Craven. Where daily exposure to a hard world has turned Joseph into a bitter man, one who sees the hand of Satan everywhere, Ben, despite his crusty exterior, is still capable of tenderness. One of the significant characteristics which defines both Joseph and Ben is their use of the broad Yorkshire dialect. Except for the three Sowerbys in *The Secret Garden*, none of the other principal characters in either book speak with such a broad accent despite the fact that most were born and raised in Yorkshire. This, of course, was a class issue at a time when children were carefully inculcated with proper speech patterns and forbidden to imitate the speech of the so-called lower

classes. Even Ellen Dean, who to all intents and purposes was grown from seed in the Yorkshire soil, speaks gentleman's English.

Plot Comparisons

With her audience in view, Burnett's plot construction is of necessity built along less complex lines than Brontë's. Such adult passions as Cathy and Heathcliff represent are treated only cursorily in *The Secret Garden* and were for Burnett not the stuff of children's stories. Lilias Craven, the story's 'lost beloved,' is less a wild and contradictory Catherine Earnshaw-like character than a reflection of the woman whom Cathy imagined herself becoming when she married Edgar Linton, beautiful, aristocratic, gracious, generous, loving and beloved. Although the love and loss represented in the relationship of Lilias and Archibald Craven is a necessary condition of the action which follows, it is marginalized somewhat by being treated in retrospect and by Craven's long periods of absence from Misselthwaite Manor. Within the context of Mary's interaction with the secret garden, itself, it is the developing relationships of Mary with Dickon and Colin which are Burnett's chief concerns.

Where Brontë creates a framing device for the inner core of her story which presents Ellen Dean as the teller of the tale and an outsider, Mr. Lockwood, as the narrator-observer, Burnett's framing device opens with Mary Lennox in India and then sends her off as a reluctant but generally impartial observer of people and events in Yorkshire. Yet Mr. Lockwood is and remains outside the main flow of the action in *Wuthering Heights* while Mary Lennox inhabits the emotional center of *The Secret Garden*. Emily Brontë's plot subsequently covers three generations; Burnett's time scheme covers a period of little over a year, beginning with Mary's loss of her parents in India and journey to England and ending with the arrival of Archibald Craven back at Misselthwaite Manor. Thus, Burnett frames *The Secret Garden* with two journeys into Yorkshire, albeit by two different characters. This is

similar to *Wuthering Heights*, whose story is framed by Lockwood's two journeys into Yorkshire. Once there, Mary befriends her sickly young cousin Colin, emotionally abandoned by his father and without a mother, and using tales of the secret garden attempts to woo him back to an awakened interest in life. In much the same way, Catherine Linton befriends and tries to aid her sickly young cousin, Linton, emotionally abandoned by his father and without a mother. Yet any echoes of Heathcliff's plans of revenge on the Lintons and Earnshaws are absent from *The Secret Garden.*

Nature and the supernatural play key roles in both books. It is Mary's growing affection for the illiterate but good-hearted Dickon, the impersonation of the healing power of nature, which releases the more positive aspects of her character. At the end of *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine Linton's hopes of a happier future are vested in her affection for the illiterate but good-hearted Hareton, like Dickon, a child of nature. For Emily Brontë, the savagery of the journey taken by some human hearts is reflected in the ravages wrought by the natural world. In *Wuthering Heights*, these are reflected in the flint-cored crags, stunted trees and pitiless storms of the moors. Burnett, with her smaller palette of garden flowers and bulbs, emphasizes not only nature's healing powers but the stirring of new life, growing from "that quiet earth" in which Brontë buries Heathcliff and Cathy. Nature offers spiritual inspiration in both books. In Brontë's, it is embodied in the open freedom but constant threat of danger on the moors; in Burnett's, it is found in the safer enclosed haven of a rose garden. In dealing with the supernatural, nature's other face, Burnett sentimentalizes the otherworldly, unlike Brontë, whose depiction of the ghost of the dead Catherine Earnshaw haunts the moors and terrifies Mr. Lockwood into the unwonted cruelty of dragging her wrist across a piece of broken window glass. In Burnett's story, the gentler ghost of Lilias Craven, whose voice alone is heard, appears to watch over her son and husband and tries to bring them once again into harmony with the earth and with each other. Catherine's ghost seems totally indifferent to her widower, Edgar Linton, and to her namesake

daughter. It is not to Thrushcross Grange but to Wuthering Heights that her ghost returns.

Language, Symbolism and Metaphor

Necessarily, given its target audience, *The Secret Garden* is written in simpler language with less complex and subtle symbolism than *Wuthering Heights*. Yet there are numerous linguistic links which tie it to the earlier work. Burnett, for example, gives a minor character in the book the name "Bob Haworth,"[24] a tribute perhaps to Brontë's Yorkshire village. As mentioned in the introduction, she also makes frequent use of the Yorkshire dialect word "wuthering," which forms part of Brontë's title. Although not an uncommon word, it is insisted upon repeatedly by Burnett. ". . . the wind was 'wuthering' round the corners and in the chimneys of the huge old house . . . [Mary] hated the wind and its 'wuthering' . . . She could not go to sleep again. . . . How it 'wuthered' and how the big rain-drops poured down and beat against the pane! 'It sounds just like a person lost on the moor and wandering on and on crying,' she said."[25] Just so did Lockwood, mixed with the wuthering of the wind, hear the crying of the ghostly Catherine Earnshaw, lost on the moor for twenty years, trying to find her way home.

Counterpoised against Heathcliff's rootless anguish, shared by the wandering Archibald Craven in *The Secret Garden*, both Brontë and Burnett explore the path to redemption forged by Catherine Linton and by Mary Lennox in their respective novels. For these two characters, the earth and its potential flowering assumes paramount and symbolic importance. "Might I [Mary asks Archibald Craven], might I have a bit of earth . . . to plant seed in—to make things grow—to see them come alive."[26] While Craven's response is startled but favorable, Heathcliff responds violently to a similar request. "We wanted to plant some flowers [Catherine Linton tells him]. . . . You shouldn't grudge a few yards of earth, for me to ornament, when you have

taken all my land!"[27] For both authors, the planting of seed in the earth represents an overt commitment, despite uncertainties, to the future rather than to the misery and mistakes of the past. For Catherine, the decision to "plant some flowers" is to risk bringing Heathcliff's wrath down on her head, yet it proves to be the catalyst which begins a new and ultimately joyful phase in her relationship with Hareton. For Mary, the request for "a bit of earth" also represents risk, one that could incur Craven's anger and lead to discovery of the secret garden and its consequent loss. Within the symbolism of Catherine and Mary's claims to a physical piece of earth, in the planting of it and in the final unfolding of nature's beneficence, despite Heathcliff's animosity and Craven's potential anger, a spring of resurrection eventually awakens, one that heralds the ending of both stories.

Burnett takes up the idea of this impending and mystical change, inaugurated by Mary and reverberating in the life of Archibald Craven, in what might be a paraphrase of the feelings that Heathcliff describes in one of his last conversations with Ellen Dean. For Heathcliff, this change is the precursor of his own death and thus of his ultimate reunion with Cathy. Burnett turns that idea around and makes the change a precursor to the renewal of Archibald Craven's life through his emblematic reunion with his own dead wife in the living person of their son. A comparison of the images used in the descriptions of the emotions of Heathcliff and Craven illustrates the similarity.

Wuthering Heights

'It's a poor conclusion, is it not .... I don't care for striking, I can't take the trouble to raise my hand! ... I have lost the faculty of enjoying their destruction, and I am too idle to destroy for nothing. Nelly, there is a strange change approaching—I'm in its shadow at present. I take so little interest in my daily life, that I hardly remember to

The Secret Garden

He did not know how long he sat there or what was happening to him, but at last he moved as if he were awakening .... Something seemed to have been unbound and released in him .... as the train whirled him through mountain passes and golden plains the man who was 'coming alive' began to think in a new way .... 'Perhaps I have

> eat and drink. Those two who have left the room . . . [their appearance] causes me pain, amounting to agony. . . .' 'But what do you mean by a change, Mr. Heathcliff?' I said, alarmed at his manner . . . from childhood he had a delight in dwelling on dark things, and entertaining odd fancies.[28]
>
> been all wrong for ten years . . . .' If he had not been under the spell of the curious calmness which had taken possession of him he would have been more wretched than ever.[29]

Although Brontë and Burnett use different language to explain their characters' altered state, yet the ideas are similar. Apparent nature and its corollary, the supernatural, have brought two anguished men to the brink of healing, one through death and the mingling of dust, and one through life and the acknowledgment of the healing power of a well-loved piece of earth.

Other Influences on *The Secret Garden*

Although the influence of *Wuthering Heights* may have provided the foundation for *The Secret Garden*, additional influences other than Brontë's work can be demonstrated in Burnett's novel.[30] In the short autobiography which Burnett wrote in 1893 about her own childhood, *The One I Knew Best of All*, she describes the Aladdin's cave of books which was her father's library and in particular, a book on the history of the Tower of London which led her to act out various dramatic historical scenes through the aegis of her dolls.[31] The story of Richard III and the little princes fascinated her and in the character of Archibald Craven, she has incorporated Richard's crooked back and the atmosphere of gloom, guilt and foreboding which surrounds him. Together with the bereaved and wolfish Heathcliff, Burnett's friend, the Earl of Crewe, may have acted as additional inspiration for Archibald Craven and for the laughing portrait of Lilias Craven which hung in Colin's bedroom and at which, together with his son, Craven

could not bear to look. In 1896 Burnett visited the Earl at his home of Fryston Hall, near Ferrybridge, Yorkshire.

> [Crewe, she later wrote] married when he was quite young, Sybil Maria, daughter of Sir Frederick Ulric Graham, and she died seven years after. Lady Fitzgerald, her sister, says they were radiantly happy and inseparable. . . In the drawing room at Fryston there is a picture of a pretty, slender girl in a white frock, and beneath it is written, 'Sybil 1887'—that was the year she died. I believe his eyes are always looking for her and thinking of her.[32]

Burnett's own son, Vivian, wrote a biography of his mother in 1927, three years after her death, and in it he describes her fascination with Christian Science and the works of its founder, Mary Baker Eddy. "That her method of thought, consciously or unconsciously, was influenced importantly by what she learned from Christian Science, there is ample testimony . . . [*The Secret Garden*] is generally credited with being a Christian Science book . . . ."[33] For Burnett, the concepts that God is love and emanant in the world joined to the possibility of healing the body through the power of the mind were important ones. These she added to *The Secret Garden*, primarily in the form of Colin's disquisitions on Magic. Christian Science helped support her deeply held conviction, and one which she no doubt had reason to believe from *Wuthering Heights* was shared by Brontë, that death is not the end of life.[34] This need to believe in a life after death is tied for both Brontë and Burnett to the tragedy of terminal tuberculosis. In 1848, Emily, like her character the teen-aged Linton Heathcliff, died of tuberculosis. Forty-two years later, Frances Burnett buried her fifteen-year-old son, Lionel, who had died within nine months of being diagnosed with the same disease. In much the way that Heathcliff appeals to the ghostly Cathy to haunt him in any shape she chooses, so Burnett wrote impassioned passages more or less asking her dead son to do the same. "Do you come and look over my shoulder and help me?" she wrote to him four months after his death. "I try to feel that you do."[35] This sense of loss must have intensified her empathy with Brontë and appears to have manifested itself in the creation of Archibald Craven's overmastering grief for his dead wife.

Burnett's own passion for gardening, too, inspired her creation of *The Secret Garden*.[36] Dubbed 'The Passionate Gardener' by her son and the 'Princess of Maytham' by Henry James for the beauty of her garden, Burnett leased Maytham Hall in Kent from 1898 through 1907. The grounds contained an old walled garden that Burnett planted with roses and used as her out-of-doors workroom. According to her son, it served as the model for the secret garden.[37] It was in 1910, shortly after being forced to give up her lease on Maytham, that the rose garden there, the tenets of Christian Science, the continuing grief over Lionel's death, her memories of the Earl of Crewe and his lost Sybil, and earlier memories of the crooked, charismatic Richard III appear to have been grafted by Burnett onto the rootstock of Emily Brontë's great romance and fashioned into *The Secret Garden*.

Conclusion

Although the characters created by Burnett may have taken their origins from those created by Emily Brontë and although they make a similar journey toward self-discovery in the remote vastness of Yorkshire, Burnett's conclusion, influenced by her philosophical belief in the absolute love of God, is a classic fairy tale happy ending. Brontë's is a more realistic, subtly shaded resolution to the lives that she has chronicled. Yet Catherine Linton's match with Hareton Earnshaw could be characterized as a happy ending after all. The tone of *The Secret Garden* is certainly less dark than that of *Wuthering Heights*, but that is hardly surprising if, as may be so in this case, one author used a tale for adults as the inspiration for a tale for children. The concerns of both authors remain quite similar—obsession and its destructive qualities, the power of grief to suffocate life, the concept that love is stronger than death, the interaction of man and nature for both healing and destruction. While these concerns are certainly common in much of the literature published in the sixty years between *Wuthering Heights* and *The Secret Garden*, the precise correlations and the over-

whelming number of them found in Burnett's novel imply both an intense scrutiny of Brontë's work and its probable influence on her own.

La Canada
California

NOTES

[1]Born and raised in England until the age of fifteen, Burnett moved with her widowed mother and siblings to eastern Tennessee in 1865 and thereafter considered herself an Anglo-American.

[2]Cf. Anna Krugovoy Silver, "Domesticating Brontë's Moors: Motherhood in *The Secret Garden*," *The Lion and the Unicorn: A Critical Journal of Children's Literature* 21.2 (1997): 193-203, here 197. Silver refers to this process as "the domestication of the Yorkshire moors" (196) and notes that, through the usage of the garden metaphor, "Burnett gives primacy to domestic values . . . over sexual passion between adult men and women (symbolized by the moors)" (198).

[3]Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (New York: F. A. Stokes, 1911) 154.

[4]Vivian Burnett, *The Romantick Lady* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1927) 3.

[5]Juliet Barker, *The Brontës* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994) 241-42, 269.

[6]Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The One I Knew Best Of All* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1893) 179.

[7]Barker 718-19.

[8]V. Burnett 12.

[9]V. Burnett 9.

[10]Phyllis Bixler, *Frances Hodgson Burnett* (Boston: Twayne, 1984) 1.

[11]Ann Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party: The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett, 1849-1924* (Boston: Godine, 1991) 3, 220-21; Bixler 125.

[12]F. Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 26-27.

[13]F. Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 1-2.

[14]F. Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 356.

[15]Silver 197.

[16]Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (New York: Signet Classics, 1993) 193-95. My italics.

[17]F. Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 156. My italics.

[18]Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* 306-07.

[19]F. Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 363-64.

[20]Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* 208. My italics.

[21]F. Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 274, 281, 371. My italics.

[22]Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* 227. My italics.

[23]F. Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 210. My italics.

[24]F. Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 331. Burnett also wrote an earlier work, entitled *Haworth's*, published in 1879.

[25]F. Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 154.

[26]F. Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 148.

[27]Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* 303.

[28]Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* 306-07.

[29]F. Burnett, *The Secret Garden* 358, 364.

[30]In his book, *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1985) 188-89, Humphrey Carpenter throws out a potpourri of "details picked up casually from handy sources," that he claims Burnett used and compares the character of Dickon to Heathcliff. Very little if any evidence is offered for supposing Burnett was influenced by any of these 'handy sources' and they appear rather to have been chosen as a way of denigrating Burnett's work which Carpenter, despite basing the title of his book on hers, stigmatizes as "careless," "crudely draw," "predictable," and "sloppy."

[31]F. Burnett, *The One I Knew Best* 115.

[32]V. Burnett 270-72.

[33]V. Burnett 376-77.

[34]Silver 194.

[35]V. Burnett 213.

[36]Silver notes that for Victorian readers (and presumably Edwardian ones as well), gardens were "part of women's private domestic sphere, (and) were conceptualized as female space in nineteenth-century England" (195).

[37]V. Burnett, plate opposite 294.

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Summertime of the Dead Whispered the Truth of His Joy: A Response to Eynel Wardi*

SHACHAR BRAM

As a starting point to my discussion of Thomas's "Poem in October" and Wardi's thoughtful presentation of it, I find it necessary to distinguish three "personae" taking part in the poem on different levels, and performing different functions. This "personage distinct-ion" is actually but the first step in my attempt to draw a line separating the different times and places to be found in the poem and in Wardi's discussion of it. The poem, as a *written* work of art, presents three figures to the reader: first there is the boy, whose time and locations are the past of youth and "the woods the river and sea" of the country. To these same locations where the boy once "walked with his mother," the grown man "set forth" on his thirtieth birthday, the day that the poem tells us about. The poet, as he *writes* his poem, as he is revealed by the act of his writing (i.e. the written poem), is looking back on two events and two personae (*the boy* and the *grown man*, as I call them henceforth). This distinction is deliberately blurred in Wardi's discussion, as part of the metaphoric way in which her language, guided by psychoanalytically oriented phenomenological approach, treats the concepts of time and space in order to look at the poem as an expression of unified experience. Through her use of language, Wardi projects (to use her own term) the metaphoric reunion between the boy and the grown man (in the sixth stanza) onto the poet. The use Wardi makes of the notion of *voice*, which she

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*Reference: Eynel Wardi, "A Boy in the Listening: On Voice, Space, and Rebirth in the Poetry of Dylan Thomas," *Connotations* 9.2 (1999/2000): 190-209.

acknowledges to be a mystique of the poetic voice, turns out to be a concept flexible enough to allow a crossing of lines dividing different times, metaphor and reality, and the content of the poem and its form and medium. It is "the voice that integrates the split self in the dimension of time" (193). Thus the voice of the boy, although "long dead" and existing only in memory, is united with the voice of the grown man, whom the poem describes as listening and looking but never as singing or saying anything (the verb *sang* is actually used only as a metaphor in the poem, applied to the "mystery" and to nature). In the course of Wardi's discussion the voice of these two (the grown man who is united with the boy) is identified with the voice of the poet, who actually has no voice except as a metaphor, since he *writes* and does not sing. But it is "the poetic voice," according to Wardi, that "constitutes imaginary spaces that accommodate its subject, locating him in, and in relation to the world" (190) so the borders separating different spaces, and separating the metaphoric and the literal use of the term space, are done away with too. Wardi's language locates the poet in the surroundings of the grown man and, moreover, applies the notion of space to such diverse terms as "poems [which] are, indeed, places to be in" (191); to the voice "in its 'oral-aural' dimension . . . the acoustic, or acoustic-like spaces of poetic resonance" (191); and to the imagination and other mental and emotional processes or functions, taking place as it seems in "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" (191). This double-edged language analysis cuts both ways: while it enables Wardi to draw a creative and meaningful pheno-menological interpretation of the poem, it also obscures the distinctions among the different levels of the poem, Wardi's discussion of it, and reality itself. It is as if they all exist on the same plane, which turns out to be language itself; thus, voice becomes a metaphor for language, and vice versa. The metaphoric need for explaining abstract relations and processes is seen here to neutralize the impact of the *written* poem, its thoughtful structure as the act of the clear-headed poet looking back

at the grown man and knowing his experience is lost (while the memory of it may be a meaningful one) *by the very fact of writing the poem*: can one really claim to be regaining youth (reunion with the boy) while actually using this youth to maintain one's present (or, better, to maintain oneself in the present)? We might add to this what the reader sometimes ignores while trying to "activate" the poem as an experience with notions of unity and wholeness: the revisions and craftsmanship productive of its final form, which is often attained through a strenuous struggle with the words on the page and their different meanings at different times to different persons (including the changing moods of the poet, and of course the reader). When Wardi writes: "Indeed, he can listen *while* speaking the poem, to the effect of finding his true voice as well as his space" (197; Wardi's italics), the unison of voices and times and places is what enables her afterwards to claim the rebirth of the poet: "By appropriating the child's song through its 'in-vocative' articulation, the poet integrates his inner child, whereby he regenerates himself as a poet" (200). The rebirth of the poet is possible only through this blurring that language helps to accomplish, so that a unity is achieved and processes can claim coherence.

The identification of the poet with the speaker of his poem, the one experiencing the events of the poem, can be ignored for various reasons in various cases. But "Poem in October" seems to be a complicated case in this regard: the act of writing declares itself as a phase of great force and consciousness by the emphasized structure and organization of the written poem. Wardi writes of the nostalgic and romantic reunion between the boy and the grown man ("That his tears burned my cheeks and his heart moved in / Mine"), as follows: "the poet comes to meet and eventually unite with the child he once was—the child who is the father of the Romantic poet, who bears 'the truth' of his heart and 'joy' and is thus the poet's true, authentic 'voice'" (199). This reunion, I believe, is rejected by the poet as master of a *written* art. It might be that the boy once sang, and it might be that the grown man sang as he traveled his childhood country again—

although, as stated, the poem does not describe him as singing (but as listening and looking, moved to tears by "the reunion" with the child in the sixth stanza). However, applying the metaphor of voice to the *written* poem is problematic; though helping to construe the poem as an expression of unified experience, it reduces the poem's different registers, personae, times, and locations. The way Thomas handles his lines and rhythm might suggests that he is more of a modernist than it might seem at first. Thomas differentiates the act of writing from the act of experiencing. Thus, it should be made clear that it is the grown man, not the poet, who is reuniting (i.e., emotionally and mentally identifying) with the boy. Wardi's analysis of the poem describes beautifully the possible relations between the grown man and "his inner child"; but as I see it, relations of this kind are to be distinguished from the poet, who presents himself in "Poem in October" as a master of the *written* word, and who understands the experiences of both his childhood and his thirtieth birthday as generating a *poem* (not the poet) while using his life as a resource even as it gives them meaning.

As noted, *voice* is the term bearing the transformation: the poem itself has no voice, as the speaker is a figure of speech the reader uses when actually reading (usually with the eyes, not aloud) the silent written words. Voice, in written poetry, is but a metaphor; however, it is needed as an "intermediary space" to connect different personae at different levels of the poem, and as such it is presented and functions in Wardi's essay: "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'" (192). Since our body is in space anyway, it is rather the poet's thoughts that are projected into space as a written poem. Especially since we consider our thoughts to last in time, their projection onto the page enables the poet to treat them spatially, structuring and ordering the stanza and its lines to create double and ambiguous meanings. The reader, while trying to transform the spatial form of the poet's words into a tempo-

ral narrative, confronts these ambivalent orderings as both intriguing and disturbing. It is an obstacle, but a challenging one, in combining word with word and line with line to form a coherent explanation or narrative.

It seems that such terms as "poetic voice" (190), while serving the description of the imaginative abilities of the poet, increase in the same breath the degree of fluidity between the time and space of the boy, of the grown man and of the poet. Part of Wardi's interest has to do with the continuity that constitutes according to some psychoanalytic theories the experience of the self as she finds it represented in Thomas's poem. Thus, looking at the poem as a "psychic space" and locating Thomas in it as the subject of this psychic space, serves a coherent interpretative purpose. But as this is achieved by the linguistic blurring of times and spaces, through this "poetic voice" which incorporates the three personae, this fluidity might in itself be interpreted as a solipsistic move. This may be so despite the fact that the essay aims to convince us of exactly the opposite view. As Wardi writes: "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 . . ." (202). Since Wardi does not clearly draw the line separating the three personae, their times and spaces fuse and the poet cannot liberate himself from the imaginative constraint of the man who is the child "who is the father of the man" (199). "Acoustically speaking," says Wardi, "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 forwards, spanning a life, as it were, between the past and the future of the resonant voice" (199; Wardi's italics). But since voice itself is a metaphor, or, stated otherwise, the voice of the boy and the voice of the grown man and the voice of the

poet are not distinguishable, it is indeed an echo going back and forth within the confines of the self, which cannot be extended. The metaphoric use of terms thus curbs the poet's affective powers, for he is not credited with the ability to move beyond the father who unites with the child who is the father of the father-who-is-the-child: these are the reverberations actually taking place. It is "inside" language, so to speak, that they are taking place, since future and past are compressed in this discourse and language into a single time that is all times: the poet, who is the speaker, who unites with the child, is going on a journey that is "a bilateral one, moving towards the future and towards the past simultaneously" (198).

It seems to me that however delicate and profound the relations Wardi draws, the cost is too high. Contrary to the "echo interpretation" Wardi suggests, I would argue for the poet's acknowledgment of the arrow of time, which leaves both childhood (even if it was not exhausted when he was a child), and the imaginative reunion with it, lost and unreachable. Wardi writes that "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" (192). It seems to me that an alternative perspective considering the motivation of modern poetry might be fruitful here.Contrary to Wardi's attitude I would center on (1) the poets' skepticism while enacting such a "poetic utterance," i.e. the possibility that many (especially modern) poets understand the impossibility of the mission Wardi attributes to them; and (2) the suppression of this understanding in their poetry. In all likelihood, this suppression has to do with the "existential anxiety" Wardi mentions (192), but the emphasis in our discussion is on the recognition of failure and on camouflaging this failure while at the same time acknowledging it. It is the very fact of the act of writing, of the written form, that bears out this understanding. The act of writing bears out the acknowledgment of the arrow of time and, accordingly, of the difference between things past and their textual recreation.

Thus, the tension between the wish for rebirth—namely for life—and the understanding of its illusionary quality is to be found in the ambivalent and ambiguous ways the poet structures his poem. This self-aware inability for reunion and rebirth is at the same time the freedom that the poet does possess. The poet experiences childhood as a resource because it is gone, and his 'rebirth' as a poet is not a function of recapturing the truth and joy of his youth; rather, it is a function of understanding the truth of his present life, as the life of remembering things past and turning them into poetry. Thus, "the poet's journey" is not "towards restoring his childhood perception" (204) nor "in quest of his lost voice" (193), but it is his writing about such a journey that hints at and finally exposes his recognition that childhood perception is dead, but the memory of its being is still with him. The poet's "heart's truth," contrary to the child's and the grown man's apparent truth, is the acknowledgment of time.

This can be seen when noticing the thoughtful enjambments and the careful ordering of the poem. Agreeing with Wardi's emphasis on the enjambment leaving "In the listening" as a line by itself, I would add a comment on this line's relations with the next. When the poet looks back at time he sees the passing of time (which means death and destruction) already incorporated within the past. The *cutting* of "in the listening" leaves it to the next line to reveal that the summertime is of death, and that this is the truth of his joy, as the poet well knows ("Summertime of the dead whispered the truth of his joy"). Looking back, the poet hints through his lineation that the boy is already in the listening to the passing of time, to the death that is the "truth of his joy." Even if we are to understand the word "dead" as the inanimate objects of nature surrounding the boy, the opposition between life (the boy's life) and "the dead" hints at the same tension: whereas his life lasts in time, the lifelessness (and immortality) of matter isolates him from what he is apparently trying to come into contact with. These latent but traceable insights are revealed in the continuation of the stanza: "And the mystery / Sang alive / Still in the water and singingbirds." Apparently, as Wardi writes, "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 . . ." (202). However, the poet does not *sing* but *writes* And further, it is not the place but the poet who has the mnemonic spirit; the poet has the ability to remember (and write about) himself on the morning of his thirtieth birthday, traveling through the familiar places of his youth, and while there remembering, or reconstructing, those times. So the mystery is alive only for the boy or the grown man who apparently unites with him. For the grown man, it may "still"—implying duration: even to that moment—be sung as he unites with the boy; but for the poet it is "still"—implying: without movement or sound—since it is long gone. The enjambment thus draws the line dividing times: "sang alive" is (past) time of the grown man, who metaphorically unites with the child; and "still in the water and singingbirds" is the (present) time of writing looking at the past—whose mystery is now dead, muted and buried in his memory. This ambivalent mode, revealing Thomas's modern dimension, continues into the last stanza. This stanza repeats lines from the fourth, sixth, and first stanzas. The poet takes lines that served him as he wove the poem's apparent narrative, and through their new structuring and repetition, through their juxtaposition in a new order in the space of the page, he exposes their previous meaning as illusionary and mistaken.

And there could I marvel my birthday
Away but the weather turned around. And the true
Joy of the long dead child sang burning
In the sun.
It was my thirtieth
Year to heaven stood there then in the summer noon
Though the town below lay leaved with October blood.
O may my heart's truth
Still be sung
On this high hill in a year's turning.

Instead of "There could I marvel" (in the fourth stanza) it is now "And there could I marvel my birthday"—the repetition is emphasized by the added "And," indicating the difference of time now applied to the word "birthday." It is now clear that there are two different past times, that is to say, the poet hints that the day of birthday was a day of marvel, when he marveled at the conflation of times, but that was there and then, not now (at the moment of writing). The next line clarifies that the weather of marveling has turned and gone for good as is seen now, carrying with it the truth of the boy. The line "And the true," which breaks to the next one, "Joy of the long dead child sang burning," reveals that "the *truth* of his joy" [my italics] from the sixth stanza is transformed into the true present. The space or interval before "And the true" typographically suggest that these words alone relate to the next stanza, as though there were an implicit colon after them. What we get is a statement from the poet about what is true, namely that the "Joy of the long dead child sang burning"—the child is long dead, and his joy, even when it sang, was burning. The temporality of time, as seen from the poet's present, was consuming the boy already at the time of his childhood joy. This meaning of the phrase does not actually change if one reads it without the supposed colon between the lines. The next line once more lends itself to two different readings, but they both point in the same direction. "In the sun," taken as completing the phase begun in the preceding lines, refers primarily to the sun of the noon of traveling and of childhood, meaning that it is already there that time has started its corrosive work on us. But "the sun" is now (at the time of writing) also metaphorically the symbol of knowledge and consciousness, of the insight the boy and the grown man could not grasp. The cutting of the two next lines, "It was my thirtieth / Year to heaven stood there then in the summer noon" distances heaven from the poet on his thirtieth birthday. The heaven that seemed so close, surrounding him at the beginning of the poem and his journey ("It was my thirtieth year to heaven"), the heaven he supposedly achieved by union with the boy, is now far removed. That "[Y]ear to heaven," meaning his

illusionary birthday journey, stands starkly against the next line, which is the poet's reality, the town with October blood, from which he is trying to escape at the beginning of the poem and to which he finally returns knowing the truth of time's bloody passage. The image of "the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall" is retrospectively seen as a hint at the web the voices weave, capturing his imagination and reminding him of a lost world, and thus in the next line he "set foot" and was himself captured in it. But the past is gone and the future is always unknown. The poet cannot reach beyond his time save through a tentative wish, as the final lines of the poem show. His wish for another birthday journey "in a year's turning" now incorporates the knowledge that it is an illusory union with the boy's voice, as can be seen in the line "Still be sung." Apparently lasting in time, the voice is "still"—without sound or movement—muted by time itself, existing only as a memory and a metaphor the poet hopes to possess "in a year's turning."

Looking back on "Poem in October," we may conclude that the title of the poem, seemingly misleading while we journey with the grown man "along the poem," is actually accurate; it refers to the poet in the mode of writing, as is disclosed at the end of the poem and retrospectively. The title regains its original meaning, which the poem seemingly turns around: the poet's writing table is "leaved with October blood," since he registers the passing of time by virtue of his gift for writing about times lost.

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Blended Identity: Culture and Language Variations in Sujata Bhatt's "The Hole in the Wind"

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Does the blending and fusion of cultures depend on dislocation, loss of communal memories, and individual alienation? As it seems to me, Sujata Bhatt's long prose poem "The Hole in the Wind" is suggesting otherwise: perhaps you can have your identity—in the form of an imaginary homeland (Salman Rushdie)—while creatively exploring a number of historical, regional or linguistic backgrounds.

Sujata Bhatt is bicultural by birth and migration, and is tricultural by marriage. She was born in Ahmedabad, India and when she was twelve her parents moved to the United States. Her husband is a German writer and radio editor/producer, and since 1988 she has been living in Bremen (northern Germany), where she works as a free-lance writer, translating Gujarati poetry and prose into English.

The title of her first book, *Brunizem* (1988), refers to the dark brown (*bruni*) prairie soil (Russian *zem*) that can be found in Asia, Europe and North America, the three very different worlds of her imagination. In her second and third volumes, *Monkey Shadows* (1991) and *The Stinking Rose* (1995), she continues to fuse different cultures, environments and perspectives, writing with equally sensitive comprehension about other species and surroundings. As in *Brunizem* she does this by interlacing her poems with passages in some of the official Indian languages such as Gujarati (mainly) and also Hindi and Sanskrit, though English is her main creative language. She also uses German, Low German, and Spanish (mainly single words) in some of her poems. This playful incursion into the poetic text of different languages serves the specific cultural context of each poem, which can be defined as one of the characteristics of her intercultural mode of writing. As she has stated in an

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autobiographical essay, she now enjoys this hard-won, fortunate versatility, this power to comprehend, interpret and thus enter into the depths of almost any environment by writing about it imaginatively. "It is also a power to control and give shape to any given environment in order not to be intimidated or overwhelmed by its foreignness."[1]

In her fourth volume of poetry, *Augatora* (2000), the title of which is also connected to the long poem "The Hole in the Wind," Bhatt again uses linguistic variations, multilingual mixings and a variation of themes and cultural backgrounds connected to her multicultural life. She plays on the etymological meaning of the Old High German word *augatora*, and of that of *window* (from ME. *windoȝe*, ON. *vindauga*) when she speaks of the "wind eye— / the hole, the opening, the opening out / into the wind, the hole," "eye-gate" or the "eye's gate," "the hole for the eye to measure / the wind, the sun,"[2] referring to the visionary imagination, to the notion of "seeing things." This already implies an approach which is not characterised by an inclusive attitude to reality, in the sense of closing one's eyes to phenomena just because they could be foreign or strange, but clearly shows an openness to the different cultural environments and their inherent possibilities. In an autobiographical essay, Bhatt says of exile, thereby commenting on her creative freedom and the notion of openness related to 'living in *the world*":

> In a way, exile brought me closer to India. I started reading everything I could find about Indian history, Indian mythology, Indian art, sculpture, sociology etc. I missed the Gujarati language as well and started reading Gujarati books (specially ordered from India of course) with a new persistence [...]. I consider myself to be an Indian writer, but I like to think of myself as living in *the world* as opposed to in any one country.[3]

Although she seems to have solved the problem of displacement, as she intimates in this essay, feelings of uprootedness, displacement and exile are also prominent in her poetry, along with an acute awareness of the epistemological and cultural implications of a blended identity and its creative potential.

In her poetry, Sujata Bhatt consciously (sometimes self-consciously) and selectively writes about 'Eastern' as well as 'Western' cultural

contexts, which are often merged, played off against each other, or confirmed in their affinity, mutuality, or complementarity. She creates many different characters and figures who can be interpreted as being equipped with various (plural) forms of identity that undergo constant transformation. Apart from female patterns of identity, prevalent in many of her poems, Bhatt writes poems that convey her awareness of 'being the Other' and at the same time present a kind of split identity, or ambivalence, as well as a sense of belonging to the 'West' and its specific historical, regional and linguistic backgrounds. Marked by an experience of "unstable cultural identity,"[4] characterized by transformation and plurality, Bhatt constantly shows the potential and scope of her poetic imagination: in dealing with her own cultural "border-territory," she can always go back to her 'mental landmarks,' the memories of her childhood in India—people, friends, family, voices, sounds, smells, myths and stories—and draw on them while she is making her creative move into the new environments.

* * *

In the following, I shall outline the ways in which Sujata Bhatt has aesthetically articulated her blended identity by looking closely at "The Hole in the Wind,"[5] a ghost poem about the East Friesian island Juist on the coast of Germany in the North Sea, which was commissioned by the South Bank Centre and BBC Radio Drama. An earlier version of it was read, recorded and subsequently broadcast as part of a ghost poem series.[6] The poem (Bhatt's longest to date), which is formally characterized by free verse and refrain, shows a change in narrative perpective and a juxtaposition of different stories connected to the different characters who are depicted. As islanders, they live in constant danger due to the overwhelming and vehement nature of the North Sea. Their lives are dominated by superstitions, tales, myths, and Christian traditions, as well as by ships, shipwrecks and death. All the different noises and sounds, smells, tastes and colours of these particular experiences are connected with the sea, giving the poem a highly metaphysical and sometimes surreal character (in lines such as "You have created angels

out of sea gulls," 68). She also draws on general human concerns by commenting on or posing some of the eternal and, in that sense, existential questions ("where can they go—the hurt souls?" 76) especially in relation to the elementary forces, i.e. sea, wind and fire. The poem begins as follows:

> The hole in the wind where the scream lives—
> The scream that is the voice.
>
> Is it only one voice?
>
> And in the lightning did you see
> his implacable face?
> And did you see the blood on the knife—
> The knife that cut into the wave?
> Have you ever seen a wave that bleeds? (1-8)

In this poem, as can be seen in the opening part, Sujata Bhatt draws attention to the notion that "things" such as natural (i.e. the sea, lightning) and supernatural ("the wind where the scream lives") forces can have voices and even souls. This is done by foregrounding a ghostly atmosphere as the wind consists not of one voice only, but of many voices, even screams, that, as it turns out in the course of the poem, are connected to the idea of people being bereft, of people who tragically died and—as souls are immortal—want to tell their life stories. The aspect of a tragic fate is underlined by the notion of an "implacable face" which refers to the sea as an unsatisfiable force, as personified by the German expression "der blanke Hans" [the wild North Sea]. Taking into account the aspect of souls of the dead, Joseph Swann has recently drawn my attention to an early poem, "The Difference Between Being and Becoming" (*Brunizem* 1988, 33), in which according to Swann, "Sujata Bhatt speaks of the clear dichotomy posited by Post-Socratic philosophy between the body and the soul":[7]

> So where does the body house the soul?
> Locked in the attic,
> Wings whirring against glass?

No.
These doors and windows are always open.

What Swann connects with "Post-Socratic philosophy" can also be interpreted in relation to the Indian philosophy and religion marked by the *Upanishads* ("Sittings Near a Teacher"), which go back to the formative and influential period of Indian religious life between 700 and 500 BC. Thus the line "These doors and windows are always open" can be seen against the background of the belief, stated in the *Upanishads*, that it is quite normal for the soul to return to Earth and to be reborn in human or animal form. Although Sujata Bhatt, in many of her poems, is engaged with a notion of life that may be called existentialist she also quite frequently puts forward questions—consciously or unconsciously—regarding the doctrine of karma (actions), according to which the soul achieves a happy or unhappy rebirth depending on its works in the previous life, which is clearly connected to the Hindu philosophy and the question of what happens to man (that is the soul) after death.

The poem "The Hole in the Wind" is characterised by different voices that speak and by the intermittent voice of a narrator describing things that come in-between the voices. He/she knows what happens and comments on the voices that tell their tragic tales. The use of tales that are imbedded in the local culture and the emphasis on the interrelatedness of life and death are as it were unconsciously connected to a Hindu belief in destiny, the transmigration of the soul and reincarnation and at the same time serve to bring into relief this specific region, history and its mythologies. In a more abstract way, the numbering of the years serves to pinpoint the severe tidal waves that took place over the centuries and that left their tragic marks.

It is the year 1170.
It is the year 1277.
It is 1570. It is 1717.
It is 1825.
It is 1863, 1866, 1873, 1878—
It is the year 1883.
It is 1962. It is 1995. (19-25)

But the local references are not confined to historical dates. In 1995, when Sujata Bhatt visited the island of Juist, her imagination was stirred by authentic stories of people such as a certain Widow Braamhorst, the Captain's wife, who, during a storm, was tossed into the sea und then pulled out onto the beach, where she finds her four sons and her husband dead. After that experience she went far inland and "never again / looked at the sea" (59-60); similarly, a "dark and deaf" (64) Polynesian sailor is mentioned, who is "much looked at, pointed at, while the cargo of cotton disappears with the tides" (66-67). Here the poet is referring to the Middle Passage and the trade with the Caribbean and India, which also suggests that the islanders had contact with people of a different race, skin colour and origin. Other examples include the nightmare of a daughter who saved the father's life (*"Ach Mutter, es weht so stark in dieser Nacht / ertrinken wir"*[8]; 71-72), or a brief episode in the life of Heinrich Heimreich, who on Christmas Day "awakened by his daughter's cries / held on to the roof of his swaying house" (95-96), and who saw Death himself but remained unharmed. There is also the story of a woman who on Christmas Eve "stayed with her husband / hanging on the masthead, cradled in the crow's nest while the storm killed [their] crew" (126-28). Their "ship, the *Excelsior*, destined for Hamburg / was trapped by the sand off Juist" (129-30) for seven days, and this woman "watched two sailors below / feast on their dead mates." Furthermore, the poem speaks of the soul of a woman called Anna Ruhtz, who was on her way to the United States on a ship called the *Cimbria;* her soul complains that she wasn't able to live her life as she wanted to live it. There is a rescued sailor, and a Captain Luckham from Salcombe, England, who lost his whole family, and was asked at court why he didn't know about the new lighthouse on Norderney [a neighboring island]. He "never retired to his country home / but plunged his restless heart / into the restless sea—" (190-94). The poem is also about a man whose horse didn't want to jump in a storm, and when it finally did, broke its neck—the rider was saved. And the poem includes the superstition of the "black cat" which dominated people's lives in former days and belongs to the specific, regional mythology. A black cat was thrown into the sea to make the merchant

ships run aground offshore, so that the islanders were able to collect the valuable cargo on which they were economically dependent. This is represented by the personification of the tides: "All winter the tides dragged in the coal for us" (117). But "[t]he black cat didn't bring a ship this time—/ Well, their black cat had no power over the moon" (14-15). Here, actually two different superstitions are interlocked in order to show the different values and beliefs that existed at the same time and marked people's lives. In this line it turns out that the moon, being responsible for the tides, is even stronger than the belief in the black cat. The different voices in the poem, including the narrator, represent a striking statement of a blended identity: a statement that is centrally concerned with the relation between memory (record), myth and reality.

Besides using the stories of 'real' people, Bhatt stresses the local scene and history by quotations in East Frisian Low German: "*doh fangede sick an groth Jamer unde Noth / dar sach men vör Ogen den bitteren Dodt / deß bedröueden Solten Waters*" (217-19) [there was so much pity and fear, and people, before their eyes, saw death, grievously waiting for them in the threatening salty water; *translation mine*]. These lines are taken from a song and are characterised by death and melancholy, typical of the region and the people living under the permanent danger caused by—the fatal tidal waves—of the North Sea. The origin of the song is explained by the line that someone is writing "*Sturmflutlieder in Plattdeutsch*" [shanties (on the tidal waves) in Low German, *translation mine*] which is repeated several times in the poem itself.

Repetition and echoism ("And there were those who opened their mouths / but could not speak—/ they opened their mouths but could not / swallow, could not eat. / And so they died. And so they died," 167-71), together with onomatopoeic effects ("the sea was hissing sounds," 285) contribute to the intended ghostly effect of the poem. "The Hole in the Wind" is set in October when the sea can be rough with strong winds and floods: "It was October and we wondered / *what are these trees with silver leaves*?" (248-49) or in a variation, "It was October and we wondered / where can they go—the hurt souls?" (275-76). The narrator always puts forward questions and comments on the connection

between life and death and the souls of human beings: "Do you think their souls were wounded / with their bodies? / Where can they go—the hurt souls?" (173-74). From line 235 to the end (line 293) the poet's own voice comes in, sometimes in the form of the personal pronoun *we*, reflecting on her own and her family's experiences on Juist.[9] This voice is, again, juxtaposed by the narrator's questions about the souls. And again, this voice is juxtaposed by comments like, "Every year someone / is swept away by the tides, lost / to the currents near Juist" (245-47) to draw the reader's attention to the fact that the dangers of the North Sea are perennial. This aspect is already referred to at the beginning of the poem, when the years of the tidal waves are listed, the last entry being as recent as "1995." In the last passages of the poem (277-93) Bhatt's voice comes in again, this time making it into a "she" in order to remove herself from the figure that is speaking. In the last two stanzas, the poet refers to "The Idea of Order at Key West" by Wallace Stevens (1935) which can be characterised as a poem of a creative act of the mind. The mind, here referred to as "she," "was the single artificer of the world / In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea / Whatever self it had, became the self / That was her song, for she was the maker" (37-40).[10] In Stevens's poem the sea becomes the self of the song created by the mind, whereas the mind "knew that there never was a world for her / Except the one she sang and, singing made." This is contrasted with the male (Ramon Fernandez) concept of order and demarcations. In Sujata Bhatt's poem, the last lines are as follows:

> The sea was hissing sounds
> she could not follow. The sea was more
> than she could ever know.
> The spirits of the island retreated
> with the waves. And though she walked fearless
> beside the North Sea—there was no order
> in her mind. And the song
> she would have sung
> hardened in her eyes. (285-93)

In these lines, it becomes clear that it is not the poet, speaking in the female voice, who is the single artificer of world, but that the sea is the relentless, obscure and ever-dangerous producer of a tragedy that will never come to an end for the people who live near it. The spirits and in this sense the souls of the dead might be calm when the sea is calm too, but when the tidal waves return, the atmosphere reminds people of their fate as well as of the dangers the North Sea forever entails. Being overwhelmed by the tragedies of the people, the narrator of the poem is unable to follow the sounds, and is unable to sing, as the song, which might be one of the "Sturmflutlieder"—of death and melancholy—"hardened in her eyes." In the last line Bhatt comes back to the visionary imagination, the notion of *seeing things* to underline the idea of the title of the poem "The Hole in the Wind." On the one hand it represents a window to the sea and the sun, to life that is connected to the forces of nature; on the other it represents a window to the world, to different concepts of life and death.

The poet fulfilled the commission from the Southbank Centre and BBC Radio Drama for a "ghost" poem by following the method of 'organic poetry'[11] as defined by the Russian-Welsh-American poet Denise Levertov.[12] At the same time the surreal and supernatural that enters Bhatt's poem shows it to be indebted to the Gothic novel. This connection is reinforced by Bhatt's concern with subjects such as the soul of man, the guilty conscience, or, more generally, pain and suffering. The poem brings to mind one primary example of this genre in German literature related to the North Sea and the superstitions belonging to it: the novella *The Ghost Rider* by Theodor Storm.[13] In "The Hole in the Wind" the poet thus blends techniques of writing (organic poetry, dramatic narrative), combines genres (the ghost poem, the gothic) and reinterprets and rewrites myth in what can be called a syncretic[14] way of writing. The landscape of the poem, similar to the setting in a Gothic novel, includes contrasting elements like massiveness and calm, danger and safety, uprootedness and wholeness, strangeness and familiarity. Unlike many Gothic novels, however, the poem does not pass moral judgement: the captain who lost his family through his own ignorance is not judged; nor

are the sailors who were found with the flesh of their mates in their pockets. The poet simply asks the question: "Did the soul of the sailor who was eaten / meet the soul of the sailor who ate him?" (264-65). Although this isn't judgement, there is a sadness in the wistful existential questioning reflecting the sadness of the stories, which are as human as they are strange—like that of "the deaf sailor [who] "laughs and laughs / a silent laughter for the isle of Juist. / He's Polynesian: dark and deaf. / But alive" (62-65). In these lines the poet plays with the word *deaf* which sounds similar to *death* and therefore makes *deaf* and *alive* appear to be antonyms, as well as with the weird situation that a "dark and deaf" sailor when he is laughing makes a sound like "a lull in the storm" (61). There is something continuous and dynamic connected with the sea, ever-dangerous, ever-present, reflected in the dramatic narrative which is also characterised by the device of foreshadowing: "At first there was only fog: / white, soft one could still believe / in life. My daughter / could still dream of marriage" (142-45), showing the dreams and aspirations of the people that are later destroyed by a storm. The poem ends on a metaphysical note with the affirmation that death and loss, as well as an awareness of pain, are essential to human life accompanied by disorder, possibility, uprootedness, no ending: the search of the unquiet soul. This again refers to Hinduism as explained above.

In the poem, the great value of cultural encounter is suggested by pointing out the interdependence of life experience, existential questioning, Hinduism and aesthetic ambition. By shifting the subject to a German background, especially regarding the region and (partly) the use of language, Sujata Bhatt shows that she has—in contrast to earlier poems in which she focuses on India while living in the USA and on America while living in Germany—the "power to control and give shape to any given environment in order not to be intimidated or overwhelmed by its foreignness."[15] Simultaneously, she draws on the metaphor of the "broken mirrors"[16] which represents the workings of the fragmented memory and the new cultural environments which are transformed into new and challenging perspectives on a seemingly archaic theme. Thus, in "The Hole in the Wind" the poet's meeting with the North German

world, in which she discovers an unconscious concept of life and death, is related to Hinduism as part of her 'mental landmarks.'

Sujata Bhatt evidently feels the need to rewrite literature, in that traditional epics, myths or stories can be perceived as subtexts of her poems. However, though Sujata Bhatt's work is characterized by a particular combination of cultural influences in terms of a blended identity, an intercultural or syncretic way of writing that shows mutual respect and a reciprocal exchange of values and beliefs and is basically dialogical, this mode of writing is to some degree typical of the eclecticism of twentieth-century poetry, in which figures from all manner of pantheons may enter and act without conflict. It is rare for Bhatt to subscribe to a single orthodoxy; she has the knowledge of many faiths, and many mythologies, and she instinctively takes something from some or all as her sustenance.[17]

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NOTES

[1]Sujata Bhatt, "From Gujarat to Connecticut to Bremen," unpublished manuscript (1988) 4.

[2]Sujata Bhatt, *Augatora* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2000) 16.

[3]Bhatt, "From Gujarat to Connecticut to Bremen," 4.

[4]Bernd Schulte, *Die Dynamik des Interkulturellen in den postkolonialen Literaturen englischer Sprache* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1993) 74.

[5]Sujata Bhatt, "The Hole in the Wind," *PN-Review* 24.1 (no. 117, September-October 1997): 17-20. Further line references are in the text. The poem is also published in the volume *Augatora*.

[6]This information is taken from interviews with Sujata Bhatt as well as from the footnotes to "The Hole in the Wind," *PN-Review*.

[7]Joseph Swann, "Transcultural Identity in the Poetry of Sujata Bhatt: *Comparative Approach*" (unpublished manuscript), presented at the conference "Towards a Transcultural Future: Literature and Society in a Post-Colonial World," Aachen / Liège, 31 Mai-4 June 2000. I am grateful to Joseph Swann to let me have his paper before publication.

[8]"Oh mother, the wind blows so strong, tonight we will drown" [translation mine]. This brings to mind Goethe's poem "Der Erlkönig" "Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind? / Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind,"which is of course also about death.

[9]Sujata Bhatt at a reading on Monday, 5 June 2000.

[10]Wallace Stevens, "The Idea of Order at Key West," Alexander W. Allison, et. al., ed., *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (New York: Norton, 1983) 556-57.

[11]"Coleridge, following the lead of the German critic, A. W. Schlegel, distinguished between mechanic form, which is a preexistent shape such as we impose on wet clay by a mold, and organic form, which, as Coleridge says, 'is innate; it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form.' To Coleridge, in other words, as to other organicists in literary criticism, a good poem is like a growing plant which evolves, by an internal energy, into the organic unity which constitutes its achieved form." M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 4th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston 1981) 67.

[12]See Denise Levertov, *The Poet in the World: Essays 1960-1973* (New York: New Directions, 1973).

[13]Theordor Storm was born in Husum (the North coast of Germany) in 1817 and died in Hademarschen in 1888.

[14]According to Christopher Balme "syncretism is based on mutual respect and reciprocal exchange of values and beliefs" in regard to religious contact. "By analogy, one could extrapolate that, in general, cultures which find themselves in a process of rapid change, crisis and acculturation are continually involved, consciously or unconsciously, in similar processes of reinterpretation; there is constant re-evaluation of cultural practices, . . . In the realm of literature and art, writers and artists involved in creating and working in syncretic processes are having to refashion meanings from diverse cultural sources to create a new quilt in which the seams have varying degrees of visibility." Christopher Balme, "Inventive Syncretism: The Concept of the Syncretic in Intercultural Discourse," *Fusion of Cultures?*, ed. P. O. Stummer and C. Balme, Cross/Cultures 26, ASNEL Papers 2 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996) 11.

[15]Sujata Bhatt, *From Gujarat to Connecticut to Bremen* (unpublished MS, 1988) 4.

[16]For further reading and a discussion of the notion of the "broken mirrors" see Cecile Sandten, *Broken Mirrors: Interkulturalität am Beispiel der indischen Lyrikerin Sujata Bhatt* (Frankfurt/M.: Lang, 1998). The title *Broken Mirrors*, is explained in relation to Salman Rushdie's essay collection, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1991) who also used the expression.

[17]Levertov 77.

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"The Hole in the Wind" from the Author's Point of View

SUJATA BHATT

In June 1995, when I received a letter from the Literature Department at the South Bank Centre in London, inviting me to participate in a 'ghost poem series' they were planning jointly with BBC Radio Drama, I was in a phase of transition: between books and between homes. My third book, *The Stinking Rose* had just been published in March of that year and I had done an extensive reading tour in England to launch the book. I had written a few new poems since the manuscript of *The Stinking Rose* was finished, however I had no clear idea about my next book. Also, I knew that my selected poems (*Point No Point*) drawing on my first three books was scheduled to be published before a completely new collection could come out. And so I felt that I had time: time to take a break from writing and to wait for new ideas, time to think about other aspects of my life. Also, the prospect of having a volume of selected poems due soon felt like a major turning point to me.

In April my husband and I bought a house not far from the flat where we lived and by June we were fully absorbed in renovating the house in preparation for the big move. And it was during this rather turbulant phase in my life that I received the offer from the South Bank Centre to write a ghost poem for their programme. It was a pleasant and welcome surprise. Over the years I've especially enjoyed working on commissioned poems because the assignments have invariably led me to topics and themes I probably would not have thought of writing about on my own. And so for example, the idea of writing a 'ghost poem' would not have occurred to me had it not been for this invitation.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debsandten01001.htm>.

I still remember the terms of the commission: the poem had to be approximately ten to fifteen minutes long and it could deal with any subject as long as it was a 'ghost poem'. We (myself and seven other poets) were invited to read our ghost poems in London on December 13th, 1995 at the Royal Festival Hall where the BBC would be recording us. (Later, the poems were broadcast separately during 1996.)

As soon as I read the letter, I felt intrigued and challenged and yes, inspired although at first I had no clue as to what my subject would be. Just the idea of a 'ghost poem' as opposed to a 'ghost story' greatly appealed to me. In fact, I immediately replied to the South Bank Centre, accepting their commission without knowing how I would write the poem. Well, it was June and I had until the end of November to submit it, so I felt determined and confident that somehow I would find a way to write it. After a few days I decided that I would focus on Juist, a German island in the North Sea. My family and I had just spent Easter there. It was our first visit to this island and from the beginning I had found it spooky and ghostly. I also found it 'exotic.' I'm sure that for many northern Europeans it's simply an ordinary island—but for me it is an exotic place. I did not expect that much (if anything) had been written about Juist in English language poetry and so this was another reason for me to write about Juist.

Juist is a long, thin island just off the German coast. One of the East Friesian islands, deceptively close to the mainland. If one travels by ferry it can only be reached at irregular hours because of the strong tides. Another characteristic aspect about this island is that there are no cars on it except for the doctors' and the fire brigade's vehicles. Nowadays it's really a family island, offering wonderful walks along the beach or through the sandy undergrowth of the inner, middle section of the island. Some areas are wildlife protection zones. On a nice, warm and sunny spring day it is hard to imagine that this island and the waters right off the shore have been a continuous setting for human tragedy and disaster. A great deal has been recorded about the storms, floods and ship wrecks of the past centuries. But even today if one talks to the islanders one realises that the danger and the unpre-

dictability of the currents of the North Sea are very real. Sudden accidents at sea and severe floods continue to occur and the islanders live with this acute sense of insecurity.

Once I had decided that the island of Juist would be the subject or the setting of my poem, I started to worry about the length of the work: it had to be at least ten minutes long. And this was another difficulty, as I initially saw it. In my first book, *Brunizem* I have a poem entitled "Search for My Tongue" and one entitled "Well, Well, Well,"each of these poems takes about ten minutes to read aloud. In *Monkey Shadows* (my second collection) I have more ten minute poems: one entitled "Mozartstrasse 18" and another entitled "Maninagar Days." However, despite the fact that I had 'done it' before, that I had experience in writing long poems, I found the prospect of writing another long poem daunting. Perhaps it was because the earlier poems had just happened to turn out that way. I had not *planned* writing 'ten minute poems': rather in many ways I consider them to be lucky poems that seemed to have written themselves without much intervention from me. Before "The Hole in the Wind" was written (and before I had even started doing the research for this poem) I was concerned, on a very abstract level, about how I would maintain the poetic tension in the language as well as the reader's interest (especially considering that it would also have to be approved by BBC Radio Drama).

These thoughts and worries lingered in the back of my mind as we finished renovating our new house. We moved in at the very end of July and in August I started to do what turned out to be extensive research connected with the island of Juist and its history. I was also interested in studying wave and storm patterns. I read memoirs and accounts of legal proceedings. All the books I had access to were in German or in Low German. There was no time to obtain English books. I wanted the poem to be grounded in reality, despite all the imaginary details I knew I would add to it. Another turning point for me, after our move, was 'a room of my own'. For the first time since my daughter's birth in 1989 I had my own study—something basic

and crucial for any writer and something for which I was very grateful. I suppose writers invariably focus on the more down to earth elements connected with their craft: where to buy the cheapest paper, where to find the nicest pens, etc. And so I also associate my study as an important element connected with the writing of "The Hole in the Wind," which was one of the first poems I wrote after our move.

In October 1995 we made a second trip to Juist. And in early November I felt that I had to start writing the poem. My mind was full of a great deal of information and I still did not know how I would compose or structure the poem. I had a vague idea that I would use different voices and that I would break up the narrative—techniques I had used before. However, the poem itself was a mystery to me. I could not predict what it would contain or what it would sound like. I remember that I felt acutely desperate. I felt that I was in a 'now or never' situation, I had to plunge into the writing of the poem in order to see how it would develop. As usual, I could not plot it out beforehand but hoped that the poem would 'write itself' which in fact is what happened. Once I had written down the opening two lines of the poem: "The hole in the wind where the scream lives— / The scream that is the voice" the rest flowed rapidly. The poem was ready within three days. I was in a trance, at another level of being, during the writing of it.

For me, the structure or the form of the poem and the rhythm, cadence, metre, tone, diction, syntax within the poem all come together with the subject matter. The poem comes out as a piece, as an organic unit, if it's going to work. Frequently, what happens to me is that I might have one line in my head and if I write it down it leads to more lines. Then, in a few hours or a few days I might have a poem. A poem has to have its own life and its own rhythm—just as a baby is born with its own blood in its veins. When I'm writing a poem it has to come naturally. The poem has to create its own form while it is in the process of being written. I cannot impose a form upon it. Of course, in the end I have to polish it up until it sounds right. I always have to read my work aloud while I'm in the process of writing and

revising. When I feel that I have a certain rhythm in my mind that's connected with the images and ideas, then I feel that I'm able to write. When I have a phase where I feel that I can't write, it usually means that I have no music in my mind, or no thoughts that are working in a way connected with music. Also, I feel that the poem has to have a certain energy to begin with—and when I'm writing this energy has to appear and take over, so to speak. I attribute my style and my voice to sheer luck. In a way, I am blind to my own technique. Ultimately, I rely so much upon instinct and intuition.

To some extent, everything that a writer knows enters and influences anything that he or she writes. One's knowledge is always there along with one's vocabulary. Often, (especially for me), one is not conscious of this 'knowledge' or of one's system of beliefs while absorbed in the process of writing. For example, my concept of Hinduism (by that I mean my own interpretation of Hinduism) as well as my private philosophy has appeared in "The Hole in the Wind" but I was not aware of that until Cecile Sandten questioned me about it. As far as other influences are concerned, I did not know of Goethe's poem "Der Erlkönig" nor Theodor Storm's *Der Schimmelreiter* or any other work of his when I was working on "The Hole in the Wind." On the other hand, Wallace Stevens' poem "The Idea of Order at Key West" was very present in my mind when I reached the concluding part of the poem. The simple reason for that is that it is one of my favourite poems in the English language. Of course, I have inverted its meaning in my conclusion to "The Hole in the Wind." Furthermore, my reference to Stevens is quite oblique: a slight hint. German readers, however, are usually not familiar with Stevens' poem and so I provided Cecile Sandten with this information which she was able to use in her essay.

I find it interesting that several reviewers have observed a connection between "The Hole in the Wind" and my poem "Augatora" (both of which appear in my collection *Augatora*). My curiosity about the relationship between the words *window* and *wind* eventually led me to *augatora*, a word which comes from the gothic *augadauro*, a completely

different etymological root from the Nordic roots of *window*. In my poem "Augatora" I have juxtaposed these different words, different etymological roots and in a sense, different interpretations for the physical object 'window.' On a deeper level however, the poems "The Hole in the Wind" and "Augatora" are completely independent of each other.

The poem, "The Hole in the Wind" as it is now (in *Augatora*), takes about twenty minutes to read aloud. However, for the reading at the Royal Festival Hall on December 13, 1995, the poem was fifteen minutes long. Afterwards (and before its publication in *PN Review*) I made a few revisions and restored a few stanzas from my first draft that had been left out so that the poem would not exceed fifteen minutes. The manuscript of "The Hole in the Wind" and my accompanying letter to the editor had another bizarre fate: The IRA bomb that exploded in Manchester on Saturday, June 15, 1996, destroyed among other things, the offices of *PN Review* and Carcanet Press. A large part of the ceiling collapsed on top of the editor's desk where my poem was lying. Fortunately, no one was working in those offices on that day. But for a long time afterwards I felt spooked thinking about how my manuscript had literally been bombed. As if the tragic aspects of the poem had taken another macabre twist.

On a more positive note however, the poem has been well received by audiences and readers. And critics from different parts of the world have been generous and enthusiastic in their appraisal of it. As a writer, this has given me a tremendous sense of relief and it has also surprised me because to some extent it is always difficult to evaluate one's own work. I find that I have a tendency to take my poems for granted.

Finally, I would like to say that I have truly enjoyed reading Cecile Sandten's detailed, perceptive and original analysis of "The Hole in the Wind."

Bremen
Germany