

Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate



Volume 10 (2000/2001) Numbers 2-3
Waxmann Münster / New York



Editor's Note

When, some ten years ago, my younger colleagues and I wanted to launch a new journal for critical debate, we asked some very well known scholars in the field of Literature in English to support us by joining the editorial board. One of them was John F. Steadman, with whom I had been privileged to practice critical debate when I met him socially in Münster. He instantly complied with our wish, and honoured us by letting us publish his article on *The House of Fame* and, through the years, gave us his advice with unfailing amiability. When he now told us that he wanted to withdraw, we of course understand and respect that decision, but we shall miss him very much. We shall think of him with gratitude and affection and we wish him all the best.

Inge Leimberg

Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate

Published by *Connotations: Society for Critical Debate*

EDITORS

Inge Leimberg (Münster) and Matthias Bauer (Saarbrücken)

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Lothar Černý, Michael Steppat, Dieter Kranz and Christiane Lang
Secretary: Jutta Müller

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

Matthias Bauer, Universität des Saarlandes, Department of English (4.3),
P.O. Box 151150, 66041 Saarbrücken, Germany
Email: editors@connotations.de <http://www.connotations.de>

EDITORIAL BOARD

M. H. Abrams, Cornell University
Christiane Bimberg, Universität Dortmund
John Russell Brown, Middlesex University
Paul Budra, Simon Fraser University
Eleanor Cook, University of Toronto
Elizabeth Story Donno, The Huntington Library
Judith Dundas, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
William E. Engel, Nashville, Tennessee
A. C. Hamilton, Queen's University, Ontario
John P. Hermann, University of Alabama
John Hollander, Yale University
Lothar Hönnighausen, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn
Arthur F. Kinney, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Maynard Mack, Yale University
Frances M. Malpezzi, Arkansas State University
J. Hillis Miller, University of California, Irvine
Dale B. J. Randall, Duke University
Alan Rudrum, Simon Fraser University
John M. Steadman, The Huntington Library
Zdeněk Stříbrný, Charles University, Prague
Leona Toker, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
John Whalen-Bridge, National University of Singapore
Joseph Wiesenfarth, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Waxmann Münster / New York



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

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

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

Connotations is published three times a year. Private subscribers are welcome to join the *Connotations Society for Critical Debate*. Members receive the journal as well as invitations to the *Connotations* symposia. The suggested annual fee is € 40 (\$ 37, £ 27); reduced rate (e.g. for students) € 20 (\$ 18, £ 14). Please write to: *Connotations*, Department of English (4.3), Universität des Saarlandes, 66041 Saarbrücken, Germany. Email: editors@connotations.de.

Libraries and other institutional subscribers write to: Waxmann Verlag, Steinfurter Str. 555, 48159 Münster, Germany; or: Waxmann Publishing Co., P.O. Box 1318, New York, NY 10028, U.S.A. Email: connotations@waxmann.com. Annual subscriptions are in Europe € 40, in the U.S. and all other countries \$ 60, including postage.

A selection of articles and responses is freely available on the internet (<http://www.connotations.de>).

© Waxmann Verlag GmbH, Münster/New York 2002
All Rights Reserved
Printed in Germany
ISSN 0939-5482

Connotations is a member of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals.
Contributions are indexed, for example, in the *MLA Bibliography*, the
World Shakespeare Bibliography and the *IBZ/IBR*.

Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate

Volume 10 (2000/2001) Numbers 2-3

The Poetics of Conversation in 20th-Century Literature and Criticism (I)

Conversation and the Poetics of Modernism

LOTHAR HÖNNIGHAUSEN

106

How to Have a Conversation with Gertrude Stein:
An Essay in Four Steps

HEATHER CASS WHITE

124

Robert Frost's Conversational Style

MAURICE CHARNEY

147

"He do the Police in Different Voices": A Bakhtinian Take
on Conversational Modes in some Modern British Poets

RAJEEV PATKE

160

"Akind of musical conversation":

Britten and Crozier's *Let's Make an Opera!*

REBEKKA FRITZ, INGE LEIMBERG and NINA SANDMEIER

175

Conversational Echoes

in Anne Fine, *Goggle-Eyes* (1989)

THOMAS KULLMANN

207

'Conversation' among Pragmatist Philosophers JOHN WHALEN-BRIDGE	224
--	-----

Poetics and Conversation NEAL R. NORRICK	243
---	-----

Other ARTICLES and DISCUSSIONS

"Momentary visions of permanence" in the Stuart Masque or the Eloquence of Speech through Picture THIERRY DEMAUBUS	268
--	-----

Vaughan and Divine Inspiration: A Reply to Donald Dickson JONATHAN NAUMAN	287
---	-----

The Visuality of Personification in Richard Savage's <i>The Wanderer: A Vision</i> SANDRO JUNG	293
--	-----

Hopkins's Portraits of the Artist: Between the Biographical and the Ideological DENNIS SOBOLEV	304
--	-----

The Poetics of Conversation in 20th-Century Literature and Criticism

Critical debate, as it is practised by the authors and editors of *Connotations*, is akin to conversation. This is an added reason why we are glad to share with our readers the contributions to our most recent symposium, and invite them to continue its discussions by writing responses and by taking part in our next conference in 2003. The second group of talks will be published in the next issue of *Connotations*. My co-editors and I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for its financial support, and the director and staff of the Gleimhaus in Halberstadt, where the symposium took place on August 5-9, 2001, for their hospitality. Gleim's "Temple of Friendship" proved a most congenial place for discussions on "The Poetics of Conversation."

-

Matthias Bauer

Conversation and the Poetics of Modernism

LOTHAR HÖNNIGHAUSEN

Poetry as a literary genre encompasses many modes but *conversational poetry* or *conversation in poetry* is not what comes first to mind when one tries to define the essence of poetry. In fact, poetry and conversation constitute different kinds of discourse with different ideological goals and different communicative appeals and responses. While conversation is primarily a societal phenomenon and as such plays a major role in novels and plays, poetry's prime end and mode of communication, at least from the era of Romanticism through Modernism to Postmodernism, is to affect the sensibility of individuals individually and intimately.

In contrast, conversation—whether we think of the enlightenment aristocrats of the eighteenth century or the salons of the nineteenth century bourgeoisie—was very much a public affair. In this regard, it is helpful to remind oneself of the social and scenic quality of the term *Konversationsstücke*, *conversational pieces* in art history, a subspecies of *genre painting*, depicting social gatherings both in interior scenes (Jan Steen, *The Bean King's Festival*, 1668; Jan Vermeer, *Christ at the House of Mary and Martha*, 1655) and as *fêtes galantes* in stylized landscapes (Antoine Watteau, *The Champs Élysées*, 1717-21, Édouard Manet, *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, 1863) in which conversation plays a major role. As for *conversational pieces* in literary history, T. S. Eliot's poetry volume, *Prufrock and Other Observations* 1917, contains not only interesting examples of poems in which conversation or conversational elements play a role but even one poem that is entitled "Conversation Galante."

The French title of this poem is a reminder of the impact on modernism of the great *conversational* tradition of *salons* and *fêtes*

galantes and particularly of the revival of interest in them through the neo-rococo of Verlaine and Beardsley. In T. S. Eliot's "Conversation Galante," the speaker's flourish of parodic moon images ("I observe: 'Our sentimental friend the moon!'" Eliot 33)¹ elicits from the female respondent a commentary that is not exactly appreciative: "How you digress!" His second attempt to evoke for her a romantic setting through an "exquisite nocturne"—perhaps by Chopin—"and moonshine" is hardly more successful: "Does this refer to me?" Finally, she counters his resentful remark ("You, madam, are the eternal humorist, / The eternal enemy of the absolute" and "indifferent and imperious") with the terse ironic question: "Are we then so serious?" Obviously, the elegant French title is in ironic contrast to this poem on a failing love affair.

Erotic failure is also the theme of T. S. Eliot's "Portrait of a Lady," a more extended literary *conversation piece* in the same volume. In contrast to poetry, where the 'authority' usually rests with one person, in conversation it is likely to shift between several speakers. Furthermore, people respond differently to each kind of discourse, reserving emotional identification, a connotative engagement of their imagination and a contemplative mood for poetry and expecting a more rational, informative and denotative kind of communication when entering into a conversation. In accordance with our cultural code, most of us associate with poetry a stronger emphasis on form and, along with that, a much greater intensity of experience. Obviously, then, there exists some kind of basic difference or even antagonism between poetry and conversation, and from this predicament several questions arise: what is the relationship of the poetic and the conversational in specific literary periods, for instance in modernism? How do individual authors incorporate conversation or conversational elements in their poetry? What is the cultural basis, what the aesthetic function of this use of conversational elements in particular poems?

As a first step in answering these questions, I shall study a few pertinent poems by a leading modernist poet, T. S. Eliot, and against

this background I shall attempt an overview of the use of conversational elements in the poetry of another major American poet, William Carlos Williams. I mean to engage in this comparison because Eliot and Williams have been taken as representatives of two opposite, or at least different, poetic traditions and because their popularity curves reflect major ideological as well as aesthetic changes. After Williams had unfairly suffered comparative neglect up to the Seventies, the situation since then has just as unfairly been reversed. T. S. Eliot has been ousted from his prime place and is denigrated as alien to the great American tradition and as a euro-centric *poeta doctus*, while Williams is regarded the true heir of Whitman and the forefather of Ginsburg and Olson. Perhaps the study of the similar and different use of conversational elements in Eliot and Williams may prepare the ground for a more balanced reappraisal of their poetry and for a better understanding of an aspect of the *Poetics of Modernism* that so far has not been systematically explored.

"Portrait of a Lady" is not just the record of a conversation, but a *poem* because of its form, a montage of three different "conversations" ironically presented and reflected upon by a first person narrator: one conversation taking place in December after a Chopin concert ("We have been, let us say, to hear the latest Pole / Transmit the Preludes [of Chopin], through his hair and finger-tips" Eliot 16), a second one in spring ("Now that lilacs are in bloom / She has a bowl of lilacs in her room" 17), and the third and, presumably, last one, in October ("I have been wondering frequently of late / . . . Why we have not developed into friends" 19). As a consequence of the narrator's frustrated and remorseful reflections ("Well! and what if she should die some afternoon" 20), the "Portrait of a Lady" becomes also an ironic self-portrait. The awkward relationship between a reluctant male and a sentimentalizing female is beautifully captured in the manneristic description of the conversation:

—And so the conversation slips
Among velleities and carefully caught regrets

Through attenuated tones of violins
 Mingled with remote cornets
 And begins.
 'You do not know how much they mean to me, my friends,
 And how, how rare and strange it is, to find
 In a life composed so much, so much of odds and ends,
 [For indeed I do not love it . . . you knew? you are not blind!
 How keen you are!]
 To find a friend who has these qualities,
 . . . ' (Eliot 16)

"Portrait of Lady" is a successful and original poem because Eliot's parodic handling of the conversational fragments agrees well with the overall ironic design of this poem on "unrequited love," a theme that so far had only be treated tragically.

Poems as diverse as "Mr. Apollinax" and the *Waste Land* show the range in Eliot's use of fragments of conversation. Mr. Apollinax (*nomen est omen*), a strangely mythic figure associated with Frigilion, Priapus, Poseidon, and centaurs, appears, disconcertingly, in the pretentious and trivial world of contemporary America:

When Mr. Apollinax visited the United States
 His laughter tinkled among the teacups.
 I thought of Frigilion, that shy figure among the birch-trees,
 And of Priapus in the shrubbery
 Gaping at the lady in the swing.
 In the palace of Mrs. Phlaccus, at Professor Channing-Cheetah's
 He laughed like an irresponsible foetus.
 His laughter was submarine and profound
 Like the old man of the sea's
 Hidden under coral islands
 . . . (Eliot 31)

While the narrator is keenly aware of Mr. Apollinax's uncanny and grotesque impact ("I looked for the head of Mr. Apollinax rolling under a chair . . . / I heard the beat of centaur's hoofs over the hard turf" 31), the fragments of the conversations at the reception show that his hosts are not:

'He is a charming man'—'But after all what did he mean?'—

'His pointed ears. . . . He must be unbalanced,'—
 'There was something he said that I might have challenged.'

The party guests by their inane chatter serve to contrastively emphasize the mythic aura and to unwittingly suggest ("pointed ears . . . unbalanced") Mr. Apollinax's faunlike, otherworldly nature. The poem is important among Eliot's early works by marking his advance beyond societal satire towards creating symbolic deep structures, his response to James Joyce's "mythic method," as he had called it in his review of *Ulysses*.

In the rich intertextual cosmos of *The Waste Land*, comprising quotations from Ezekiel to Hermann Hesse, the conversational assumes new forms and functions. Fragments of conversation like "Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch" (Eliot 61) or "You gave me hyacinths first a year ago; / They called me the hyacinth girl" (62) enter into symbolic relationships with other segments in the text. The German sentence becomes part of the thematic complex *migration, alienation* and the words of the hyacinth girl expand the leitmotif of the "dull roots" and "dried tubers" in the opening passage ("April is the cruellest month"). At the same time, the conversational elements instigate interesting stylistic contrasts and tensions as well as affinities within their immediate verbal context, for instance, between the words of the hyacinth girl and the quotation from Richard Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*: "Frisch weht der Wind / Der Heimat zu / Mein Irisch Kind, / Wo weilest du?" (62).

The end of section I "Burial of the Dead" constitutes a particularly striking example of how creatively Eliot worked with conversational elements because he succeeds in weaving several quotations and allusions into what reads like one piece of conversational speech linking and integrating Stetson, a contemporary, with Mylae, the Roman sea-battle of 260 BC, and the dog-image from the dirge in Webster's *White Devil* with Baudelaire's confidential address to his "hypocrite lecteur . . . mon frère."

'Stetson!

'You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!

'That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
 'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
 'Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
 'O keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
 'Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!
 'You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!
 (Eliot 63)

In addition to the use of short and isolated conversational elements, functioning in the context like quotations, Eliot also introduces more extended conversational segments. In section II of *The Waste Land*, "A Game of Chess," he contrasts with the dehumanized attractions of his decadent Cleopatra (an ingenious rewrite of Enobarbus's speech from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* II.ii.190) the more trivial allurements of contemporary women, ranging from the neurotic Bloomsbury type ("My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me" 65) to women from the working class milieu of Lil and her false friend ("When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said— / I didn't mince my words . . . he wants a good time / And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said. / Oh is there, she said" 66).

Like T. S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams draws on material that would have been regarded as *unpoetic* and even *taboo* in other periods of literary history. But he transforms the bit of conversational back and forth between "the girl" and "the barkeeper" into the stanzas of the poem, "At the Bar," which from the girl's opening flourish "Hi, open up" to the barkeeper's warning "You'll blow a fuse," proves a tightly knit aesthetic whole.

At the Bar

Hi, open up a dozen.

Wha'cha tryin' ta do—
 charge ya batteries?

Make it two.

Easy girl!

You'll blow a fuse if
 ya keep that up. (EP 431)²

One gets the same impression from the poem with the ironic title "A Fond Farewell" which is a conversation only in the sense that its tirade of vituperative exclamations implies a listening partner. What makes this rather one-sided conversation a poem is the balance between the continuing angry outpour and its careful organization in four stanzas of three lines each. At a close look, one discovers a subtle rhythm deriving from the tension between verse and syntax and between run-on lines and periods. The beginning and the end ("You? . . ."; "I'm / going elsewhere") are effectively emphasized. However, what moves one in this poem is the mixture of comic bravura and psychic and social misery ("sucking / my life blood out"; "baker and garbage must be served"), off-set by the masterful form:

A Fond Farewell

You? Why you're
just sucking
my life blood out.

What do I care
if the baker
and the garbage man

must be served.
Take what
you might give

and be damned
to you. I'm
going elsewhere. (EP 422)

The greatness of Williams poetry derives from the fact that his professional life as a doctor and his lifelong exposure to the social problems and the human predicaments of his patients appealed to his creative imagination. The outcome might be a humorous poem like the following one of the poems entitled "Detail":

Detail

Doc, I bin lookin for you
I owe you two bucks.

How you doin?

Fine. When I get it

I'll bring it up to you. (EP 427)

But the result could also be, as in the case of the telephone-call, in which aging Dr. Williams tries to get rid of an insistent mother, a self-accusing and deeply disturbing poem. Williams captures admirably the contrast between the woman's confused and anxious talk and his own detached tone in which he tries to make her call again at a more convenient time. Against this bulk of the poem he sets as a dramatic counterpoint the concluding punch line: "I, I, I don't think it's brEathin'." This finish reveals to the reader that the selfcritical poem is not only entitled "To Close" because it marks the conclusion of the book.

It stands to reason that an author who could turn a telephone call or a chat with a patient into poetry, would draw inspiration from family life. What appears amazing though is the range of poetic forms and moods arising from this source. "Promenade" is a poem, in which Williams, the family man, takes his little son out for a walk, so that his wife Flossie can relax and remain undisturbed while fixing breakfast. The poem is loosely structured, evolving in three parts of different length and numerous irregular stanzas. It has a lot of movement, many references to changing scenery and numerous short segments of authentic baby-talk (see for instance, the repetitions of the word "splash"). Its achievement lies in giving shape to the material while retaining an air of improvisation. This fits very well the self-irony of the situation ("Well, mind, here we have/ our little son beside us: / a little diversion before breakfast" EP 132) in which the poet toys with the idea that "A poem might come of it?" but instead heroically enters into his role of devoted husband and entertainer of his son "Oh, be useful. Save annoyance to Flossie . . ."; "Splash the water up! (Splash it up, Sonny! . . . See it splash! Ah, mind, / see it splash! It is alive." The theme of being at the same time a family man and a poet is given a parodic turn in part III when, in making a wreath for Sonny, he playfully alludes to the time-honored tradition of crowning poets:

Oh, then a wreath! Let's
refresh something they
used to write well of.

Two fern plumes. Strip them
to the mid-rib along one side.
Bind the tips with a grass stem.
Bend and intertwist the stalks at the back. So!
Ah! now we are crowned!
Now we are a poet! (EP 133)

In contrast to the very nimble and scenic early poem "Promenade," the late poem "The Horse Show" conveys in six block-like regular stanzas of seven lines a static situation, a talk between the 64 year-old Williams and his mother. However, this talk becomes the occasion of an epiphany ("Constantly near you, I never in my entire / sixty-four years knew you so well as yesterday / or half so well") adumbrated in the title "The Horse Show" and eventually captured in stanzas 6 and 7. This epiphany is to be seen as a development of and a counterpoint to the gist of the conversation in which son and mother "talk intimately of themselves" and touch on such things as her belief in a life-giving "spirit and the world of spirits." The theme of her boredom and her restless curiosity, introduced, in stanza 5, by her exclamation "Oh if I could only read!" (LP 186), is encapsulated in the image of the *horse show* with which she—like the boy in Joyce's story "Araby"—seems to associate a world of magic richness and wonder: "Tell me about the horse show. I have / been waiting all week to hear about it."

Mother darling, I wasn't able to get away.
Oh that's too bad. It was just a show;
they make the horses walk up and down
to judge them by their form, Oh is that
all? I tho't it was something else. Oh
they jump and run too. I wish you had been
there, I was so interested to hear about it.

The exchanges, in stanza 6, between the two partners are left without quotation marks and are presented mostly in run-on lines which makes this conversation appear as one continuous speech. This

has the effect of ironically leveling the distance between the mother's rich imaginations and her son's trivializing account of the factual ("It was just a show; they make the horses walk up and down"). We understand that the busy pediatrician Dr. Williams thinks he has more important things to do than attend a horseshow to entertain his senile mother with his account of it. But we realize that he has sadly missed the point when, in the last lines of the poem, she repeats her desire with that stubbornness which the very old share with the very young: "I wish you had been / there, I was so interested to hear about it." However, if the Dr. Williams in the poem is obtuse and callous, there is no doubt that the Dr. Williams, writing the poem, has had an epiphany and one that we share.

There is no doubt that the unorthodox use of everyday conversation in poetry presupposes a society increasingly uncertain not only about the traditional language of poetry but also about itself and eventually ready to dismantle the political hierarchies and social distinctions of the Victorian and pre-World War I era. These cultural changes made a profound impact on contemporary aesthetics such as the foregrounding of unpoetic subjects and unpoetic diction. Situations of ordinary life demanded an ordinary language. In terms of literary history this meant the modernists had to recover the language of poetry from the thematic and formal limitations of the *traditionally poetic*. It is in this historical context that exploration of conversation as a poetic means of expression became important. Colloquial tone, delight in the vernacular, lightness of touch, flexibility, also a new kind of interest in the sensuousness of the ordinary, which is quite different from the exotic sensuousness of the *fin de siècle*, are elements characterizing the new kind of poetry.

Several of these qualities are evident in the little poem "This Is Just to Say" which is not more than a poeticized kitchen note of Dr. Williams to his wife Flossie. The three stanzas of this poem with their subtle short lines are carefully if humorously wrought, the first sentence taking up the first two stanzas, the counterweighing second sentence making up the third stanza. The first stanza contains the

writer's confession of 'guilt,' the second shows consideration for his wife, whose breakfast plans he has crossed, the third shows, in the repetitions of the final flourish "so sweet / and so cold," that sensuous delight clearly outweighs moral considerations. The poem is so popular because the ironic play with the ordinary is off-set by an equally prominent shaping power.

This Is Just to Say

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were so delicious
so sweet
and so cold (EP 354)

In developing this shaping power, Williams, like other modernists, looked not so much to literary forebears as to contemporary artists. Norbert Bischoff has described the Armory Show of European and American avantgarde painting (1913), at which W. C. Williams read his two poems "Overture to a Dance of Locomotives" and "Portrait of a Woman in Bed," as the great event upsetting the flabbergasted American public but also inspiring American painters and poets.³ How this inspiration of the arts interacts with the irony of the conversational tone manifests itself in such poems as "To a Solitary Disciple."

As so often in Williams's conversational poems, the situation is not one in which two partners exchange views. Rather, it is the master whose speech pattern of insisting advice—a parody of an art lesson—is the ironic force informing the poem: stanza (1) "rather notice . . . than"; (2) "rather observe . . . than"; (3) "rather grasp . . . perceive how

. . . "; (4) "See how it fails!" (5) "Observe . . . It is true . . . "; (7) "But observe . . . observe." There are two nuances that are of particular interest in connection with the poetic use of conversational elements. In stanza 4, the teaching of rhetoric takes on a dramatic coloring: "See how it fails!" In the sentence connecting stanzas 5, 6, 7, the clause "It is true . . . But observe" serves to enhance the conversational element.

The gist of the master's lesson is the importance of observation and perception on the one hand and of facts, structure, architectonics on the other (the repetition of the order "to observe"; "how the dark/converging lines of the steeple / meet at the pinnacle;" "But observe / the oppressive weight / of the squat edifice"). This new modernist ideal is set against the late romantic penchant for rare coloring (shell-pink), painterly effects and fine writing. The last stanza draws the full consequence from this kind of poetic "statics," balancing against "the oppressive weight of the squat edifice" "the jasmine light / of the moon":

Solitary Disciple

Rather notice, mon cher,
that the moon is
tilted above
the point of the steeple
than that its color
is shell pink.

Rather observe
that it is early morning
than that the sky
is smooth
as a turquoise.

Rather grasp
how the dark
converging lines
of the steeple
meet at the pinnacle—
perceive how
its little ornament
tries to stop them—

. . .

But observe
 the oppressive weight
 of the squat edifice!
 Observe
 the jasmine lightness
 of the moon. (EP 167)

As the last stanza of "To a Solitary Disciple" iconically captures the contrapuntal pull and push of weight and lightness, the two-stanza poem "The Dish of Fruit" appears in its entirety as an icon. The two stanzas mirror the relation of the poem to Juan Gris's still life *Dish of Pears* in which the cubist projections of the table are also prominent. Moreover, the two stanzas embody the opposition between description and simile, between the two halves of a simile, between being and becoming, between thing and artwork, between painting and poetry.

Furthermore, there is the parodic parallel and opposition of the table and the poem: "four legs, by which / it becomes a table. Four lines / by which it becomes a quatrain" and "The table describes nothing—The poem . . . lifts the dish of fruit." This analogy is matched by its reversal, linking the beginning and the end ("The table describes / nothing . . . how will it describe / the contents of the poem") of this little masterpiece that emerges in one sentence, comprising its two halves in one unity: it is in this context that the elements of a conversational argument ("if we say . . . how will it") fulfill their ironic purpose, smoothing the process through which an abstract poetological proposition becomes a concrete poem:

The Dish of Fruit

The table describes
 nothing: four legs, by which
 it becomes a table. Four lines
 by which it becomes a quatrain,

the poem that lifts the dish
 of fruit, if we say it is like
 a table—how will it describe
 the contents of the poem? (LP 91)

While ordinarily poetological poems like love poems are far from being ironic, this is quite different with Williams whose contributions to both kinds of poetry are characterized by their ironic tone and, in conjunction with it, by their use of conversational elements. In fact, his "Portrait of a Lady" (EP 40) is as much a poetological *exercise* in stylizing and ironic deflating as it is a love poem. The extravagant praises of the beloved, inspired by the courtly paintings of Watteau and Fragonard but also by the manneristic metaphors of the Song of Solomon, are parodically undercut by the lady's terse realistic questions: "Your thighs are appletrees / whose blossoms touch the sky. / *Which sky?* The sky / where Watteau hung a lady's / slipper. Your knees / are a southern breeze *Agh! what sort of man was Fragonard?*" These questions annoy the enthused poet, seeing himself forced to give up his idealizing language and to adopt a conversational tone: "*—as if that answered anything.*" After he has been thus put down, it is only with some effort that he can recover his idealistic fervor ("One of those white summer days, / the tall grass of your ankles / flickers upon the shore,") only to be pulled down again with the question: "Which shore?" The comic outcome of his lady's insistent questioning—she repeats the question four times—is that his poetic rapture is completely deflated: "Agh, petals maybe. How / should I know . . . I said petals from an appletree."

In comparison with this parody of manneristic male playfulness in "Portrait of a Lady," the case of conversational dismantling of male postures in the poem with the indifferent title "Twelve Line Poem" is much more serious.

Pitiful lovers broken your loves
the head of a man
the parts disjointed of a woman
unshaved pushing forward

And you? Withdrawn caressive
the thighs limp eyes
filling with tears the lower lip
trembling, why do you try

so hard to be a man? You are

a lover! Why adopt
the reprehensible absurdities of
an inferior attitude? (LP 202)

After the first half of the poem has presented a realistic picture of the exhausted lover which is quite revealing in regard to Williams's view of sex and gender, the second part confronts the lover, under the pressures of his *machismo*, with the detached, ironic question: "why do you try / so hard to be a man? You are a lover! Why adopt / the reprehensible absurdities of / an inferior attitude?"

There are several "love poems" employing conversational elements to humorously explode male deficiencies. Among them, "The Gentle Rejoinder" (LP 59) is a comic and concise variant on the theme of male narcissism and obtuseness that in Henry James's famous story "The Beast in the Jungle" has such tragic consequences. In "The Gentle Rejoinder," the male partner uses the first and longer stanza to set forth his idyllic vision of catching sea-snails "like the old men I once saw / on the wharf at Villefranche." The female partner has the shorter second stanza to remind him of "something else you could catch . . . / if you wanted to." As it turns out, the stanza and, in a way the whole poem, moves towards her ironic and movingly diffident appeal in the last line: "But you probably / don't want to, do you?"

What seems important in regard to Williams's employment of conversational elements is that they depend on and often emerge from a short scene, the scenic and the conversational reinforcing each other in Williams's reality-oriented poetry. In the case of "The Act," there is even a one-line introductory description of the scene "There were the roses, in the rain." She discards his plea for not cutting the roses ("But they are so beautiful / where they are") with the ironic remark "Agh, we were all beautiful once." However, her flippant tone is belied by the grave and emotional manner in which Williams has him register her action: "and cut them and gave them to me / in my hand" (LP 96).

But Williams does not only use “conversational elements” to enhance and add weight to the thematic developments in his short “realistic” poems. In “The Monstrous Marriage,” a narrative poem of 12 stanzas of 3 lines each, the mythic encounter and ironic conversation between male and female speaker arise from a realistic situation depicted in 1-3: A woman’s attempt to help a wounded pigeon leads to a painful and awkward struggle with the wounded animal and, eventually, to their miraculous union, the “monstrous marriage” of the title: “You are my wife for this.” (LP 53) After the initial bloody encounter, in which their blood commingles, she finds it advisable to “adopt a hawk’s life”—instead of a pigeon’s. This shift from pigeon (peaceful love bird) to hawk (bird of prey) is as important a metamorphosis as the humorous back and forth between animal and human features. It culminates, in the last line, in the grotesque provisions for their monstrous marriage:

I try to imitate you, he said while she
cried a little in smiling. Mostly
he confided, my headed is clouded

except for hunting. But for parts of
a day it’s clear as any man’s—by
your love. No, she would

answer him pitifully, what clearer than
a hawk’s eye and reasonably the
mind also must be so.

...

After that she had a leather belt made
upon which he perched to enjoy her. (LP 53-54)

The motive for this strange poem is probably the modernist urge, observable also in Joyce, Eliot, Faulkner, and Hemingway as well as in Picasso and Stravinsky, to explore in myths or in the relationship between human beings and animals the kind of primitive configuration and liminal situation embodied in archetypes. In “Monstrous Marriage,” the use of conversation allows Williams to give an ironic touch to the mythic love relation between humans and

animals, e.g. Leda and the swan: "Certainly, / since we are married," she said to him, "no / one will accept it." The parodic use of conversational elements is matched by the grotesque details of the narrative ("Nestling upon her as was his wont . . . always astonished at his assumptions . . . she had a leather belt made/ upon which he perched to enjoy her"). The outcome is a text whose ambiguous combination of the mythic and the ironic invites the kind of imaginative participation demanded by modernist poetry.

In their search for a new language to express a new kind of sensibility, William Carlos Williams and T. S. Eliot, like other modernist poets, made use of conversational elements to rupture conventional poetic associations and to set free, through this intertextuality, new linguistic energies. Characteristically, these poets, like modernist painters in their collages and montages, used snippets rather than whole conversations. And their aim in this was also similar, both demanding ironic distance as well as unorthodox playfulness to liberate their arts from Victorian pathos and stylistic paralysis. The examples of conversational elements in Williams's poetry show clearly that he introduced them to give his poems a witty, relaxed, and improvised quality. However, his new lightness of touch did neither make him neglect form nor abandon the inner zone of poetry.

University of Bonn

NOTES

¹Quotations are from T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1935* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959).

²Quotations are from *The Collected Earlier Poems of William Carlos Williams* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1951) abbreviated EP. *The Collected later Poems of William Carlos Williams* (New York: New Directions, 1963), abbreviated LP.

³See also: *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York: Random House 1951) and *I Wanted to Write a Poem: The Autobiography of the Works of a Poet*, ed. Edith Heal (Boston: Beacon Press 1958); Volker Bischoff, *Amerikanische Lyrik zwischen 1912 und 1922: Untersuchungen zur Theorie, Praxis und Wirkungsgeschichte der "New Poetry"* (Heidelberg: Winter 1983) 29-33.

How to Have a Conversation With Gertrude Stein: An Essay in Four Steps

HEATHER CASS WHITE

Introduction

I was once at a lecture by Eve Sedgwick, who was talking about J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things With Words*. Sedgwick was discussing Austin's endless meditations on the performative utterance "I do" that is a marriage, and all of the many ways in which it can go wrong; for example, two people are married at sea but it is not the captain who marries them, etc. She wound up this part of her talk by suggesting that the book's subtitle could easily be "I do–Not!" In titling this paper I have undertaken an exercise in a related genre; I plan to suggest a series of ways one might go about engaging in a conversation with Gertrude Stein, largely, in each case, by focusing on the ways that Stein makes it difficult, if not impossible, to do so. My focus will be on several short poems Stein wrote between 1929 and 1931, in the years just preceding her twinned books *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and *Stanzas in Meditation*, and on the *Stanzas* themselves. The *Autobiography*, published in 1933, is Stein's eminently readable account of her life in Paris as a young writer and art collector, and is well-known even among people who have never read anything else by Stein. *Stanzas in Meditation*, which she wrote simultaneously with the *Autobiography*, is a lengthy poem (151 pages in the Yale edition of Stein's unpublished work) that was not published until after her death in 1956 and remains somewhat notorious even among people who read a great deal of Stein. It has been persuasively argued that *Stanzas in Meditation* represents an alternative account of Stein's autobiography, one written in a Steinian language that is as uncompromising as the language of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* is commercially palat-

able.¹ The *Stanzas* represent the culmination of her work in poetry, which she claimed began with *Tender Buttons*. The poems she wrote between 1929 and 1931, out of which the *Stanzas* specifically emerge, however, are much more directly engaged with the specific traditions of lyric form than were the tender buttons, and most especially with the construction of lyric "voice." It is in her play with those traditions, and specifically with the idea of an implied "I" that stands behind the lyric, that Stein most fully teases her reader with the possibility of "conversation."

In the face of the *OED*'s raft of tempting possibilities, I have chosen to center this paper on its most pedestrian definition of "conversation": "Interchange of thoughts and words; familiar discourse or talk." Applying this definition to Stein's work in lyric poetry quickly suggests some of the contradictions inherent in her work. On the one hand, few other poets have focused so intently on the material particularity of words and the way they engage in "interchange" with thoughts, as Stein. On the other, few poets seem so disinclined to disclose their thoughts to use in a "familiar" way. Although, again, there is a sense in which Stein's work is almost relentless in its use of the familiar: familiar words, phrases, topics, etc. Stein herself called *Stanzas in Meditation* her "real achievement of the commonplace," and the reader can see the familiarity of Stein's lexical materials in any of the poem's lines.² To choose a few at random (a method Donald Sutherland recommends in his introduction to the *Stanzas*), consider the lines: "It is so easy to be often told and moved / Moved can be made of sun and sun of rain / Or if not at all."³ The tone of these lines is pleasant, the sentence reassuringly declarative in mood and simple in diction. The only thing missing, it seems, is a stable frame of reference to which to relate each of the clauses. Here, as so often, Stein's work tantalizes the reader with the sense that if only we were more familiar with her habits of expression, if we could through experience of the writing supply the missing reference, her impenetrable discourse would resolve itself into friendly conversation.

It is possible, however, to see the resistance of Stein's poems to yield an interchange with the reader's own thoughts and words as an index of how true they remain to the idea of lyric, first articulated by John Stuart Mill, as the "overheard" speech of the poet to himself. "Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude," he writes; "all poetry is of the nature of soliloquy."⁴ Anecdotal evidence from classroom discussions of Stein suggests that "soliloquy" is often the first description students have of what Stein is doing; she must be talking to herself because she does not speak at all to them. Paradoxically, however, in more conventional poems it is just this effect of a directly articulated singular consciousness that can lend a "conversational" feel to conventional lyric poems; the poet may be talking to him or herself, but the poem is designed to foster the reader's illusion that the poem speaks to, or for, or about, or at, or with her.⁵ The reader is invited into a conversation with the poem in the sense of the *OED*'s first, most encompassing definition: "the action of living or having one's being [including spiritual being] in a place or among persons." Stein's poems do not work like this, and the conversation they invite follows other lines. Specifically, they present distinct challenges to the nineteenth-century Romantic theory and practice of the lyric (of which Mill is one exemplar) with which they are also deeply engaged in three ways; first, by interrogating rather than assuming the presence of a stable, non-linguistic authorial "I." Second, by nevertheless insisting that poetry is identified chiefly by the "feeling" that made it; and third, by proceeding to locate that feeling not in the motions of the author's mind and heart but in the motions of language itself.

In discussing her engagement with Romantic writing I will concentrate on the affinities between her theory of poetry writing in "Poetry and Grammar" and the theories of Wordsworth, in his "Preface to the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800)," and John Stuart Mill in his response to Wordsworth in "Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties." In choosing to discuss Stein's relationship to this period I am in part following her hint in "Composition as Explanation" (1926) that con-

fronting Romanticism, indeed incorporating and subsuming and reinventing it for herself, was pivotal in the development of her work after 1914. Stein writes:

This then was the period that brings me to the period of the beginning of 1914. Everything being alike everything naturally would be simply different and war came and everything being alike and everything being simply different brings everything being simply different brings it to romanticism.

Romanticism is then when everything being alike everything is naturally simply different, and romanticism.⁶

Stein reiterates the importance of Romanticism to her work, and, startlingly, defines it anachronistically as part of her own development as a writer, near the essay's end:

In the beginning there was confusion there was a continuous present and later there was romanticism which was not a confusion but an extrication and now there is either succeeding or failing there must be distribution and equilibration there must be time that is distributed and equilibrated. (527)

There is a complex re-positioning of Romanticism as part of Stein's personal history at work in these passages. First, she defines it as a coda to her own revelation that "everything being alike is naturally simply different," a maxim she pushed to its limits in her use of repetition. In this way she avoids being indebted to an earlier literary moment by claiming to have arrived at it independently, discovering it for herself naturally in the course of her own thinking. Stein's famous, late definition of a genius as "some one who does not have to remember the two hundred years that everyone else has to remember" is suggestive in this context: Stein does not have to remember Romanticism because she can create it for herself when she needs it. Second, Stein immediately assures the reader that coming upon Romanticism was not a "confusion" but an "extrication." I understand this statement to mean that she is aware of and untroubled by the anachronism she is claiming in having been "brought to" Romanticism by her own practice, and that in inventing her own Romanticism as she did she was extricated by it from the impasse of her "contin-

ous present"; at the same time, she is claiming to have extricated herself from nineteenth-century Romanticism. In order to show you how Stein negotiates her affinities with and divergences from Romantic poetic language I invite you to take the first step into a conversation with Stein's work:

I. Introduce Yourself

One way to phrase the difficulty with much of Stein's writing is that it contains too much of Stein's self to leave any room for the reader's. Stein's older brother Leo, who was possibly her least sympathetic reader, first articulated this objection as a matter of the presence or absence of an "I." Stein reports that he said of her work "that it was not it it was I. If I was not there to be there with what I did then what I did would not be what it was. In other words if no one knew me actually then the things I did would not be what they were" (EA 60).⁷ Stein represents Leo's conviction on this matter as the turning point in their relationship: just as she herself is becoming convinced that she is a genius, Leo claims that she is nothing, in essence, but a bad conversationalist whose solipsism precludes meaningful exchanges. Leo's complaint is important because in its cranky way it identifies something crucial about what Stein attempts to do throughout her writing life: make writing that is "complete" within itself. Leo claims that she has failed in this project, that there is no "it," no work or writing as such, there is only Gertrude in her egotism. Take away the "I" that stabilizes this writing and what it "really" is, that is, a private language of a particular self, becomes nonsense.⁸

A variety of Leo's criticism, permuted into praise, appears today in the work of Stein's most appreciative and astute readers, who also find that a particular authorial presence makes her work legible. Most notably, Stein's identity as a lesbian has often become the primary authorizing fact of her writing. Elizabeth Fifer's contention is representative:

Behind the imperturbable exterior [of the self] . . . the real world is also embodied, questioning the self and identifying one of its incarnations, the socially prohibited lesbian The sexual self that admits its true subject cannot take its own preoccupation as a norm for all receivers of its message.⁹

Fifer's argument is grounded in Lacanian psychoanalysis; as such she reads Stein's "prohibited lesbian" self as one facet of an unconscious that is itself a conversation, "made up of . . . appeals and responses, of desires and interdictions" (466). Fifer's privileging of Stein's lesbianism as the "true subject" around which she organizes her close readings of Stein's writing is part of a larger critical project that has, in opposition to some of Stein's earliest critics, celebrated Stein's treatment of sexuality as an essential part of her literary innovation.¹⁰ Work has also been done that uses other facets of Stein's biographical presence as interpretive pivots, as in Maria Damon's treatment of Stein's Jewishness, and Kirk Curnutt's exploration of Stein's status as a celebrity.¹¹

Simultaneously, a number of critics find the primary source of value in Stein's work to be what they claim is her total rejection of "self" and allied categories of transcendental signification. For example, Robert Grotjohn, in an essay about Stein's "Patriarchal Poetry," claims that:

Stein refuses this lyric organization [in which the poem's voice "is single and generally speaks out of a single moment in time"] by subverting the singleness of the lyric voice, denying the possibility of eternalizing a moment, and rejecting the transcendence this eternalizing attempts.

Patriarchal poetry needs to be undercut because, in its emphasis on a single voice isolating single moments, in its desire to enforce a unitary meaning on what is strange, it has ignored the multiplicity active in the perceptual world The lyric asserts the selfhood of the speaker, while Stein's anti-patriarchal poetry . . . "doubles" "I" and "you," refusing to assert the priority of authorial selfhood.¹²

Peter Quartermain's exuberant reading of *Tender Buttons* asserts that Stein extends her critique of authorial selfhood to that of the reader as well:

The transformational strategies in which her writing abounds render impossible the reader's possession of meaning, for in rendering inaccessible to the

reader the customary contract with the author as authority it undermines the reader's sense of his/her own certainty as arbiter of the meaning of the text. Stein's attack on notions of clarity radically undermines our notions of knowledge: It is difficult to know what we know, or even that we know, for we can only see clearly (and therefore "know") what is static. Her writing, completely antiauthoritarian, cultivates its own indeterminacy of meaning because it takes place in and is part of a world that is itself indeterminate.¹³

My method will be more concerned with analyzing the grammatical "transformational strategies" that interest Quartermain than with the sort of psychological theory Fifer uses. However, in this essay I shall argue that Stein's engagement with traditional Romantic lyric in her poetry of the late twenties and thirties, specifically in her claims about the status of the authorial "I," is neither the wholesale rejection of Romanticism that Grotjohn posits, nor the unmitigated celebration of "indeterminacy" that Quartermain outlines; as I hope to show, Stein is often preoccupied with the primacy of her "authorial selfhood," and consistently interested in the ways words determine meaning moment by moment (especially when they show the parameters of that determinacy by making "mistakes").

Stein herself worried over the problem of what made her herself, and her writing itself, by coming back repeatedly to a phrase from Mother Goose, "I am I because my little dog knows me." As Stein puts it on her return to France in *Everybody's Autobiography* (1936), "I became worried about identity and remembered the mother goose I am I because my little dog knows me and I was not sure but that that only proved the dog was he and not that I am I" (EA 259). Stein's doubt and dismay at this possibility are further developments in an old history of investigating, celebrating, and exploiting the writer's ability to be, as a writer, non-identical with herself as a person. Her use of the Mother Goose phrase to consider the issue first appears in her work in 1929, in the "Saving the Sentence" section of *How To Write*, with a few important revisions. She asks in that text, "What is a sentence for if I am I then my little dog knows me" (HTW 19). When Stein re-writes Mother Goose she shifts the emphasis from the dog's certainty as the naive guarantor of authenticity, to an implicit question about the

ability of one consciousness to know the identity of another. That “I am I” becomes a conditional clause in her revision, suggesting the range of possible circumstances under which I am not I. If I am not “I” at any given moment, in any given situation, in any given text, then my dog may not in fact know “me” at all. This recognition is central to her experiments in composition. In the Henry James section of *Four In America* (1933) she writes:

I am not I any longer when I see.
 This sentence is at the bottom of all creative activity.
 It is just the opposite of I am I because my little dog knows me.

Richard Bridgman takes these lines to mean that “only as we transcend the subjective self, do we become creative. ‘Seeing’ represents a concentration upon something so complete that it excludes personal feelings” (242). This gloss points to the way Stein seeks to rigorously articulate the linguistic effects that constitute each person’s sense of “selfhood”; in this way she takes language not as the expression of an “I” that a little dog knows, but as its ever-shifting, playful, endlessly complex constitution in the moment of writing.

Stein’s sense of excitement at watching the center of a poem’s consciousness shift rather than remain still is expressed in one of her most famous maxims, from the “Rooms” section of *Tender Buttons*: “Act so there is no use in a center.” An example of a poem that acts in this way is “To The First Bird Which They Heard” (1929):

I
 They heard. The first bird.
 II
 They had already. Heard. The first bird.
 III
 It is nice having a white dog chase a white chicken.
 As yes.
 It is nice. That a white. Dog. Would chase. A white. Chicken.
 Better. Yes.
 IV
 It is very difficult. To wonder.
 Or better. For them.

To be. In addition.

Their pleasure.

It would be pleasant.

To send. More.

There.

But to be satisfied.

V

She and he.

Go together.

He rather.

VI

A first bird. Which. They heard.

VII

So that. They heard.

VIII

It is very much their choice.

To leave. It. To them.

IX

Having forgotten. That it was. Well. Worth. Their notice. They had been.

Finding. It pleasant. To listen. To him. Gardening.

X

He answered.

XI

They were immediately. Anxious. To have. Everything.

XII

A first bird. Was heard.

(SIM 235-6)

This short poem has, in essence, two plots. One involves the interaction of several characters and their feelings: a "they," a "bird," a "she," a "he," and a "him," and feelings of pleasure, anxiety, contentment, and ambition. The other is grammatical, and traces a shift in voice from active to passive: "They heard" to "was heard"; a shift in article from definite to indefinite: "The first bird" to "a first bird"; and the arbitrary play of a series of periods disrupting the stanzas into strangely emphasized phrases. These two plots are in tension; the former posits relationships of symbolical significance, temporal order, and emotional cause-and-effect that the latter undermines. For example, one possible way to read the poem is as the record of a speaker's engagement with the material of lyric tradition. In this reading the

poem starts with a "bird" whose morning song is matched by an internal song the poet has heard within herself; the poet then moves through an allusive stanza about her delight in the sensory details of the surrounding world (a white dog chasing a white chicken), arrives at her sense that she has something "more" to offer, a contribution to tradition to make, and ends with a sense of urgency about her task (their immediate anxiety).

Such a reading, however, demands the imposition of a linear continuity that that everything except the numbering of the sections themselves resists. For example, while "they" refers to a plausibly continuous plural subject, section five suggests that the pronouns "he" and "she" are interesting not because they together refer to a plural subject "they," but because they physically "go together" as words: the "he" disappears when laid over the "she." Similarly, section three proposes that the referential content of the declarative sentence "It is nice having a white dog chase a white chicken" is "better" when broken up to allow the period to assert itself all the way through rather than waiting tamely to punctuate the end of a supposed speaker's thought. Section twelve, in fact, ends the poem by doing away with the "subject" of the poem altogether; the passive voice of the final clause retroactively makes it possible that there have been many "they's" in the poem all along, and that the real action of the poem was not to construct a single story but to meditate on the many possible stories predicated on the happy coincidence of a rhyme between "bird" and "heard." Perhaps most importantly, the poem is a capacious space, receptive to and tolerant of errant motions of thought and language. The writing is not random but it is notably tolerant of any possibility opened by any word or phrase it contains. This quality can be both exciting and a drain on the reader's energy, particularly since, as in this case, conventional empathy and identification on the part of the reader are not only difficult to achieve, but fundamentally irrelevant. Nevertheless, while this sort of abstraction is definitive of Stein's poetry, it is not its exclusive mode. Richard Bridgman's claim that "'Seeing' represents a concentration upon something so complete that

it excludes personal feelings" is somewhat misleading. In "Poetry and Grammar," the final essay in Stein's 1935 *Lectures In America*, Stein defines poetry specifically as a repeated calling, motivated by passionate love; in other words, she defines poetry as matter of distinctly personal feeling.

II. Ask How She is Feeling

Gertrude Stein's essay "Poetry and Grammar" specifies three necessary components of writing: "knowing," "doing," and "feeling." "Knowing" is the first; the essay begins by asking, if not outright daring, the essay's addressee to take stock of what he or she knows:

What is poetry and if you know what poetry is what is prose.

There is no use in telling more than you know, no not even if you do not know it.

But do you do you know what prose is and do you know what poetry is.¹⁴

As cautions to the reader these opening sentences tell us how much is involved in asking one question about writing: first, the one question immediately becomes two, as the question "what is poetry" can only be answered if "what is prose" can also be, which suggests what the essay will later make explicit: in order to know anything about any kind of writing one must know everything about every kind of writing. Second, these opening sentence-long paragraphs emphasize that what is important, what is "useful," is *knowing* what poetry is. Since the essay will later specify that "knowing" is the special and province of writers who have "long" written, a class that includes Homer, Chaucer, Whitman, and Stein herself, these lines will serve as a retroactive definitional difference between Stein and her reader: Stein can "know" what poetry is as her reader cannot, because only Stein is sufficiently "doing" writing (PG 233). In defining herself this way, as one who "does," Stein aligns herself with her medium, for "words have to do everything in poetry and prose" (PG 209). Only the parts of the language that "do" something are interesting to her. For example:

Verbs and adverbs and articles and conjunctions and prepositions are lively because they all do something and as long as anything does something it keeps alive. (PG 214)

Nouns, by contrast, are not interesting, at least initially, because

A noun is a name of anything, why after a thing is named write about it . . . generally speaking, things once they are named the name does not go on doing anything to them and so why write in nouns. (PG 210)

The answer will turn out to be that although nouns do nothing, they involve (as I will shortly explain) Stein's third key term "feeling." The act of feeling, unlike "knowing" and "doing," brings the reader into Stein's understanding of writing in general and poetry in particular. While it is unnecessary, in fact impossible, for the reader to know what Stein knows, it is essential that she nevertheless confirms that knowledge, a distinction Stein enacts with a series of performative utterances:

If you read my writing you will you do see what I mean. (PG 213)

You see of yourself how true it is that which I have just said. (PG 211)

[Periods] did not serve you in any servile way as commas and colons and semi-colons do. Yes you do feel what I mean. (PG 218)

Of particular importance is that the reader "feel" what Stein means, since, like the generation of Romantic poets and critics who preceded her, Stein defines poetry in terms of the "feeling" it involves and evokes. Although Stein initially dismisses nouns as mere static names, and therefore uninteresting, she later acknowledges that as names, nouns have a unique ability to summon feeling in the writer. She writes:

I have said that a noun is a name of anything by definition that is what it is and a name of anything is not interesting because once you know its name the enjoyment of naming it is over and therefore writing prose names that is nouns are completely uninteresting. But and that is a thing to be remembered you can love a name and if you love a name then saying that name any number of times only makes you love it more, more violently more persistently more tormentedly. Anybody knows how anybody calls out the

name of anybody one loves. And so that is poetry really loving the name of anything and that is not prose. Yes any of you can know that. (PG 231-32)

In her emphasis on the primacy of the writer's feeling in making poetry Stein aligns herself squarely with the nineteenth century in the form of Wordsworth and John Stuart Mill. Wordsworth, in his "Preface to the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads*" writes that he made his poems by "fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation" (1),¹⁵ a practice that recognizes that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," and that "the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, not the action and situation to the feeling" (6). Mill, responding to Wordsworth in 1833, agrees that "the object of poetry is confessedly to act upon the emotions"; unlike science, which "present[s] a proposition to the understanding," poetry "acts . . . by offering interesting objects of contemplation to the sensibilities" (344). On the basis of these principles Mill asks, "who, then, shall we call poets? Those who are so constituted, that emotions are the limits of association by which their ideas, both serious and spiritual, are connected together" (356).

In *Tender Buttons* (1914) Stein solves the problem of the noun's dead-end function of naming by "re-naming" objects (and food and rooms) in a series of paragraphs (buttons) that invent a language of feeling and association. Stein calls this language "not unordered in not resembling," a reminder to the reader that creating conventional likenesses is irrelevant to her poetry; she is instead creating portraits invested with the emotional life of household things. That life is created by their interconnectedness, the way one object exists not in itself, but in relation to and differentiation from a thousand other things, thoughts, events, etc. For example, the button called A FEATHER reads:

A feather is trimmed, it is trimmed by the light and the bug and the post, it is trimmed by a little leaning and by all sorts of mounted reserves and loud volumes. It is surely cohesive.

This poem takes palpable delight in the way that a feather, trimming a hat, is itself trimmed (adorned, defined, made particular), by its interaction with “the light and the bug and the post,” and by the “mounted reserves and loud volumes” (of its wearer? of the cavalrymen it suggests?) that surround it. The poet’s pleasure in the feather’s capacity to be a lively part of the world and of language is summed up in the half-ironic final judgement: “it is surely cohesive.” Twenty-five years later, as Stein is writing the poems that precede *Stanzas in Meditation*, the focus of her emotion shifts, as does her technique. Where *Tender Buttons* creates verbal relationships that parallel the interconnected lives of objects, Stein’s later poems create verbal objects that parallel the shifting states of everyday feeling. These poems favor indefinite pronouns, plain words with fields of reference so wide that the reader’s attention must shift to the words themselves. The following passage from “Abel,” (1930) a poem that loosely considers gardening, cultivation, and sustenance, is exemplary:

What is the difference of thinking of two words or one word.
 He has gone to listen if there has been anything.
 Yes there has been something
 He will bring it back often
 Why do they put more there
 Because they asked him to do so.
 It is very touching to have individual beseeching.
 And she came in as she went.
 What is the difference between a wedding and waiting
 We waited for him they did not wait for them.
 A poem is one thing
 A play is one thing.
 Sitting in a garden is something
 Watching nothing is obliging. (SIM 227)

This passage invites the reader to make up accompanying narratives; its vagueness suggests many plots, characters, and motivations waiting just offstage, as it were. But taken to mean what it says, the poem suggests a perspective in which consciousness is not made up of ordered plots with specific characters so much as a shifting landscape of categories, such as “she,” “he,” “anything,” “something,” “a poem,”

and "a play." At the same time it reflects on the doubling in life and in language: it is grammatically correct to use one word where two people are meant, as in "she came in as she went," and it is also correct to hear two words where one is meant, as "a wedding" grows so easily from "awaiting."

If the "feeling" of this passage is distinctly banal, that is as Stein wants it. The purpose of this writing is to catch the motions of ordinary feeling; "vivid" feeling, to be sure, even feeling that permits the poet to "see into the life of things," but only because such feeling is ordinary and ubiquitous if only we read Stein and thus come to know it as such. Stein's materials are the linguistic "commonplace," and she uses them in the service of her ambition to understand the way we are built out of their endless rearrangements.

I. Ask How Her Writing is Going

Like Wordsworth, Stein is passionately interested in the motions of her own consciousness; unlike Wordsworth, however, she understands those motions to be governed by the motions of language on its own account. Throughout "Poetry and Grammar" she describes her experience of what language does as independent of, if simultaneous with, a writer's intent as she writes. As she puts it in her essay "Portraits and Repetition," "As I say a motor goes inside and the car goes on, but my business my ultimate business as an artist was not with where the car goes as it goes but with the movement inside that is the essence of its going."¹⁶ In "Poetry and Grammar" the movement "inside" written language is the interaction of the parts of speech and punctuation marks, and it is through watching those motions that we watch ourselves. As she says early on in the essay, "I like the feeling the everlasting feeling of sentences as they diagram themselves. In that way one is completely possessing something and incidentally oneself" (PG 211). Sentences endlessly "diagram themselves" because each part of writing does what it does wherever the writer uses it; in other words, to misuse a part of speech is not to neutralize it, but on

the contrary to initiate the fascinating process of making a mistake. As I mentioned earlier, verbs and adverbs are especially interesting to her in this way because as she says, "Nouns and adjectives never can be mistakes can never be mistaken but verbs can be so endlessly, both as to what they do and how they agree or disagree with whatever they do. The same is true of adverbs" (211-12). Prepositions are similarly exciting, as they "can live one long life of being nothing but absolutely nothing but mistaken and that makes them irritating if you feel that way about mistakes but certainly something that you can be continuously using and everlastingly enjoying" (212). One example of an excitingly mistaken preposition may be found in a proposition she makes at the beginning of the essay, that "one of the things that is a very interesting thing to know is how you are feeling inside you to the words that are coming out to be outside of you" (209). The substitution of "to" for the expected "about" in the phrase "feeling inside you to the words" reminds the reader that the interaction between writer and language is dynamic; the writer has feelings that move *toward* the words and attach *to* the words, a feeling *for* words, a feeling *of* words, and so forth.

With respect to Stein's work in the genre of lyric poetry and its basis in the passionate feeling of an "I," however, the part of speech with the most rich capacity for shifting significance is the pronoun. In "Poetry and Grammar" she writes:

Pronouns are not as bad as nouns because in the first place practically they cannot have adjectives go with them. That already makes them better than nouns.

Then beside not being able to have adjectives go with them, they of course are not really the name of anything. They represent some one but they are not its or his name. In not being his or its or her name they already have a greater possibility of being something than if they were as a noun is the name of anything. (PG 213-214)

The capacity of pronouns to "be something" in and of themselves is perhaps the most consistent element of Stein's method in *Stanzas in Meditation*. The poem is built on three pronouns, "I," "they," "she,"

whose references shift each time Stein uses them. The first stanza introduces the "I" and "they" as well as the themes of play, authority, chance, intention, rest, and work, that will run through the rest of the poem:

I caught a bird which made a ball
 And they thought better of it.
 But it is all of which they taught
 That they were in a hurry yet
 In a kind of a way they meant it best
 That they should change in and on account
 But they must not stare when they manage
 Whatever they are occasionally liable to do
 It is often easy to pursue them once in a while
 And in a way there is no repose
 They like it as well as they ever did. (SIM 3)

The *Stanzas* are generally taken to chronicle Stein's domestic life and assessment of her own work up until that time. In particular, as I mentioned before, Ulla Dydo has persuasively argued that the *Stanzas* are Stein's private *Autobiography*. In this light her pronoun references often seem quite legible, as when, in Part IV, Stanza XIV, Stein writes,

She knew that she could know
 That a genius was a genius
 Because just so she could know
 She did know three or so
 So she says and what she says
 No one can deny or try
 What if she says. (SIM 71)

In these lines the "she" is Alice B. Toklas; they recount the well-known anecdote from the *Autobiography* in which Stein, writing as Alice, claims that Alice has met three geniuses in her lifetime, Pablo Picasso, Alfred North Whitehead, and Stein herself. However, when the *Stanzas* are most closely fulfilling Stein's stated ambition for them, an "I" has no more significance, is no more the center of the text than is "she" or "they." The text itself has no center around which arcs of story line or crises of emotion group themselves.¹⁷ The poem offers no

propositions to be compared to the reader's own knowledge and experience, no central persona with which to identify. Instead it offers something like a kit for perception, as in the following stanza:

Stanza XIV (Part II)

It is not only early that they make no mistake
 A nightingale and a robin.
 Or rather that which can which
 Can which he which they can choose which
 They can know or not like that
 They make this be once or not alike
 Not by this time only when they like
 To have been very much absorbed.
 And so they find it so
 And so they are
 There
 there which is not only here but here as well as there.
 They like whatever I like. (SIM 37)

This stanza manifestly enjoys language's irrepressible capacity to make its own sense, the ability of words to create sense as they are set next to one another in any order. However, the order is not random; it follows patterns of relationship marked by conjunctions ("or," "and") and "likeness;" it tests words in different contexts to see if they change, as in "that which can which / Can which he which they can choose;" it defines common words, so that "there which is not only here but here as well as there." These operations are the substance of the stanzas, and they create a text that presents the reader with the foundations of readability. This is part of what John Ashbery means in calling the poem "a hymn to possibility; a celebration of the fact that the world exists, that things can happen."¹⁸ However, part of that "possibility" is also that Stein's alternately anxious and exalting presence as an author can move in and out of a text devoted to abstraction from just such ideas of authorship. Stein considers the interaction of language's sense-making capacities with the idea of "meaning" and authorship in terms that recall Wittgenstein:

Next to next to and does.
 Does it join.
 Does it mean does it join.
 Does it mean does it mean does it join.
 If after all they know
 That I say so. (SIM 139)

This stanza's conclusion, that "they" know that "I" say so, demonstrates one of the poem's many negotiations between its questioning of "I" as a pronoun like any other, and its representation of Stein's strictly personal investment in making claims for the value of what she says, is, and writes. In this way the *Stanzas* present a microcosm of Stein's entire body of work in which, as Bob Perelman claims:

Her imperturbable commitment to her daily practice of writing rather than to the quality of any particular bit of the product is the primary fact. There is a literalism and self-assertion to her work that is not easy to assimilate to aesthetic or literary-historical categories of judgement . . . And the "I" embodies the problematics of Stein's career: her seemingly endless output was not selfless meditation: she insisted on its value as masterpiece and her own value as genius.¹⁹

There is a pull throughout the *Stanzas* between their ideal of abstraction and their sporadic personal reference. These latter references take a number of forms. In addition to passages that may be read as referring to Stein's relationship with Toklas and their life together, there are numerous instances of Stein's commentary on her own writing that encourage a face-value reading:

This is an autobiography in two instances. (SIM 76)
 Leave me to tell exactly well that which I tell. / This is what is known.
 (SIM79)
 I could go on with this. (SIM 83)
 This whole stanza is about how it does not make any difference. (SIM101)
 If I am one I would have liked to be the only one / Which I am. (SIM 146)

In light of these quotations, especially the last one, it is too sweeping to claim, as Grotjohn does, that Stein "refuses the priority of authorial selfhood," or as Quartermain does, that her writing is "completely

antiauthoritarian." Her work both interrogates the foundations of her position as author and reserves the right to claim power as she occupies that position. Stein's pronouncements on her importance in twentieth-century writing are unequivocal; as certain as she is that creativity is predicated on the fact that "I am not I any longer when I see," she is equally certain in "realiz[ing]" that in English literature in her time she is the only one. She has always known it and now she says it" (ABT 94). A considerable part of the *Stanzas'* interest comes from Stein's frequent insistence on having it both ways; if she refuses anything definitively it is the obligation to be consistent. Stein is aware of the tax she levies on the reader's patience in making this refusal, as she makes clear in the final stanzas:

Stanza LXXXII

Thank you for hurrying through.

Stanza LXXXIII

Why am I if I am uncertain reasons may inclose.
 Remain remain propose repose chose.
 I call carelessly that the door is open
 Which if they can refuse to open
 No one can rush to close.
 Let them be mine therefor.
 Everybody knows that I chose.
 Therefor if therefor before I close.
 I will therefor offer therefor I offer this.
 Which if I refuse to miss can be miss is mine.
 I will be well welcome when I come.
 because I am coming.
 Certainly I am come having come.

These stanzas are done. (SIM 151)

In the poem's final stanza Stein formalizes the invitation she has offered to the reader all along: "I call carelessly that the door is open." The "door" Stein has opened may lie between her and the reader, between parts of speech and states of feeling, between grammar and

poetry; all one can know for sure is that a line of access and communication lies open to the reader who wants it. Her "careless" call, however, emphasizes that if the reader refuses to converse on her terms, she has nonetheless irrevocably established those terms: "Which if they can refuse to open / No one can rush to close." In defending the methods she has been pursuing throughout the *Stanzas* Stein turns finally to the risks she herself has taken in order to verify her good faith. She has laid herself open to the world: "everybody knows that I chose." The reader may or may not choose what Stein has chosen, but Stein does not need the reader's approbation to know that she herself has chosen well. Stein refuses to "miss" what her writing has taught her about language and subjectivity; if that teaching misses the mark then at least the "miss" is hers alone, a defiant claim that can be traced back to Job's assertion that "be it indeed that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself" (Job 19:4).²⁰

Stein's triumph then, is not to have achieved a perfect disengagement from the lyric "I" and all of its implications. Some of those implications, especially as regard her demand for an individual, named place in history, suit her quite well. What the *Stanzas* do instead is to open out the possibilities of emotion and liveliness in poetic language, and to insist that sense is always being made, most of all when "mistakes" are also being made. When the *Stanzas* stick most closely to Stein's goal of total abstraction from any particular referent, ideas and descriptions arise in this text not as authenticating preconditions, but rather as the inevitable function of the text's materials. If the poems that make up this text tend toward soliloquy, in the way that Mill claims lyric poems do, it is because Stein is writing the essentially impersonal linguistic operations that make up anyone's interiority, including her reader's. To have a conversation with Stein's work is thus to acknowledge that her writing is, however unfamiliar it appears, in fact premised on the ceaseless, and egalitarian, "interchange between thoughts and words" that constitutes each one of us. Though her poems are playful, her purpose is not, and a sustained engagement with her writing necessitates a respect for the gravity of her

project; as Stein herself writes in *Henry James*, "I now wish to speak very seriously, that is to say, I wish to converse." For the reader who wishes to converse seriously on Stein's terms the rewards are considerable, and I follow her lead in suggesting a final step, which I address to you as well as to her:

IV. Say Thank You

University of Alabama

NOTES

I would like to thank the Research Committee at the University of Alabama for a grant that enabled me to write this essay.

¹Ulla Dydo, "*Stanzas in Meditation: The Other Autobiography*," *Chicago Review*, 35:2 (1985): 4-20. See also Susan Schultz's lucid account of Stein's self-authorization as "genius" in the *Stanzas* in "Gertrude Stein's Self-Advertisement," *Raritan*, 12:2 (1992): 71-87.

²Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1933) 276; hereafter abbreviated as ABT.

³Gertrude Stein, *Stanzas in Meditation* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1969): 101. All further poetry citations are from this volume and will be noted parenthetically in the text as SIM.

⁴J. S. Mill, "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties," *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* vol. 1, eds. John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1981) 348-49; all subsequent quotations from Mill are from this edition and will be noted parenthetically in the text.

⁵"Anyone" is an eminently Steinian term, and the idea of her work being accessible to, as well as encompassing, "anyone" is primary among her ambitions. See Jennifer Ashton's thorough and illuminating discussion of Stein's engagement with "anyone" as a logical category in *The Making of Americans*. "Gertrude Stein for Anyone," *ELH* 64.1 (1997): 289-331.

⁶Gertrude Stein, "Composition as Explanation," *Gertrude Stein: Writings 1903-1932*, ed. Catherine R. Stimpson and Harriet Chessman (New York: Library of America, 1998) 527.

⁷Gertrude Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography* (London: Virago P, 1985) 60. (Original publication Random House, 1936.) All subsequent citations of this text are from the Virago edition.

⁸Leo's criticism frequently falls prey to the error that Mill describes as awaiting the insufficiently empathetic critic: "in such a case, a critic who, not having sufficient feeling to respond to the poetry, [and] is also without sufficient philosophy to understand it though he feel it not, will be apt to pronounce, not 'this is prose,' but 'this is exaggeration,' 'this is mysticism,' or, 'this is nonsense'" (363).

⁹Elizabeth Fifer, "In Conversation": Gertrude Stein's Speaker, Message, and Receiver in *Painted Lace and Other Pieces* (1914-1937), *MFS* 34.3 (1988): 466, 468.

¹⁰For example, see Richard Bridgman's (*Gertrude Stein In Pieces* [New York: OUP, 1970]) now infamous judgement that "as she entered her forties, the demon of noon capered openly through her writing . . . Virgil Thompson has described it as concerning 'the domestic affections,' and so it is, luridly so" (149).

¹¹Maria Damon, "Gertrude Stein's Jewishness, Jewish Social Scientists, and the Jewish Question," *MFS* 42.3 (1996): 489-507. Kirk Curnutt, "Inside and Outside: Gertrude Stein on Identity, Celebrity, and Authenticity," *Journal of Modern Literature* 23.2 (1999-2000): 291-308.

¹²Robert Grotjohn, "Gertrude Stein and the Prose Long Poem," *Genre* 24.2 (1991): 179, 186.

¹³Peter Quartermain, *Disjunctive Poetics* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992) 23.

¹⁴Gertrude Stein, "Poetry and Grammar," *Lectures in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957) 209; hereafter abbreviated PG.

¹⁵William Wordsworth, *Selected Poems and Prefaces*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965).

¹⁶*Lectures in America* 194-95.

¹⁷To the extent that sections of the poem have boundaries they arise from the physical dimensions of the notebooks in which Stein wrote them (see Dydo 10).

¹⁸John Ashbery, "The Impossible," *Poetry* 90.4 (1957): 251.

¹⁹Bob Perelman, *The Trouble With Genius: Reading Pound, Joyce, Stein, and Zukofsky* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1994) 130.

²⁰Surely too Stein is pleased that whatever happens, Miss Toklas is "hers."

Robert Frost's Conversational Style

MAURICE CHARNEY

Robert Frost would seem to be the ideal poet for this year's *Connotations* topic: "The Poetics of Conversation in 20th-Century Literature." Frost has written many poems with speakers engaged in conversation like "The Death of the Hired Man" and "A Hundred Collars" from *North of Boston*.¹ He has written a number of plays, *A Masque of Reason* and *A Masque of Mercy* (and several more in his uncollected works), and he has always been interested in distinctive New England speakers who are highly characterized and who function like dramatic characters. In terms of poetic technique, Frost favors the iambic pentameter line, with its connotations of Shakespearean blank verse, ideally suited to dramatic speakers. But Frost also uses the iambic tetrameter line that Andrew Marvell found so supple in the seventeenth century. Frost's pentameter and tetrameter lines are sometimes rhymed as couplets, showing his affinity with witty, eloquent, epigrammatic-like statement of such a poet as Pope in the eighteenth century. In addition, Frost cultivates a refined conversational diction and a syntax that follows speech rhythms and patterns.

I could enumerate more derivations in Frost's conversational style, but the point is that this style doesn't try to imitate the inconsequentialities of spoken discourse. Frost is not at all like David Mamet or Harold Pinter, although these two dramatists are probably just as far from the realities of everyday conversation as Frost. We need to establish as an assumption that conversation, or the semblance of conversation, in poetry is radically different from the language that we ourselves speak or that we hear others speak in public. Like dramatic dialogue, Frost's conversational style is an artfully fabricated imita-

tion of ordinary conversation. Frost may have had an especially acute ear for New England speech because he was born in San Francisco and spent his early years there.

I would like to begin my talk with a fairly early poem, "The Runaway" from *New Hampshire* (1923). I heard Robert Frost read this poem a number of times, so that my account is obviously influenced by this reading. Frost was notorious for making small revisions while he read, but I don't remember any significant variations for "The Runaway." The poem is written in blank verse and is about a young colt who has run away from its native stall and is acting in a very skittish manner. The horse is specifically a Morgan. Following Frost's own reading, the poem is highly onomatopoeic, with the sound of the words and the rhythm of the speech imitating the sense of the poem. For example, the last line, "Ought to be told to come and take him in," has ten monosyllables which mimic the sound of the frightened colt's hooves as he "mounts the wall again with whited eyes."

Onomatopoeia is an often discussed abstract ideal of poetry. Much, of course, depends on the reading to make the onomatopoeia effective. I always mistakenly thought that the final line was repeated twice, with the second time giving the sense of a quiet echo. Perhaps I heard Frost himself read it that way! It's a coincidence that the poem right next to "The Runaway" in *New Hampshire* is "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," which ends with the repetition of the final line, "And miles to go before I sleep."

Onomatopoeia as a poetic concept is problematical because sounds are language specific. In English the rooster cries "cock-a-doodle-do," whereas in French it is "cocorico," in German "kikeriki", in Spanish "quiquiriqui" (much like the German), but in Yiddish it is "kook-erikoo." Clearly the rooster in the barnyard makes none of these sounds, and the stage direction in *Hamlet* for "one to crow" to indicate the rising sun is entirely different from the sounds recorded in dictionaries. For example, another onomatopoeic line in "The Runaway" is "He dipped his head / And snorted at us," which is mostly monosyllabic. The onomatopoeic effect probably comes from the verbs

"dipped" and "snorted," but I wouldn't want to press this argument too closely.

The poem identifies a "We" as the observers of the events in "The Runaway": "We stopped by a mountain pasture to say, 'Whose colt?'" In the middle of the poem, however, "I" speaks six lines beginning "'I think the little fellow's afraid of the snow.'" The anapestic "Of the snow" gives a special emphasis to *the* snow rather than just snow, as if it is a big snowfall, what is called in the first line "the snow of the year." The conversational effect is helped by a consistent elision, as in "fellow's afraid," "Isn't," "He's," "It's," "He'd," "didn't," and "can't." The speaker continues:

"He isn't winter-broken. It isn't play
With the little fellow at all. He's running away.
I doubt if even his mother could tell him, 'Sakes,
It's only weather.' He'd think she didn't know!
Where is his mother? He can't be out alone."

There are a number of metrical irregularities in these lines, as in "He isn't winter-broken. It isn't play / With the little fellow at all." After "winter-broken," the caesura emphasizes the non-iambic pattern, which is echoed by the stress-pattern of "With the little." In the representation of the colt's mother, Frost introduces a playful anthropomorphism. She speaks the only really colloquial word in the poem, "Sakes," which is a country form of "for God's sake," or "land sakes." But the mother personified is made to speak in an offhand, gnarled, and gnomic style: "Sakes, / It's only weather," as if the change in weather—the snowfall—can fully account for the colt's erratic behavior. Frost continues the personification in the colt's imagined response to his mother: "He'd think she didn't know!" This is the only specific exclamation in the poem, and it characterizes the colt as a headstrong, rebellious child chafing at parental control.

The 21-line poem concludes with "I" speaking the final three lines, which represent an aphoristic summing up:

"Whoever it is that leaves him out so late,
When other creatures have gone to stall and bin,
Ought to be told to come and take him in."

Of course, if the colt is running away, there is no "Whoever" to represent agency and purpose, but this is like many other Frost poems in implying that there is some sort of Fate or Nature that causes seemingly random events. It clearly indicates purpose in the universe because "Whoever" badly needs advice: "Ought to be told to come and take him in." Something needs to be set right in nature. The little Morgan colt has been left out in the snow "so late, / When other creatures have gone to stall and bin." Presumably these creatures are the domestic animals of the Peaceable Kingdom. Someone—"Whoever"—looks after them and "Ought to be told" how to right an obvious wrong.

Another aspect of the poem's conversationality is its ironic, mock-heroic tone, something very familiar in Frost's poetry. The poet seems self-conscious about rendering ordinary happenings of rural life in epic terms. For example, "We heard the miniature thunder where he fled" is comic in its mingling of great and small. Thunder can hardly be miniature. The commotion of the runaway colt that immediately follows the six-line speech of "I" in the middle of the poem is made both grandiose and ludicrous by the use of unheroic details:

And now he comes again with clatter of stone,
And mounts the wall again with whited eyes
And all his tail that isn't hair up straight.
He shudders his coat as if to throw off flies.

The colt's immature tail that isn't yet hair and the fly image in the last line to indicate the horse's twitching mark a pretension to epic behavior that belies the clatter of stone and the mounting of the wall with whited eyes. The tone of the poem deliberately miniaturizes its youthful protagonist, who is not yet capable of bringing off the grand gestures to which he pretends.

"The Death of the Hired Man" from *North of Boston* (1914), but written much earlier, is one of Frost's best known poems, a dramatic, dialogue poem written in blank verse. It has a sharp emphasis on narrative as it tells its dramatic story about the return of Silas, the hired man, to the farm of Mary and Warren. Most of the conversation is between Mary and her husband Warren, with Mary represented as sympathetic and Warren as skeptical. The blank verse is supple and moves easily, and goes together with definite syntactical indications of conversation. These are mostly marked by dashes for abrupt breaks in the syntax. For example, Mary says to her husband:

"When I came up from Rowe's I found him here,
Huddled against the barn-door fast asleep,
A miserable sight, and frightening, too—
You needn't smile—I didn't recognize him—
I wasn't looking for him—and he's changed.
Wait till you see."

The dashes follow Mary's train of thought—they are really isolated exclamations that indicate Mary's surprise and her lack of a definite purpose. We even have a specifically dramatic effect—"You needn't smile"—bringing Warren's reaction into Mary's discourse. "Rowe's" is obviously the name of a store in town otherwise unidentified. The pentameter beat is fairly regular with a few exceptions like "Huddled" in the second line. The conversational style shows strong emotions in the highly characterized speaker.

There are many other examples of broken syntax marked by dashes to give the effect of conversation. For example, Mary is talking again:

"Warren, I wish you could have heard the way
He jumbled everything. I stopped to look
Two or three times—he made me feel so queer—
To see if he was talking in his sleep.
He ran on Harold Wilson—you remember—
The boy you had in haying four years since."

Mary interpolates her thoughts in parenthetical statements within her narrative account as in "he made me feel so queer" and "you remem-

ber." The breaks are essential to indicate the speaker's self-consciousness and her awareness of the person to whom she is speaking. Again, some trochaic feet come at the beginnings of lines as in "Warren" in line 1 and "Two or three times" in line 3. Frost uses colloquial diction as in "jumbled" and "he made me feel so queer," and even more emphatically in "He ran on," meaning that Silas spoke extensively about "The boy you had in haying," "had in" meaning hired to do the haying. Mary says that she "stopped to look" to see if Silas was talking in his sleep when she means literally that she stopped to listen. Frost exercises a continuous sense of displacement to jar us away from what we expect to hear onto a particularly dramatic and highly characterized narrative.

It is interesting how Silas is brought into the poem through indirect discourse about his relation to the college boy Harold, who has been hired in the summer to help with the haying. Silas is vividly represented in Mary's recollection:

"He asked me what I thought of Harold's saying
He studied Latin like the violin
Because he liked it—that an argument!
He said he couldn't make the boy believe
He could find water with a hazel prong—
Which showed how much good school had ever done him.
He wanted to go over that."

That's a very colloquial line: "Because he liked it—that an argument!" implying Silas' sense of superiority to a mere college boy saying foolish things. "That an argument" is short for "Is that an argument?" or "Is that a real and thoughtful argument?" How could someone possibly say he studies Latin like the violin? How silly! Silas boasts of his abilities as a dowser—to find water with a crooked hazel branch, a divining rod, which is an intuitive skill superior to mere school learning. "Which showed how much good school had ever done him" is a long line slowed down by the contemptuous spondee of "good school."

Silas is represented as an artist in loading the hay wagon, and this is Warren's only positive stanza in the poem:

"He bundles every forkful in its place,
And tags and numbers it for future reference,
So he can find and easily dislodge it
In the unloading. Silas does that well.
He takes it out in bunches like big birds' nests.
You never see him standing on the hay
He's trying to lift, straining to lift himself."

Silas is a poet of hay-making. The alliterative fifth line, "bunches like big birds' nests," is very slow and emphatic with four continuous accents: "like big birds' nests." This is a rural metaphor of exaggeration, since the largest possible bird's nest is considerably smaller than a forkful of hay. Warren is characterized as a kind of gentleman farmer, like Frost himself, in the line "And tags and numbers it for future reference," as if Silas were a scholar assembling note cards for a research project.

Mary ends this segment about Silas's history on a doleful note:

"Poor Silas, so concerned for other folk,
And nothing to look backward to with pride,
And nothing to look forward to with hope,
So now and never any different."

It is elegiac in tone, anticipating the tragic ending. The two lines, "And nothing to look backward to with pride, / And nothing to look forward to with hope," are a contrast turned into an exact parallel, capped by the emphatic final line: "So now and never any different." The spondee "So now" ends Mary's speech with a fateful, deterministic note—it can never be any different than it is now, there is no possibility of change.

The best known and most quoted lines of this poem are Warren's statement shortly after the lines we have just quoted: "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, / They have to take you in." This homely, aphoristic, monosyllabic enunciation of a moral truth is the climax of a discussion with his wife. Mary begins the topic:

"Warren," she said, "he has come home to die.
You needn't be afraid he'll leave you this time."

To which Warren replies: "'Home,' he mocked gently." Warren has strong reservations about Silas, which Mary tries to answer:

"Yes, what else but home?
It all depends on what you mean by home.
Of course, he's nothing to us, any more
Than was the hound that came a stranger to us
Out of the woods, worn out upon the trail."

The image of the stray hound is strikingly grotesque, considering Mary's compassion for Silas, but she is trying to establish the rock bottom of moral responsibility. In answer to her husband's "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, / They have to take you in," Mary makes a final proviso, "I should have called it / Something you somehow haven't to deserve." This whole exchange illustrates Frost's conversational style at its best. It is homely, imitating the banalities of actual speech, as in "Something you somehow," but it also develops a dramatic context of growing fatality that anticipates the end of the poem. It envelops the reader in its moral purpose, which is essentially a definition of what "home" is. Warren's "They have to take you in" is developed by Mary's disclaimer, that home "is / Something you somehow haven't to deserve." This counters Warren's basic argument in the poem that the dying Silas is unworthy of being taken in. The moral seriousness of the poem is emphasized by the plain and earnest conversation between husband and wife.

Another element in the poem is the lush romanticism about moonlight that influences what Mary says. This occurs as a prelude to the debate about the meaning of "home" we have just quoted:

Part of a moon was falling down the west,
Dragging the whole sky with it to the hills.
Its light poured softly in her lap. She saw it
As spread her apron to it. She put out her hand
Among the harp-like morning-glory strings,
Taut with the dew from garden bed to eaves,

And if she played unheard some tenderness
That wrought on him beside her in the night.

The moonlight is part of the emotional climate of Mary's argument, as are the morning-glory flowers and vines that hang like a harp's strings. Again, the striking metaphor is an effective evocation of a tenderness—tender is the night—that Mary wants to call up in the husband who sits beside her in the darkness. Mary is represented as a musician in the moonlight, playing the "harp-like morning-glory strings." This segment is an emotional interlude before their climactic conversation about the meaning of home.

There is a final echo of this passage at the very end of the poem, when Mary sends Warren to see Silas:

"I'll sit and see if that small sailing cloud
Will hit or miss the moon."

It hit the moon.

Then there were three there, making a dim row,
The moon, the little silver cloud, and she.

There is surprising assonance and consonance in that row of five monosyllables: "Then there were three there"—a daring effect in the conversational style, almost a tongue twister. The final image is painterly and static: the dim row of the moon, the little silver cloud, and Mary. The news of Silas's death follows right afterward.

I'd like to look now at a very different kind of poem, a late poem called "Directive," from *Steeple Bush* (1947). It is full of imperative directions to the reader: "Make yourself up a cheering song," "pull in your ladder road," "make yourself at home," "Weep for what little things could make them glad," and the climactic last line: "Drink and be whole again beyond confusion." The poem is a directive from the poet to the reader about what he needs to do to achieve personal salvation, to "be whole again beyond confusion." "Confusion" has strong Shakespearean and Miltonic connotations of total chaos. We remember that in "The Figure a Poem Makes," that prefaces Frost's *Collected Poems*, he speaks of a poem as "a clarification of life," "a

momentary stay against confusion." It is clear from this context that the clarification a poem exerts works temporarily against confusion. That's why even though a poem begins in impulsive delight it "ends in wisdom."

"Directive" is a witty poem with a characteristically detached, amused, and ironic narrator, who involves the reader in his mythic, fairy-tale-like directions. It is written in Frost's favorite meter, iambic pentameter blank verse, which is relaxed and conversational. It is a memory poem about an abandoned house, an abandoned farm, an abandoned town (or two towns), and, more importantly, an abandoned children's playhouse.

The poem has striking images of daily life. The mood of "loss / Of detail" is "Like graveyard marble sculpture in the weather." In other words, the sharp detail of the present has been gently effaced like the lettering and carvings on marble tombstones. This establishes an elegiac tone. The past is recreated as if it were an archaeological fiction. The road has "Great monolithic knees"—presumably large boulders—as if it should have been a stone quarry, or set in a stone quarry. The narrator represents himself as an untrustworthy guide, "Who only has at heart your getting lost," an amusing, self-referential detail. The glacier is personified as a sculptor:

The ledges show lines ruled southeast northwest,
The chisel work of an enormous Glacier
That braced his feet against the Arctic Pole.

The poem proceeds by homely images that figure in the poet's directive to the reader, who is drawn into a lost world of at least twenty years ago, with sharply indicated details of the country scene, like "pecker-fretted apple trees," or old apple trees whose bark is filled with symmetrical woodpecker holes. The reader is paradoxically given directions for a time when "you're lost enough to find yourself":

pull in your ladder road behind you
And put a sign up CLOSED to all but me.
Then make yourself at home.

"CLOSED" is a road sign, but it is a toy road, a ladder road, that can be pulled up as in a child's game. The poem is pressing on to its seemingly mystic, or religious, or mythical conclusion.

The real scene is juxtaposed against the memory scene, and the reader is enjoined to weep

for the house that is no more a house,
But only a belilaced cellar hole,
Now slowly closing like a dent in dough.

Frost pursues comfortable domestic images like the imperceptibly closing hole in bread dough that has been kneaded by hand. And the cellar hole of the house that has disappeared is festively bedecked—it is "belilaced," a Frost coinage. The poem is an elegy for time past, but also a triumphant elegy leading to a resurrective conclusion.

The final powerful image is of the mystical cup, a goblet the poet has stolen from the children's playhouse:

I have kept hidden in the instep arch
Of an old cedar at the waterside
A broken drinking goblet like the Grail
Under a spell so the wrong ones can't find it,
So can't get saved, as Saint Mark says they mustn't.

The old cedar tree is personified as having an instep arch in its imaginary shoes. The tone is amused and childlike, but the poet invokes the Holy Grail of Arthurian legend as represented by the broken drinking goblet, a child's plaything from long ago. It is under a magical spell under the protection of Saint Mark. The rhythm of the poem seems to rush on in a wave of colloquial alliteration of "s's":

Under a spell so the wrong ones can't find it,
So can't get saved, as Saint Mark says they mustn't.

"So can't get saved" is like a child's sweeping assertion. The concluding lines are strong and apocalyptic:

Here are your waters and your watering place.
Drink and be whole again beyond confusion.

The Poet speaks in prophetic tones, but that's not how the poem began.

What tentative conclusions can we draw about Frost's conversational style? We started with the assumption that the feeling of conversation in poetry is an artful effect contrived by the poet to promote an illusion of ease, naturalness, and fluidity. The homely, colloquial touches, therefore, are more a product of poetic construction rather than what Wordsworth, in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, called "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." But this is an unsatisfactory dichotomy because the poet's art, when successful, creates the convincing impression of the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. It is the old paradox of Art improving on Nature, which, when well done, is more natural than raw Nature itself.

We may note, first, that Frost moves very freely in the iambic pentameter of blank verse (and sometimes in tetrameter). All three of the poems we have discussed are in iambic pentameter. As Shakespeare demonstrated, the blank verse line is a natural expression of speech rhythms in English, which itself tends toward iambic feet. But Frost, like most poets who use blank verse, has many substitutions for the iambic foot, patterns of alternating stress. He sometimes breaks the speech rhythm abruptly with parenthetical exclamations represented by dashes in the punctuation. Second, the diction seems simple and monosyllabic, unadorned and pure in the sense of the avoidance of rhetorical flourishes. Frost generally uses learned, polysyllabic words only for comic effect. The diction passes for New England speech, yet some of Frost's attempts to imitate a rural, farmer's talk seem arch and self-conscious, like the colt's mother in "The Runaway" saying, "Sakes, / It's only weather."

Third, Frost's figurative language tends to be drawn from nature, with similes and metaphors of a homely and domestic quality. This is, of course, the greatest illusion of all because the images are so artfully applied to the subject of the poem. Is Frost a keen observer of the flora and fauna and the natural features of the New England landscape? He certainly makes every effort to give this impression, but we should

remember that he is also a close student of Latin poetry. Finally, everything we have said so far contributes to a characteristic Frost tone of amused and ironic detachment that, surprisingly, sometimes issues into gnomic, epigrammatic, even hortatory and sermonistic statement, especially at the end of poems. Frost seems to be seeking some conclusive summing up, often of a moral or philosophical nature. This is not exactly conversational except as the poet succeeds in creating the impression that he is only a homespun Yankee thinker, offering reflections like the village cracker-barrel philosopher.

I am very influenced by the way Frost read his own poems, which seemed so appropriate for him as a public figure. But we know from Frost's turbulent biography that he took great pains to fashion himself as the perfect speaker of his poems. In his frequent readings, he dealt with the public not only in speaking—and improving on!—his own written poems, but also in introductions, answers to questions, and in general commentaries with the same whimsical, colloquial, and eloquent style so evident in his texts. There is a special, magical irony in the way Frost created himself as the nostalgic New England bard, the spokesman for a mythical rural America that most auditors thought had vanished long ago.

Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey

NOTE

¹I am quoting Frost from *Complete Poems of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1949).

"He Do the Police in Different Voices"¹: A Bakhtinian Take on Conversational Modes in some Modern British Poets

RAJEEV S. PATKE

"I am disappointed if a scene is carried through in the voice of the author rather than the voices of the characters."

Ivy Compton-Burnett to Margaret Jourdain (1945)

The need to resist monologism receives a resonant twentieth-century statement in the many discourses on the dialogic by Mikhail Bakhtin. In his perspective, doubleness is necessary to the freedom and cognitive power of imaginative writing, because art is always answerable to life, and life is a process of incessant change, which finds fulfilment "unconsummated" in time.² Like good conversation, "Man, properly speaking, is not something completed and finished, but open, uncompleted."³ In life as in art, the dialogic principle enables one to step outside the self into an otherness whose voicing represents an exchange between empathy and objectification.⁴ Conversation as the dialogic principle in action becomes more than a mere escape from the solipsistic self.⁵ It sustains the possibility of mediating experience as "an open event" with "cognitive-ethical directedness."⁶ For Bakhtin, conversation and life are, in this sense, based in non-identity, the freedom in which "A man never coincides with himself."⁷ Conversation as the agent of non-identity in speech becomes imperative as an antidote against the self-expressiveness latent to the lyric mode.⁸

Non-identity as a quasi-ethical imperative has the curious effect of converting opposition into a principle. In poems such as "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," W. B. Yeats offers us a modern version of an antinomical tradition at least as old as Andrew Marvell's dialogue

poems, in which abstract entities such as Created Pleasure and Resolved Soul clash elegantly over the inflexible positions they emblemize.

MY SELF

—and all these I set
For emblems of the day against the tower
Emblematical of the night,
And claim as by a soldier's right
A charter to commit the crime once more.

MY SOUL

Such fullness in that quarter flows
And falls into the basin of the mind
That man is stricken dumb and blind,
For intellect no longer knows
Is from the Ought, or Knower from the Known—⁹

This form of dialogism has been described by Paul de Man in his classic lecture on "Lyric and Modernity" (1969) as internally self-divided about the notion of a self and of the language through which this divisive self finds self-expression:

Truly modern poetry is a poetry that has become aware of the incessant conflict that opposes a self . . . the conscious expression of a conflict within the function of language as representation and within the conception of language as the act of an autonomous self.¹⁰

At this point, we might pause briefly to reflect on the irony that in opposing the univocal, conversation in poetry practices its own artifice and parts company with the nature of conversation in life. In moving away from the narcissism inherent to solitary self-expression, conversation in poetry gives up on the free-wheeling, improvisatory and contingent or fortuitous quality of conversation as "familiar discourse or talk."¹¹ The whole point of conversation might be said to consist in not wanting to make any point. Hans-Georg Gadamer begins the third part of *Truth and Method* (1960) with this recognition:

We say that we "conduct" a conversation, but the more fundamental a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partner. Thus a fundamental conversation is never one that we want to conduct. Rather, it is generally more correct to say that we fall into conversation, or even that we become involved in it. The way in which one word follows another, with the conversation taking its own turnings and reaching its own conclusion, may well be conducted in some way, but the people conversing are far less the leaders of it than the led. No one knows what will "come out" in a conversation . . . All this shows that a conversation has a spirit of its own, and that language used in it bears its own truth within it, i.e. that it reveals something which henceforth exists.¹²

Poems that subsidize the fiction of conversation cannot help underline the difference between conversation in life and its dissembling in poetry. Art—as Ivy Compton-Burnett once remarked—can hardly afford the luxury of the fortuitous, the random, and the contingent that are the province of life.¹³ The purposive drive acquired by conversation in poetry moves it in the direction of greater formality, metamorphosing the carefully studied illusion of the unstudied aspects of speech into an increasing acceptance of its own formalization. I will quickly illustrate this formalization through a number of poems which align themselves away from the spirit of conversation towards the kinds of diagonal oppositionality which have created the traditions of the poem as debate, catechism, colloquy and dialogue.

My second example is taken from F. T. Prince's "A Byron-Shelley Conversation," and like his "Not a *Paris Review* Interview" from *Later on* (1983),¹⁴ it shows the tradition of formalized dialogue disguised as an extended conversation after the fashion of Walter Savage Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* (1824-29, 1853). This is how his Byron talks to his Shelley:

Bloodshed in war
And massacre . . .
. . . for those who would believe
like you, man could achieve
perfection, and be free,

what can the spectacle
be, but damnation?

And here is Shelley to Byron:

Communists make me
The true revolutionary,
You a mere rebel—

See you as mainly bored,
And much the lord.
(And surely they can tell
you would bemoan
their orderly sad Hell.)

Here the fiction of conversation holds, but barely, because each voice offers a position that is placed in a diagonal relation to the other. They intersect without exchange and without the likelihood of change. In such situations difference merely affirms itself through various reiterations arranged in static alternation.

Another kind of formalization undergone by conversation in poetry can be illustrated from the poem in question-and-answer format, as in my third example, R. S. Thomas's "Revision":

So the catechism begins:
'Who are you?'
'I don't know.'
'Who gave you that ignorance?'
'It is the system that, when two people
meet, they combine to produce
the darkness in which the self
is born, a wick hungering
for its attendant flame.'
 'What will that
Do for you?'
'Do for me? It is the echo
of a promise I am meant
to believe in.'
'Repeat that promise.'
'Whoever believes in this fire,
although he lives, he shall die.'¹⁵

My fourth example shows another variant, an extrapolation from the convention of dramatic stichomythia, R. S. Thomas's "Nocturne by Ben Shahn," which begins:

'Why look at me like that?'
 'Well—it's your hand on the guitar.'
 'Don't touch it; there is fire in it.'
 'But why doesn't it burn you?'
 'It does, it does; but inside me.'
 'I see no smoke at your nostrils.'
 'But I see green leaves at your lips.'¹⁶

My fifth example arranges its conversation as a quick and laconic play of answer-and-response, Adrian Mitchell's "Questionnaire," which begins:

Q. How do you do?
 A. Like a bear in the Zoo.
 Q. Why should that be?
 A. The world is not free.
 Must it always be so?
 A. No.

And ends:

Q. But how do you do?
 A. Like a bear who dreams he is not in a Zoo.¹⁷

Such poems take conversation into the partially overlapping zone of dialogue, where the fiction of two voices moves from the meeting or intersection of two minds to the clash of two ideologies.

I would now like to turn to a more complex poem that derives from the nineteenth century tradition of dramatic monologue, but complicates it by using the fiction of voices in conversation for dramatizing the internal divisions of a single consciousness in two minds about itself. Philip Hobsbaum has argued that the dramatic monologue may signal "a failure in the dramatic tradition."¹⁸ One

might add that the popularity of the monologue has been the bane of conversation in poetry, because its plurality of voices gives up on the engagement of two or more persons, and turns instead to kinds of division within a single speaker, such as the disjunction between predisposition to utterance and the actual utterance, the disjunction between utterance and concurrent inner thought or disposition, and the disjunction between the actual utterance and afterthought. Nevertheless, monologue and conversation poem share the feature of presenting the reader with alternative interpretations or attitudes which resist unity, so that the fiction of conversation continues to serve as a metaphor for the need to be taken outside the self. We can call such poems "shadow-dialogues."¹⁹

One of the most illuminating recent examples of this type provides my sixth example, Carol Ann Duffy's "Standing Female Nude," which combines the fiction of conversation with the poetic equivalent of what drama presents as an "aside," the comic book as the "thought-bubble" and cinema as the "voice-over" effect. A prostitute who works as a part-time nude model engages the painter in idle conversation while she reflects on the experience of being painted. The poem is constituted out of the implied figurative dialogue between the desultory conversation and her continuous and concurrent self-reflexivity. The convention of art draws the reader into this disjunction between words and thoughts, as a third and silent witness to both the external exchange and the internal colloquy. We thus get to hear all that she does, and to understand more than either she or he:

... He possesses me on canvas as he dips the brush
repeatedly into the paint. Little man,
you've not the money for the arts I sell.
Both poor, we make our living how we can.

I ask him, Why do you do this? Because
I have to. There's no choice. Don't talk.
My smile confuses him. These artists
take themselves too seriously When it's finished

he shows me proudly, lights a cigarette. I say
Twelve francs and get my shawl. It does not look like me.²⁰

The poem engages simultaneously in more than one type of conversation. As Ian Gregson remarks, monologue combines with dialogue, and dialogue with the dialogic. Each effect depends for its success on the capacity to surprise one voice with another.²¹

Another, very minimal and witty form of shadowing can be illustrated in the type of poem which formalizes conversation into a simple but forceful pattern. My seventh example is taken from the second section of Thom Gunn's long poem "Misanthropos" (1965). It exploits the motif of the echo that is always more or less than a true echo. In Arthur Golding's charming version of the story of Narcissus and Echo, each utterance by the foolish boy gets a plaintive diminuendo from the languishing nymph Echo:

Now when she saw *Narcissus* stray about the Forrest wyde,
She waxed warme and step for step fast after him she hyde.

....

By chaunce the stripling being strayed from all his companie,
Sayde: is there any bodie nie? Straight *Echo* answered: I.
Amazde he castes his ey aside, and looketh round about,
And come (that all the Forrest roong) aloud he calleth out.
And come (sayth she:) he looketh backe, and seeing no man followe,
Why fliste, he cryeth once againe: and she the same doth hallowe.
He still persistes, and wondring much what kinde of thing it was
From which that answering voice turne so duely seemed to passe,
Sayd: let us joyne. She (by hir will desirous to have said,
In faith with none more willing at any time or stead)
Sayd: let us joyne
He runnes his way, and will not be imbraced of no such.
And sayth: I first will die ere thou shalt take of me thy pleasure.
She answered nothing else thereto, but take of me thy pleasure²²

One of Gunn's literary heroes—Yvor Winters—was a great admirer of Golding's device, and Gunn provides a neat variation, in which the echo is derived from a diminished form of the preceding utterance, but with changed inflection:

At last my shout is answered! Are you near,
Man whom I cannot see but can hear?

Here.

The canyon hides you well, which well defended.
Sir, tell me, is the long war ended?

Ended.

I passed no human on my trip, a slow one.
Is it your luck, down there, to know one?

No one.

What have I left, who stood among mankind,
When the firm base is undermined?

A mind.

Yet, with a vacant landscape as its mirror,
What can it choose, to ease the terror?

Error.

Is there no feeling, then, that I can trust,
In spite of what we have discussed?

Disgust.²³

The succession of hollow questions is cauterized by a punning diminution in which mimicry is no mere diminishment. It refracts what it appears to echo, so that the intent of each question is set right by a minimalist tangent. The reading experience enacts an inversion of Golding's Echo and her dependency on the solipsist Narcissus.

The next part of my argument turns to the difficulty conversation has in approximating to communication. Like the many voices in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, which Calvin Bedient describes as "a crisis of heteroglossia,"²⁴ in such poems utterance can intend conversation without quite achieving it. In my eighth example, Edwin Morgan presents this difficulty under the Bakhtinian or Rabelaisian aspect of laughter. In a surreal encounter between the mummy of Rameses II and Mme Saunier-Seïté, who welcomes the mummy to Paris, hilarious miscommunication becomes an essential part of the poem's carnivalesque.

—I hope the flight from Cairo was reasonable.

—Mmmmm.

—We have a germ-proof room at the Museum of Man
where we trust your Majesty will have peace and quiet.

—Unh-unh.

—I am sorry, but this is necessary.
Your Majesty's person harbours a fungus.

—Fng, fng's hn?

The macabre conversation proceeds through allusions to Shelley's *Ozymandias* and the absence of women in the tomb to a final exchange in which the alarmed curator exclaims at the frantic mummy tearing off its bandages:

—Your Majesty, Your Majesty! You'll break your stitches!

—Fng st'chez fng's wrm hrm.²⁵

Linguistic incoherence neither dampens nor obscures the rejuvenation of lust as the comic thrust of the poem. In what is also a kind of conversation between poems, Morgan adds a post-script to Andrew Marvell's conflation of the themes of *carpe diem* and the *memento mori*:

The Grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.²⁶

Most poems that use conversation to dramatize the difficulty of communication are less facetious than the Morgan poem. But worlds can still stand divided in exchanges that read as more than dialogue while remaining less than conversation, as in the comic poignancy of my ninth example, Henry Reed's *Lessons of the War* (1946). The sequence dramatizes a disjunction between the voice of an Army instructor and a genteel, educated civilian. To begin with, the reader is lulled into supposing that each poem in the sequence is voiced by the

instructor preparing civilians for war. But when he puts a mildly sarcastic question to one of his less attentive recruits, the rejoinder becomes an antiphonal drift in muted contrariness.

You must never be over-sure. You must say, when reporting:
At five o'clock in the central sector is a dozen
Of what appear to be animals; whatever you do,
Don't call the *bleeders* sheep.

I am sure that's quite clear; and suppose, for the sake of example,
The one at the end, asleep, endeavours to tell us
What he sees over there to the west, and how far away,
After first having come to attention. There to the west,
On the fields of summer the sun and shadows bestow
Vestments of purple and gold.²⁷

The shift in voice remains uninflected, in correspondence to the bemused and reluctant tone of the civilian's reverie. The instructor remains oblivious of the subvocalization, which subverts its own protest by accepting marginalization.

Further along the spectrum of partial or oblique communication, we get exchanges that are at odds with themselves, which add up to less than dialogue while they remain more than conversation, as in my tenth example, the first section of Geoffrey Hill's *Mercian Hymns* (1972):

King of the perennial holly-groves, the riven sandstone: overlord of the M5:
architect of the historic rampart and ditch, the citadel at Tamworth, the
summer heritage in Holy Cross: guardian of the Welsh Bridge and the Iron
Bridge: contractor to the desirable new estates: saltmaster: money-changer:
commissioner for oaths: martyrologist: the friend of Charlemagne.

'I like that,' said Offa, 'sing it again.'²⁸

Here, two voices speak neither *with* nor *against* each other. The obvious difference in style and tone—inflated rhetoric undercut by laconic casualness—goes hand-in-hand with an outward conjunction of wills. The servant is annunciatory in tone, but if he speaks tongue-in-cheek, he does so without biting his tongue, though the poem

remains two-faced about the attitude to authority endorsed by the exchange. Self-effaced, the servant provides a face for his master. His utterance is directed at all and sundry, though it speaks only of, and to, its subject. The master discovers the novelty and pleasure of being made the subject of splendid nominations. That the splendour resides less in the master than in the servant's mastery in nomination gives the litany of praise its contexture of comic dispraise. Naming is fun, and calling names can be funny, and though King Offa might be neither, even he might see the joke. The poem as speech-act constitutes disjuncture as the basis for cognition not merely in the polarization of styles and implied attitudes but in opening up the possibility that such doublings are inherent to the contemplative mind. The poem then becomes—in Stevens's phrase—"the act of the mind,"²⁹ but specifically as a mind in several voices about itself, where the notion of mind conflates poet, reader, and fictive protagonist.

In Hill's poem, the differences in linguistic register dramatize the potential for conflict between language and power, power and identity. By foregrounding this in and as language, Hill also shows how a poem can circumvent the limitations that Bakhtin (pre-judicially) ascribes to poetry:

The world of poetry, no matter how many contradictions and insoluble conflicts the poet develops within it, is always illumined by one unitary and indisputable discourse. Contradictions, conflicts and doubts remain in the object, in thoughts, in living experiences—in short, in the subject matter—but they do not enter into the language itself. In poetry, even the discourse about doubts must be cast in a discourse that cannot be doubted.³⁰

Bakhtin is rhetorical in his assertion of doubt that it is possible to find poems in which conversation represents a discourse that can be doubted. Yet that is precisely what is done in my final example, "Dialogue on the Headland," in which Robert Graves presents a conversation between two lovers. The poem's intertextual force deflates the rhetoric we associate with the tradition of Robert Burns's "My love is like a red, red rose." The more hyperbolic one voice gets in its asseverations, the more doubt opens up like a vertiginous abyss

before the lovers and their desire for transcendence—not from time, but—their own fear of frailty in love:

- SHE: You'll not forget these rocks and what I told you?
 HE: How could I? Never: whatever happens.
 SHE: What do you think might happen?
 Might you fall out of love?—did you mean that?
 HE: Never, never! 'Whatever' was a sop
 For jealous listeners in the shadows.
 SHE: You haven't answered me. I asked:
 'What do you think might happen?'
 HE: Whatever happens: though the skies should fall
 Raining their larks and vultures in our laps
 SHE: 'Though the seas turn to slime'—say that
 'Though water-snakes be hatched with six heads.'
 HE: Though the seas turn to slime, or tower
 In an arching wave above us, three miles high
 SHE: 'Though she should break with you'—dare you say that?
 'Though she deny her words on oath.'³¹

They go on in this vein for a while, but the end of the poem brings them no closer—nor leaves them any farther—than when they began this ritual exorcism of doubt. Conversation progresses here only in the paradoxical sense of opening up the recognition that their love cannot overcome the doubt they are overcome by. Conversation speaks here as poetry only of the truth of doubts that cannot be doubted, of affirmations that cannot confirm assent through speech. The only affirmation speech can make in this secular version of a negative theology is to persist in the kind of conversation that brings out the colours of silence as speech. The poetry of conversation thus reaches a limit. Language concedes to what cannot be redressed through language, before which we still continue with the effort to converse.

Put another way, if conversation is the exchange of speech in an economy of surplus, poetry is the recession of language in which dialogue dissembles conversation in order that meaning remain outside the agency of the interlocutor while apparently contained within the field of possibility circumscribed by the author. The will of the author, when it presents dialogue as a fiction of conversation,

constitutes a form of intentionality. What this will intends is difference in consciousness. The intersection of speech-acts becomes an embodiment of this will to difference, and the conventions of genre ground this difference as meaning. When this intersection stretches beyond that will, but within that genre, we have dialogue revert to the state of conversation, a surplus beyond the initiating economy of authorial intent. That is why someone like Bakhtin looked to the literary text for a space in which difference in discourse—difference as discourse—could acquire what we might call its perlocutionary force.³² He purported to find this scope at its most sustained in the novel; we can find it at its most elemental in the form of the short poem. Michael Holquist links the contrast between Bakhtin's imperative to dialogue as difference and the Kant of the chapter devoted to schematization that opens the *Analytic of Principles* in the *First Critique*. Kant there invokes "a third thing, which must stand in homogeneity with the category on the one hand and the appearance on the other."³³ For Holquist, the need for such thirdness corresponds to the ground that must be taken as shareable when two consciousnesses meet, whether in conversation or dialogue, "Knowing that between ourselves and the world there is no direct connection but only a highly mediated relation."³⁴ Conversation, or its semblance in the text as dialogue, is the form such mediation takes in poetry.

National University of Singapore

NOTES

¹T. S. Eliot's borrowing from Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, Bk. 1, Cp. 16 for the early version reproduced in *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber, 1971).

²Mikhail Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, trans. Vadim Liapunov, eds. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov (Austin: U of Texas P, 1990) 13.

³Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, The M.I.T. Press, 1968) 364.

⁴*Art and Answerability* 212; *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, trans. and ed. Vadim Liapunov (Austin: U of Texas P, 1993, 14). Cf. "What is necessary is an essential point of support in meaning *outside* the context of my own life . . . in order to be able to remove the act of experiencing from the unitary and unique event of my own life" (*Art and Answerability* 113).

⁵"One must come to feel at home in the world of other people, in order to go on from confession . . . to the world as a beautiful given" (*Art and Answerability* 111).

⁶*Art and Answerability* 98.

⁷Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson. (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984) 59.

⁸"The form of my life-from-within is conditioned by my rightful folly or insanity of *not coinciding*—of not coinciding in principle—with me myself as a given" (*Art and Answerability* 127).

⁹"A Dialogue of Self and Soul," *Yeats's Poems*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (London: Macmillan, 1989) 348-51.

¹⁰Paul de Man, "Lyric and Modernity," *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1983) 171.

¹¹OED, "conversation," n. 7.a. Cf. 2.: "The action of consorting or having dealings with others; living together; commerce, intercourse, society, intimacy," and 5.: "Circle of acquaintance, company, society," and 7.c.: "small talk." However, 8. goes some way towards blurring the distinction between conversation and dialogue: "A public conference, discussion or debate," as do the OED's 1.a. and 1.b. for "dialogue."

¹²Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (1960, 2nd ed. 1965; trans. 1975, rpt. New York: Crossroad, 1982) 345.

¹³Ivy Compton-Burnett interviewed by Margaret Jourdain: "As regards plots I find real life no help at all. Real life seems to have no plots." *Orion: A Miscellany*, Vol. 1 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1945) rpt. In Charles Burckhart, *The Art of Ivy Compton-Burnett* (London: Gollancz, 1972).

¹⁴F. T. Prince, *Collected Poems 1935-1992* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1993) 231-44, 247-53 resp.

¹⁵R. S. Thomas, *Collected Poems 1945-1990* (London: J. M. Dent, 1993) 492-93.

¹⁶R. S. Thomas, 231.

¹⁷Adrian Mitchell, *Blue Coffee: Poems 1985-1996* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1996) 15.

¹⁸Philip Hobsbaum, *Tradition and Experiment in English Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1979) 234.

¹⁹Vincent Crapanzano, "On Dialogue," *The Interpretation of Dialogue*, ed. Tullio Maranhão (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990) 269-91, here 289.

²⁰Carol Ann Duffy, "Standing Female Nude," *Standing Female Nude* (London: Anvil Press, 1985) 46.

²¹Ian Gregson, *Contemporary Poetry and Postmodernism: Dialogue and Engagement* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996) 101-02.

²²Arthur Golding (trans.), *The Metamorphoses* (1565; London: The Centaur Press, 1961) 72 (Book III, ll. 461-88).

²³Thom Gunn, "Misanthropos," *Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 1993) 134. I am grateful to my colleague John W. Phillips for drawing my attention to this poem.

²⁴Calvin Bedient, *He Do The Police In Different Voices: 'The Waste Land' and Its Protagonists* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986) 9.

²⁵Edwin Morgan, "The Mummy," *Selected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1985) 98-99.

²⁶Andrew Marvell "To his Coy Mistress," *The Selected Poetry of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: The New American Library, 1967) 76.

²⁷Henry Reed, "Judging Distances," "Lessons of the War, 2," *Collected Poems*, ed. Jon Stallworthy (Oxford: OUP, 1991) 50.

²⁸Geoffrey Hill, *New and Collected Poems* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994) 93.

²⁹Wallace Stevens, "Of Modern Poetry," *Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson (New York: The Library of America, 1997) 218-19.

³⁰Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P 1981) 286.

³¹Robert Graves, *Selected Poems*, ed. with an introduction by Paul O'Prey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986) 174-75.

³²J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1962) 98-101.

³³Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: CUP, 1998) 272.

³⁴Michael Holquist, "Afterword: A Two-Faced Hermes," "Bakhtin/'Bakhtin': Studies in the Archive and Beyond," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 97 (1998): 781-90, here 786.

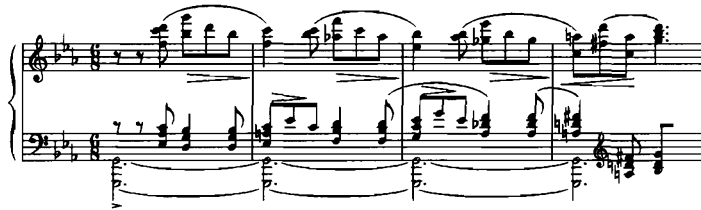
"A kind of musical conversation":¹ Britten and Crozier's *Let's Make an Opera!*

REBEKKA FRITZ, INGE LEIMBERG, NINA SANDMEIER

1. Meeting the theme and getting in touch²

I.L.

When asked for a theme within the theme of the conference, I found myself singing the Owls' Nightsong with the audience in one of the performances of *Let's Make an Opera* at the Hammersmith Lyric, half a century ago:³



The full title, *Let's Make an Opera! An Entertainment for Young People in Three Acts, including The Little Sweep, A Children's Opera* gives us the matter and the manner and the purpose and the persons of the work in a nutshell. The first two acts consist of a preliminary play devoted to the making of the opera which will be performed in the third act. Apart from a professional composer, a young lady who writes poetry, a charming young nanny, and the middle-aged lady who tells the story of the little sweep's rescue, the opera-makers are boys and girls, so that the entertainment is not only "for" but also by young people and, finally, the imperative "Let's" turns out to be an invitation extended to the audience. Thus, on that remembered occasion, we were asked to participate in the little "entertainment" that consisted of words and music arising out of conversation and

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debfritz-leimberg-sandmeier01023.htm>>.

performed in a manner that never denied that origin. Nor should it be absent from the discussion of the theme at this conference. Therefore the partnership of a musicologist and a literary historian seemed to be indicated. So I rang up a musicologist colleague and asked for the address of a likely candidate. He named Rebekka Fritz who named Nina Sandmeier as our pianist. Frau Fritz and I will discuss the theme from our different angles while Frau Sandmeier will intermittently play some of the musical examples mostly alive in your memory, anyway. In the last part of our talk we shall ask you to "Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts,"⁴ dividing us, if not "into a thousand parts," at least into a couple of adults (male and female) and half a dozen children. As their substitutes we shall, moreover, have to sing, for which we ask your "pardon, gentles all."

2. Where does this "Entertainment" come from?

R.F.

When Inge Leimberg asked me whether I would like to join her in giving a talk on Benjamin Britten's *Let's Make an Opera* I was intrigued. How does this work fit into a symposium on "the poetics of conversation"? Investigating the relationship between poetry and opera seems plausible, but looking for conversation in opera? So I wanted to find out more about the work itself and its context, especially the historical one.⁵

Let's Make an Opera falls into the category of school opera, children's opera etc.⁶ This genre has a long tradition going back to the sixteenth century when, in Germany plays in Latin were performed at the Protestant *Lateinschulen*. They often included choruses at the end of acts. In England, up to the seventeenth century, choirboys—e.g. the Children of the Chapel Royal—often doubled as actors, performing at court and in public, now mostly in the vernacular. Since they were trained musicians the proportion of music in the plays and the standard of performance was very high. Having said this much—or

rather little—I must leave the enormous subject of the English boy companies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the experts, proceeding to the modern practice of performing not only by but for children. From the nineteenth century onward the plays often combined spoken dialogue with songs, like ballad operas or operettas, and the educational aim which had gradually given way to a purely representational one, came to the fore again, e.g. in Brecht and Weill's *Lehrstück Der Jasager*, Hindemith's *Wir bauen eine Stadt*, or Britten's *Let's Make an Opera*. Here the combination of spoken dialogue and music occurs on two levels. The first two acts form a play with a few sung passages, whereas the last act is an opera with a few spoken dialogues.

Secondly *Let's Make an Opera* is closely linked with the operatic tradition from the very beginning, since the first two acts discuss the thematic and structural elements of a grand opera, especially of the nineteenth century. In the opera proper, the third act of the entertainment, the typical forms of grand opera—ensembles, arias, recitatives—are reproduced on a smaller scale in three scenes instead of acts. Britten works with the set pieces and traditional methods of opera but he also undercuts their respectability by placing them in that educational context. This does not "come from" the operatic tradition, nor does the audience involvement in the songs which function as entr'actes. As a parallel perhaps Hindemith's *Ite, angeli veloces*, a cantata on a text by Paul Claudel, should be mentioned where the tradition that the congregation sings the final chorale in cantata is taken up in a secular work. But in opera I know of no audience involvement, apart from the possibility to sing-along in ballad operas (e.g. *The Beggar's Opera*) the music of which is made up mainly of popular songs.

Britten not only knew about these traditions, but was literally steeped in them:⁷ for the English Opera Group he realised *Dido and Aeneas* and *The Fairy Queen* by Purcell, who was himself a "Master of the Children" at the Chapel Royal, as well as John Gay's *The Beggars Opera*—and, surely, we are supposed to read the words "a children's

opera" in the title as a reminiscence of the opera that was made by the beggar as this is by children. Britten's immersion in the music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries shows in many compositional aspects of *Let's Make an Opera*. If the structural patterns are looked at more closely, Handel and Mozart have contributed rather than later composers; even though the only operatic work mentioned in the play is an operetta of the late nineteenth century—*The Pirates of Penzance* by Gilbert and Sullivan.

I.L.

Seen from a literary viewpoint the opera of the little sweep's misery and rescue recalls, of course, the charming but, perhaps, to a modern reader somewhat longish story of the Water-Babies but also the formal austerity and music of Blake's two poems.⁸ In fact it was through reminiscing their lines that Britten thought of a little sweep for the hero of the planned children's opera. But when, at Aldeborough in 1949, the libretto had been written and the opera composed, it simply did not measure up to an evening's entertainment for an audience consisting of adults and children at a connoisseurs' festival, and that is how the first two acts came into being,⁹ which are only partly operatic and poetic but mostly conversational in style. Moreover, they mix up the melodrama of the poor little sweep from Jane Austen's days¹⁰ with present-day reality, as well as the finished artefact of the opera with all the various technicalities of its making.

The idea of this mixture comes under the heading of Touchstone's dictum "the truest poetry is the most feigning,"¹¹ and some random examples begin to line up before the mind's eye: first Ralph Roister Doister tramples over the boards of Terentian school-drama written, in this case, by a real schoolmaster for his boys.¹² Then Christopher Sly made his boisterous entrance and, doing so to an audience brought up on Plautus, Terence *et alii* by well-read humanist teachers, the drunken old tinker set against a background of Ovidian trees and hounds had a good chance to be recognized as a Silenus in disguise. (But modern scholars and producers fail to see that point and so the

lovely Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew* is usually dropped.) When the new century (I mean the seventeenth) was well on its way, Citizen's Wife insisted on making a play rather than merely watching one, casting and rejecting actors and absolutely refusing to do without the musical hit of the day, Dowland's "Lachrymae".¹³



'Let's Make a Musical Comedy' would have been a fitting subtitle for *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.

While the three figures mentioned above thrust themselves upon our memory, no hero of an eighteenth-century rehearsal play has survived, though in its time the genre flourished and, containing a number of thematic links, calls for scholarly regard as a historical foil of the preliminary play to *Let's Make an Opera*.¹⁴ "Jumping o'er time"¹⁵ and finding ourselves in the 20th century, we think, perhaps, of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, making use of traditional as well as modernist ways of theatrical self reflexion¹⁶ with enormous though, lately, waning success and thus sharing the fate of its eighteenth-century forbears as well as Britten and Crozier's *Entertainment*.¹⁷

Feigned theatrical reality effectuated by a Stage Manager or in the form of an induction or interlude, combined with the straightforward kind of illusion germane to stage-plays or operas (however veristic) is just one of the old tricks of putting the metaphor of the stage upon the stage. Since, in *Let's Make an Opera* conversation is the mode of expression characteristic of the feigned reality while "truth" is the hallmark of the story of the little sweep, the question comes up

whether, in this case, conversation may not be coupled with "All the world" and poetry with the "stage." Looked at more closely or rather listened to more attentively, however, all the examples cited have a conversational element in common. Moreover they share the fate of the first two acts of *Let's Make an Opera* that they are not much appreciated in our own age or, in Crozier's words:

3. That the preliminary play "does not wear so well."

I.L.

It was not easy to collect at least some sources reflecting the critical response to *Let's Make an Opera* from the beginning. If it had not been for the courtesy of Britten's publishers Boosey & Hawkes, who provided us with copies of the press cuttings on their files, we should have been completely on the rocks. As it is, the fragmentary kind of medley has emerged of which Rebekka Fritz and I shall now try to give an impression.

Generally the critics' attitude to *Let's Make an Opera* is of the more patronising type: the *Opera* is said to be, on the whole, very nice and in some particulars really fine and the whole entertainment not without a certain didactic value. Often there is some businesslike criticism of the professional singers and, more often, a pat on the back for the children's singing and performing. The one really interesting aspect, however, is the radical change in the appreciation of the preliminary play including the audience-songs.

R.F.

After the first performance at Aldeborough in 1949, the whole Entertainment including the preliminary play with the audience songs and the opera was called "delightful" in the *Times*,¹⁸ and again in one of the most recent notices available (Matthias Roth in the *Rhein-Neckar Zeitung*) the whole Entertainment, especially the audience participation is praised enthusiastically: "Das Vergnügen, mit dem sich die

jungen und älteren Zuschauer beteiligten, [ließ] diese Premiere zu einem Erlebnis werden" (The pleasure with which the audience [whether young or middle aged] participated made this first night quite an event)¹⁹



But, as far as the preliminary play goes, this praise did no longer concern Crozier's original libretto but a completely new text written for this 1991 Mannheim Production which, actually, followed the lead of a former one at Sadler's Wells in 1986 where the opera had already been provided with a newly invented up-to-date introduction of which we could, regrettably, find no trace.

I.L.

Strangely enough it was Crozier himself who gave producers the green light for this kind of substitution. In 1962 the commentator of the *Opera Magazine*, reviewing a performance with a considerably abridged introduction, could not but "wonder . . . if it [the introduction] should not be dropped altogether."²⁰ Such a radical purging would of course have made away completely with the idea of "Entertainment." Therefore (perhaps) Crozier in his short foreword to *The Little Sweep* in David Herbert's 1979 edition of the libretti of Britten's operas suggested a middle course: the "preliminary play," he wrote, "does not wear so well as the opera" and "should be rewritten to suit the local circumstances and characters performing *The Little*

Sweep.”²¹ And promptly the introduction was modernised for instance by the National Youth Theatre in their production at Sadler’s Wells in 1986 which drew wholehearted praise from the critic of the *Independent* who felt that Crozier’s preliminary play was “irredeemably time-locked” and that the opera without any kind of introduction was “limp”²² (whatever that means). At Aldeburgh in 1989, however, the preliminary play was indeed “dropped.”

R.F.

But dropping the preliminary play bears on the realisation of the audience songs which are meant to integrate the audience into the whole Entertainment. Not only do children as well as adults “learn by doing” but an improvisational character is maintained throughout. In this way both of Britten’s ideas in *Let’s Make an Opera* are realised: the experience of “making” as well as of producing an opera for and together with everyone—the children onstage, the audience, people like you and me. Without the rehearsals included in the preliminary play the audience rehearsal becomes separated from the performance, takes much longer than envisaged by Britten—up to an hour instead of 20 minutes—and acquires a seriousness which does not really suit the context. In the Munich performance of 1990, therefore, the director had the audience songs sung by the ensemble, even though a radically shortened and rephrased preliminary play preceded the opera, while in the performance at the Theater der Freundschaft (Berlin) in 1992 the preliminary play was completely omitted and the audience songs sung, apparently, by the ensemble. This way the artistic and social edge is taken off Britten’s *Entertainment for Young People* and, as the commentator of the *Kurier am Morgen* notes, *The Little Sweep* is reduced to a “gefällige Kinderrevue” (an undemanding musical show for children).²³



4. What's wrong with the preliminary play

I.L.

The question "what's wrong with it" is the other side of "what's right with it?" And I should prefer to look at that first. After all, at least for about a dozen years the first two acts were a success and audiences enjoyed participating and singing the songs composed for them. So let's have a look at *Let's Make an Opera* from our viewpoint of poetry and conversation.

When the curtain rises a conversational tableau presents itself: some more or less grown persons and some children are comfortably seated in a drawing room and one of them, a lady, tells an old but approvedly true story, frequently interrupted by the listeners, so that the story develops in a conversational manner. If this is really obsolete ("irredeemably time-locked," as that reviewer wrote),²⁴ it is a pity. But if it is only just a little old-fashioned, why not play it (as another critic implicitly suggested)²⁵ as a costume piece? Surely the opera itself is just that but it has worn well, all the same. And so have some of the most successful musicals of the twentieth century in spite, or perhaps rather because of their old-fashioned settings.²⁶



In the movies (for instance in Christie-films) the fashions and jargon of the twenties are felt to be an added charm. And who says that children shy away from that sort of thing? The children I happened to know as a schoolteacher loved nothing better than dressing up in whatever strange garb and trying out a kind of language different from their own everyday usage. Hopefully, children are brought up now to converse in spite of social or national or intellectual or whatever barriers, then why not let them take part in an at least fictional conversation bridging the gap of a few generations?

When it comes to the actual words they seem, perhaps, even less "wrong" than the setting, especially when looked at from the viewpoint of conversation, being, nearly all of them, charged with participation. Here are some examples. A story of, at least for children, mythical age is told but it is a true one: "Is it a true story?" "True as true."²⁷ Truth and fiction converge. The old story happened in the Christmas holidays and so does the action developing on the stage but in this case the holidays are used for "working," "hard work," "more work."²⁸ Work and play are as necessary for each other as the famous proverb says.²⁹ Writing the libretto and composing the score make clear that music and poetry go together and are well-nigh interchangeable: the librettist must learn to try and imitate Shakespeare's magic idiom, i.e. to "pick out the words that sing from

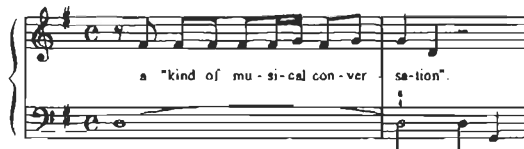
those that only mumble"³⁰ while the composer mixes words and music "just like a painter who mixes blue, red and yellow . . ."³¹ As the arts work together so do the professionals on the stage with the amateurs in the auditorium: "The whole audience is going to sing it!"³² But, of course, on this stage, most of the professionals are supposed to be amateurs which, in some cases, they really are, while, on the other side of the footlights, the audience plays the part assigned to the chorus in Greek tragedy.

R.F.

Finally many musical terms implicitly refer to meeting and mixing; Norman, the composer, speaks of "blending the characters in different combinations" such as "ensemble" or "trio" or "duet,"³³



as "it would be very dull if they [the characters] only sang by turns or if they all sang all the time."³⁴ Some of the musical numbers use forms of traditional communal music making: the Shanty (No. 4) of seamen appears as the rope is pulled to get the little sweep out of the chimney, and a Marching Song (No. 6) illustrates the placing of sooty foot tracks on the floor. The recitative is defined as³⁵



The persons even have their own characteristic way of speaking in the music just as in the text. This is most obvious in such comic characters as Tom and Alfred: Alfred usually sings in stepwise motion, while Tom uses many big leaps like octaves and fifths.³⁶ Since these musical devices are realized by the characters of a story,

language comes in again because "character" is also another name for "letter"; "phrase" is another term which links music and poetry in Crozier's libretto. Even the names of the characters, especially the two musicians, refer to music: Norman Chaffinch, the composer and Mr. Harper, the conductor.

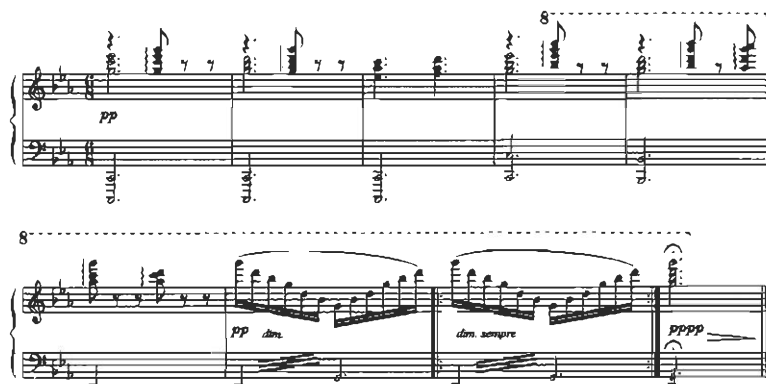
While the first Act of the preliminary play shows how music and words are combined to converse in an opera, the rehearsals of Act II are chiefly concerned with making music together and most importantly—as in a conversation—listening to each other. Especially the audition for Clem's role shows the conversational interaction on several levels: in the scene the children and Norman try to make Max, who is auditioning for the role of Clem, feel at ease, not only in the situation of the audition: "Is this the right key for you?"—"How is this?"—"That's comfortable, thank you!"³⁷ They also illustrate the idea if the opera as a conversation between the persons on stage and in the auditorium—"We are making this opera for people just like ourselves."³⁸ Through their involvement in some of the songs, the audience is not restricted to listening only but can actually participate in the making of the opera.

I.L.

When it comes to the initial act of finding the right words as well as the right music it is through the characters that the energetic impulse needed is produced: "After working for a week or two on the story," says the composer, "the characters will begin to become alive. Then you will find the words lining up on the end of your pen, and I'll be hearing the notes they call for." Characteristically this dictum is part of a conversation. Anne, the librettist, says: "It sounds wonderful when you put it like that, Norman. Are you sure you're not exaggerating?" And Norman answers: "Of course I am!" Then Gladys, the teller of the story who is going to play and sing the part of the nasty housekeeper, Miss Baggott, concludes: "He's leaving out the hard work."³⁹

I would not like to miss this bit of 'trialogue.' Of course it is didactic, but then the whole little entertainment is, quite openly, that. It has a bit of the old school-drama about it, but teaching does not necessarily prevent delight. At least Crozier's, in this instance, doesn't. It is terse not longish, it is modest not pompous, and it is by no means trite but intelligent and felt to be derived from genuine professional experience. Though Norman may be exaggerating, he is not just talking rarified aesthetical jargon or building mere castles in the air. We have it on excellent authority (to pick out only three examples at random, from Horace⁴⁰ and Sidney⁴¹ and Rose Ausländer⁴²) that words are not dead matter, nor are they pulled on a leash or sucked out of a pencil or copied out of a lexicon but come of their own accord—always provided that the author really met the characters in his story and handled the *characters* in his type-case, working out, carefully and patiently, pattern after pattern till the evident one, surprisingly, emerges.⁴³

Working with the notes of music and the words of language does not mean using mere tools but opening a conversation with these speaking entities. It is this initial, creative partnership that inspires and invites actors and singers and stage-hands and audiences in this exemplary conversation in which, in perhaps the most beautiful of the audience-songs, even the animals join when Sammy is dreaming:⁴⁴



The short passage devoted to *The Little Sweep* in *The New Grove Dictionary* of 1965 culminates, after touching cursorily on the preliminary play, in the definition: "Like much other Britten this is a parable about cruelty and compassion";⁴⁵ in the 2001 edition, however, that statement has been cancelled. This is a most welcome revision, especially as regards the preliminary play, which is only very cursorily related with that theme. The story of the little sweep has, of course, a social appeal, but *Let's Make an Opera* as a whole was never thought of by its makers as a parable but as an entertainment, and its focus is not cruelty and compassion but opera-making, that is to say, creativity. And the lesson we are, accidentally, taught about it is that, as a child needs father and mother, human creativity needs participation, meeting, conversing. And the composer and librettist (i.e. Britten and Crozier, not Norman and Anne) have taken great pains to make this obvious in an emblematic manner, by focusing on a model which appears to be nothing less than the model of this entertainment which is in itself a model.

R.F.

At the beginning of the second scene of Act I, which is set a month later, the stage directions refer to "a scale-model of the opera set" standing on a table with a lamp to illuminate it.⁴⁶ This lamp, however, is not yet lit. At first the model can hardly be seen by both the actors and the audience. About half way through the scene Monica discovers it; the lamp is switched on and the children now admire the model, realising only gradually that it is the scaled-down stage set of the opera.

But even before this, in Gladys's story the light goes on, so to speak, and the set lights up in the imagination of the children who all contribute their ideas to invent a scenery of only one set: a nursery with "Two doors, a fireplace, a window . . . and the toy-cupboard!" But not only the scenery is invented in this model imagined in

conversation, but the beginning of the opera, too: "We could start bang off with the arrival of the sweeps dragging Sam into the room . . ." ⁴⁷



Then there is, of course, the stage of the opera proper. The curtain is drawn back at the beginning though the illusion had been destroyed already when it went up in the dress rehearsal. In the opera itself, too, the illusion is broken several times: Juliet's announcement of "the great transformation scene" closes Act I and the 'coach' at the very end of the opera is a kind of Heath Robinson contraption improvised by the children using chairs and umbrellas. Moreover the window which is already present in the children's first idea of the room opens out to yet another stage: Sam has supposedly fled through it and in the *Finale* the children remaining onstage watch his actual departure through it, reporting what they see to the audience.

The music in the opera often functions as a scaled-down model for grand opera as well. Many forms are taken from or refer to the operatic tradition from Handel to Strauss: Rowan's Aria (No. 8) is set as a *da capo* aria with introductory recitative, a form common in the eighteenth century, even though the text is not repeated as the music is. From the seventeenth century come the emotional effects like the syncopations and quaver motion which are used in the middle section of the aria to express haste and flight:⁴⁸

pressing forward
molto stringendo
cresc.

Run, poor boy! O do not slack-en, do not slack-en! Black Bob fol-lows

pp cresc.

Faster
Più presto

swift, fol-lows swift be-hind! See his ang-ry fea-tures

f mf

black-en! Rage and fu-ry make him blind!

ff

And, of course, the entire subject matter—making and performing an opera within an evening's entertainment—is in itself a model. It can be seen in a grand opera, too: for instance in Richard Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*.⁴⁹ Here Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the librettist, also plays with the various levels of time and illusion. As in *Let's Make an Opera*, several time-levels are intermingled: the opera is set in the

eighteenth century, in terms of style the music belongs to the nineteenth century, but the opera was written and is performed in the twentieth century. The "Vorspiel" shows the preparations of various groups for an evening's entertainment at court. An opera and a *commedia de l'arte*-pantomime are to be performed before the duke, who decides at the last minute that it would be better to have just one performance—a mix of both. The second act, thus, starts off as a conventional opera, which, however, is interrupted again and again by the comedians. The two groups are set off against each other not only in their different theatrical genres—tragedy and comedy—but also in their musical idioms, which are both taken from nineteenth-century convention. The characters in the opera sing as in a grand opera, the *commedia de l'arte* characters use the idioms of operetta, especially coloratura.⁵⁰ As in *Let's Make an Opera* the illusion of opera is not only broken by showing the preparations for its performance in an induction, but also during the actual performance by the introduction of elements which, strictly speaking, do not belong to the genre.

6. Poetry and music conversing together

I.L.

The paradigm being an opera, the nucleus of conversing as well as creating is the meeting of words and music. This is a recurring motif in the ongoing conversation in the first act, e.g.: "Opera is very like Shakespeare," or "Music is just the same as . . . poetry . . . it cuts to the heart of things."⁵¹ Moreover, we are made to realize how the symbiosis of words and music can be put into practice. For instance, we are taken step by step from the moment in Gladys's story when she relates the original little sweep's words "Please don't send me up again" and the composer says: "Good moment for music"⁵² to the finished Ensemble in the opera when each stanza leads up to the climax of "Please don't send me up again."⁵³



R.F.

The decision to write an opera having been made before the play begins, the discussion now centres on the prerequisites essential to an opera and the suitability of the story. But doubts are soon dispersed: Even as the story is told, Norman hears a "Good moment for music!"⁵⁴ More points are added later: the story is true and simple, and it has musical and dramatic possibilities. When the composer is asked how to begin he describes the essentials of opera: "What's an opera for?—to tell a story through words and music. Gladys has given us the story. We have a family of characters, . . . We know pretty well what happens to them . . . We want them to sing . . . So we must aim to blend our characters in as many different combinations as we can—duets, trios, alone sometimes, or all together . . ."⁵⁵

At this stage, the composition of the opera is already well under way: Norman's reaction to the little sweep's cry leads to a first experiment on sung and spoken text. And even before that Gladys describes music and poetry as speaking "in a magic language" and being able to "reveal all the wonderful and terrible and exciting things that lie beneath the surface of everyday life."⁵⁶ In his experiment Norman shows exactly how music changes the expressions of everyday life into magic.

NORMAN: Just speak it. Go on! [...]

JOHN: "Please don't send me up again!"

NORMAN: Say it once more, as movingly as you can.

JOHN: "Please don't send me up again"—Easy! [...]

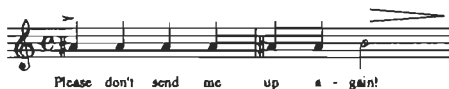
NORMAN: Now sing it. I'll give you the notes. *He plays the phrase on the piano.*



Got it?

JOHN: Once more, please.

NORMAN: *playing the phrase again*



Sing it twice. First time rising a semitone on the last note, second time dropping a semitone. *He plays the phrase that way.*



Off you go!

JOHN *sings the phrase twice, with appropriate chords.*⁵⁷



CHILDREN: Oh, yes! Much better than speaking!⁵⁸

The emotion is caught in the setting, as Britten uses the musical figure of *Passus duriusculus*, conventional since the seventeenth century, where rising or falling semitones express sadness, lament or pain. So "When [the little sweep] sings, you can hear the heartbreak in the musical phrase."⁵⁹ The experiment also shows how Norman actually composes; it shows how a character comes to life and makes

the poet and composer find the right words and notes, as Norman will later describe to Anne.

I.L.

Trying to outline in at least some detail the characteristic contribution of the words, I should like to stick to just one example, only mentioning in passing what an essential part is played throughout by rhyme and metre and stanza-forms and levels of style and, last but not least, by sound-symbolism, especially onomatopoeia.⁶⁰ My chosen example is an Ensemble echoing one of the two poems from Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience* which gave birth to *The Little Sweep*. Perhaps it deserves special attention, too, because it is the only number that is repeated in full, though in the dress rehearsal it is called "Ensemble" but "Song" in the opera. Here is Blake's first stanza:

A little black thing among the snow:
Crying weep weep in notes of woe!
Where are thy father and mother? say?
They are both gone up to the church to pray.

And here is Crozier's:

O why do you weep through the working day?
O why do you weep at your task, poor boy?
Father and mother are far away,
How shall I laugh and play?⁶¹

There are striking parallels: i.e. the repeated "weep," the motif of father and mother being absent, or the interplay of question and answer. In the refrain Crozier seems to have introduced a new motif, laughing and joy, but this is taken over from Blake's next stanza: "Because I was happy upon the heath . . ." Both songs have three stanzas of four lines in what we are accustomed to call iambic metre with the unaccented syllable frequently doubled. In Blake all four lines have four beats; Crozier shortened the refrain and, moreover,

filled Blake's rhyme scheme a-a-b-b, or a-b-a-b with near-identical sounds: "... day ... boy ... away ... play" in all twelve lines, which was, of course, not very difficult for him, since his Song or Ensemble practically consists of repetitions: "O why do you weep ... / O why do you weep ... / O where is the home ... / O where is the home ..." etc. while in Blake's "Chimney Sweeper" the phrases emphasized by repetition alternate with a rich variety of words charged with bitter satire and tragic pathos.

Surely the *Songs of Experience* are far from being an "Entertainment," but *Let's Make an Opera* is and, though inspired by Blake's passionate accusation of father and mother and king and priest and God, Sammy's complaint is sentimental rather than tragic. And why shouldn't it? A composition for which Britten will perhaps remain most dearly beloved by his public (if not most highly admired by the pundits) is the slow movement of the *Simple Symphony* called, quite openly, "Sentimental Saraband."⁶²



Our Ensemble, too, is simple and sentimental, using the small vocabulary of children and repeating, again and again, the meaningful phrases of complaint which are chosen to blend with the interjection "O" which signifies wordless complaint: "O why ... O where ... O what ... O ... O ... How ... how ... Home ... Home." The whole effect verges on an onomatopoeia that imitates a complaint uttered in sounds rather than words.

In Blake, too, there are moments of that kind; for instance in the "weep weep" that is used in a manner resembling the *peep peep* of a young bird. He also repeated the phrase "notes of woe" making it rhyme, moreover, with "snow" but he used it as a formula of pathos in a richly varied, highly expressive context, while, in Crozier's Song, the repetition of word and sound and rhythmical pattern reigns supreme. Blake wrote a poem. Crozier, imitating that poem, wrote a Song which is also an Ensemble in a children's opera.

Repetition is recommended, for instance in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (IV.28, 38) as a means of arousing pity, and even in writing a treatise on the subject the author uses a kind of style that will move rather than instruct the reader:

Reduplication is the repetition of one or more words for the purpose of Amplification or Appeal to Pity . . . The reiteration of the same word makes a deep impression upon the hearer and inflicts a major wound upon the opposition—as if a weapon should repeatedly pierce the same part of the body.⁶³

The rule above all rules the classical rhetoricians insist on is, however, not to overdo things. Blake, though far from being a classicist poet, avoids this *vitium* while Crozier revels in repetition to a degree that would kill his piece as a poem which, of course, it isn't. It was made for an opera and wants to be read not in the libretto but in the score. Here it is clear at once that repetition in the text is balanced by variation in the music.

R.F.

The advice from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* might have been applied literally to the music by Britten: Sammy's lines, in the ensemble and already in his cry "Please don't send me up again!" are extremely repetitive: several notes in the phrases are repeated—the phrase "Please don't send me up again" consists almost only of one repeated

note) and the phrases themselves are also repeated, although starting on different pitches. By reiterating the same note or phrase Sammy's lines indeed make "a deep impression upon the hearer."

The other lines in the ensemble, however, balance this repetition by their variety. The first two lines of every stanza are sung by different singers not only in different voices but to different though similar tunes. So every stanza has a character of its own. The third line, sung by all except Sammy, is treated as a miniature chorus of three voices which leads up to Sammy's refrain. Even though the chorus repeats the same music in all three stanzas, the harmonies underlying Sammy's refrain change, giving a subtle balance of the variety in the harmonisation against the repetition in the words and music of the refrain.

The three stanzas of the ensemble are held together in their variety by several elements in the accompaniment which run through the entire number: the rocking quaver motion in the bass as well as the rhythmic pattern of 2 against 3 in the bass and vocal lines. This idea of variety in an *Ensemble*, as opposed to a *Chorus*, is described already in the first act of the play:

NORMAN: Scene One ensemble.

RALPH: Scene One *what*?

NORMAN: Scene One *ensemble*—French for 'together.'

ANNE: *Ensemble*—when we all sing together.

RALPH: Then why not say so?

BRUCE: I thought singing together was called a 'chorus.'

NORMAN: So it is, Bruce. But in this number, each of you has his own line to sing. You have separate parts, and it's easier to call that an 'ensemble.'

MONICA: It sounds jolly difficult.

NORMAN: Let's try it and see.⁶⁴

X. ENSEMBLE

Sam, Rowan, Children

Gently moving; sad (♩. ♩) = 54
Andante mesto

ROWAN *pp*
O why do you

pp
gchlaro

Piano I

Piano II *ppp*

Violin I *Gently moving; sad (♩. ♩) = 54*
Andante mesto *con sord.* *pp dolce*

Violin II *con sord.* *pp dolce*

Viola *con sord.* *pp dolce*

Violoncello *pp sempre disinto*

R
weep through the work - ing - day?

SOPHIE
O why do you weep at your task, poor

Piano I *pp*

Piano II

VI I *pp*

VI II *pp*

Vla. *pp*

Vc.

31

SAM *p* Now shall I

GAY & TWINS *pp* Fa - ther and mother are far a - way

ROWAN, SOPHIE, JULIE, JOHNNY *pp* Fa - ther and mother are far a - way

Sop *pp* boy?

I *pp*

II *pp*

31

VI I *pp*

VI II *pp*

Vla *pp*

Vc *pp*

Sam laugh and play?

Gay Twins

I Sop & Jan *pp* JOHNNY *p* O where is the home where you

I *pp*

II *pp*

VI I *pp*

VI II *pp*

Vla *pp*

Vc *pp*

D.A.N. 17928

The repetitious pathos of the text allows for the variety of the music. Eric Crozier alias Anne has written a text for an operatic ensemble, so the words and music converse in supporting and complementing and balancing each other. But the Ensemble is, of course, conversational in

itself. In the first stanza Rowan sings the first line and Sophie the second, in the second stanza Johnny begins and Gay takes over (which means the striking change from women's to boys' sopranos); in the third stanza Juliet and the twins sing the first lines while, throughout, Gay and the twins sing the third line with Rowan, Sophie, Juliet and Johnny providing an accompaniment of thirds. Then Sammy sings his little solo.

I.L.

The verbal repetitions go smoothly with the musical conversation; the persons involved in it seem to be taking their cues from each other. Blake's poem (like "Shakespeare") is poetry and music in one and here, too, a conversational energy is at work, with different voices speaking in different grammatical persons, the third, the second, and the first. Blake's little sweep is introduced by the magic voice of a lyrical speaker. Then he is asked a question. Then he answers it, and then he goes on speaking in a voice no longer his own. He does not say "I" and "me" any more, but "our" which means that now he speaks not in his own name but in the name of humanity, drawing a striking conclusion from the contributions of the different voices.

Realizing this argumentative kind of pattern one cannot but think of the sonnet which has been compared, structurally, with the syllogism and the enthymeme. One of the Renaissance authorities on this subject, Torquato Tasso, goes even further: to him certain kinds of poems are parallel with certain kinds of arguments; the canzone is a reflection of the "divisive" argument, the sonnet of the "compositive" . . .⁶⁵ These are explications of a rule set by Dante in *De vulgari eloquentia* where he calls poetry a "fictio rhetorica in musica posta."⁶⁶ Now, public and forensic rhetoric, focusing on the *summa quaestio* are always in league with dialectic. But, according to Plato's *Sophistes*, there is (as Quintilian reminds us) still another kind of rhetoric named "προσομιλητική." In Quintilian's Latin translation that means "sermocinatrix" which, translated into English, means "conversational."⁶⁷

This cluster of rhetorical considerations and definitions calls for a syllogism:

When rhetoric is conversational
and poetry is rhetoric set to music
then poetry and music are conversational.

They are so in giving room to conversation and in conversing with each other, and *Let's Make an Opera* is an illustration of this rule. And the word "illustration" is the cue for our conclusion, the *Night Song*, with its onomatopoeic illustrations of nature falling asleep.

R.F.

The idea of the audience songs is discussed between composer and poet very early in the preliminary play. Pragmatic aspects are settled first—they could be used as interludes relating events not practicable on stage, or: will the audience sing?—but soon the professional co-operation of poet and composer in writing an opera comes to the fore. The composer requests a specific form for the Night Song (No. 14): four verses of three lines each (triplets, to be exact) not with a specific metre but of quiet and serene character. The poet suggests "A musical game about the things you might hear in the country at night."⁶⁸ Several "things" are named (e.g. "the ripple of the river" or "the chime of a distant church bell") but in the end poet and composer settle on birdsong. Here both language and music imitate nature, even the performance instructions to the singers (which require them to do things a professional singer should never ever do) aim to make the birdsong sound more realistic—and provide more fun for the singers: *nasal* sounds for the herons, rolled Rrrr for the doves and *falsetto* for the chaffinches. The birdsong is musically realized on two levels: the vocal line as well as the piano imitate the birdcall. Each bird gets its own motif in the orchestra—made up of specific harmonic patterns, special articulation, and the use of various percussion instruments. This motif is repeated in a few bars of instrumental music between the stanzas. The penultimate stanza imitates the "competition of birds" and in the refrain all birds sing at the same time though the entries are

not synchronized, which makes the different birdcalls clearly discernible. In the last verse the accompaniment returns to the original version and the tumult of the birds dies down as they, joined by the audience, sing their different songs in their sleep.⁶⁹

ALL SECTIONS (48)

Aud The night is pale, the owl is hoarse, The finches slumber in the grove, The

I Piano II Perc D VI I VI II Via Vc

Gong *ppp*

Repeat this bar as before,
dying away to nothing

I he - ron sloops, the tur - tile droops. tu - whoo! tu - whoo!

Aud he - ron sloops, the tur - tile droops. Kaah! Kaah!

III he - ron sloops, the tur - tile droops. Prrr-ool Prrr-ool

IV he - ron sloops, the tur - tile droops. Pinkt PinktPinkt PinktPinktPinkt

Piano I *ppp dim?* *dim, sempre* *ppppp*

Piano II *ppp dim* *dim, sempre* *ppppp*

Perc Gong *pppp dim* *dim sempre* *ppppp*

VI I *pp dim* *dim sempre* *ppppp*

VI II *pp dim* *dim sempre* *ppppp*

Via *pp dim* *dim sempre* *ppppp*

Vc *pp dim.* *dim sempre* *ppppp*

NOTES

¹See Eric Crozier, *Let's Make an Opera! An Entertainment for Young People in Three Acts including The Little Sweep A Children's Opera* (Liverpool: Eaton Press, 1949), subsequently quoted as Libretto, 49.

²The conversational manner in which we read our paper at the Halberstadt conference on "The Poetics of Conversation in 20th-Century Literature and Criticism" is retained in the printed version.

³For at least a small part of the (regrettably rudimentary) stage history of *Let's Make an Opera*, see Maureen Garnham, *As I Saw It: Basil Douglas, Benjamin Britten and the English Opera Group 1955-1957: A personal memoir* (London: St. George's Publications, 1998). Music: Benjamin Britten, *The Little Sweep*, op. 45, Full Score (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1965) "XIV. The Night Song," bars 15-18. The music is reproduced by permission of Boosey & Hawkes.

⁴This and the following two quotations are from Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, 1st Prologue 23-24 and 8, *The Arden Shakespeare*, ed. T. W. Craik (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson, 1998).

⁵Literature on *Let's Make an Opera* is minimal. Usually only the third act is discussed with the first two acts, i.e. the preliminary play, just mentioned in a subordinate clause. Notable exceptions are two more recent publications on Britten: Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* (London: Faber, 1992) and Imogen Holst's chapter "Entertaining the Young: *The Little Sweep*" in *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer (London: Faber, 1984).

⁶"Kinder- und Jugendmusiktheater," *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Sachteil, vol. 5, ed. Ludwig Finscher (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1996), col. 43-59; "Schuldrama," *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Sachteil, vol. 8, ed. Ludwig Finscher (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1998), col. 1144-52.

⁷"Britten," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 2001) 4: 364-402.

⁸*Songs of Innocence*, "The Chimney Sweeper" ("When my mother died I was very young") and *Songs of Experience*, "The Chimney Sweeper" ("A little black boy among the snow"); subsequently quoted according to William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, ed. G. Keynes (1967; Oxford: OUP, 1989), unpaginated. On the influence of Blake's two poems as well as Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* see Carpenter 273-74.

⁹See Eric Crozier in *The Operas of Benjamin Britten: The Complete Librettos*, ed. D. Herbert (London: Hamilton, 1979) 168, and Carpenter 273-77.

¹⁰See Libretto 7.

¹¹Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 3.3.16, *The Arden Edition*, ed. Agnes Latham (London: Methuen, 1975).

¹²Nicholas Udall, *Roister Doister*, in *Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas*, ed. J. Q. Adams (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1924) 421-68; Udall, who was

headmaster of Eton from 1534-41 and of Winchester from 1554-56, composed the play to make the boys experience in practice how the comedies of Plautus and Terence were made. See Adams 423, note 1.

¹³Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, 2.2.572-79, ed. H. S. Murch, *Yale Studies in English* 33 (New York: Henry Holt, 1908). Britten, too, had an affinity to this song by Dowland: in 1950—only a year after *Let's Make an Opera*—he composed a set of variations for violin and piano on the *Lachrimae*-theme and called them *Reflections on a song of John Dowland* (op. 48). Music: John Dowland, *Lachrimae Antiquae*, bars 1-8.

¹⁴See, e.g., Dane Farnsworth Smith, *Plays about the Theatre in England from The Rehearsal in 1671 to the Licensing Act in 1737* (London: OUP, 1936); Dane Farnsworth Smith and M. L. Lawhon, *Plays about the Theatre in England, 1737-1800* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP 1979); Karlernst Schmidt, *Die Bühnenprobe als Lustspieltyp in der englischen Literatur* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1952); J. Paul Hunter, *Occasional Form* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1975), esp. ch. 3, "Fielding's Reflexive Plays and the Rhetoric of Discovery."

¹⁵*Henry V*, 1st Prologue 29.

¹⁶Wilder did not destroy an already established theatrical verisimilitude but made verisimilitude a target of irony from the very beginning. There never is an attempt to create the illusion of some kind of town but there certainly is an attempt to create the illusion that there is no scenery before the Stage Manager starts pushing a table and some chairs while, actually, the very lack of scenery is the scenery. So illusion is the object under discussion from the primitive emptiness of the stage via the activities of the Stage Manager (alias "Messenger" or Chorus) to the cinematic effect of dramatic action being arrested to form a "tableau." See Thornton Wilder, *Our Town, a Play in Three Acts* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1938), esp. 96.

¹⁷Wilder is, for instance, left out of the section "American Literature between the wars 1914-1945," in, at least, the Second, Third, and Fourth Edition of the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*.

¹⁸Quoted in Carpenter 276.

¹⁹Harry Kroekel in *Kurier am Morgen*, 27 January 1992. Music: Benjamin Britten, *The Little Sweep*, "XIV. The Night Song," bars 53-60.

²⁰*Opera Magazine*, March 1962, signed A.J.

²¹Herbert 168.

²²Michael John White in *The Independent*, 13 June 1989.

²³Harry Kroekel in *Kurier am Morgen*, 27 January 1992. Music: Henry Mancini, *The Pink Panther Theme*.

²⁴Michael John White in *The Independent*, 13 June 1989.

²⁵J. Michelis in *Berliner Zeitung*, 27 January 1992.

²⁶Music: Frederic Loewe, *My Fair Lady*, "No. 7 Song," bars 1-6.

²⁷Libretto 27.

²⁸Libretto 19-20 and *passim*.

²⁹"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." 1659 HOWELL *Eng. Prov.* 12 b., *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*, rev. by F. P. Wilson (Oxford: OUP, 1970) 916.

³⁰Libretto 27.

³¹Libretto 19.

³²Libretto 24.

³³Johann Sebastian Bach, *Invention C-Major* (BWV 772), bars 1-4.

³⁴Libretto 18.

³⁵Libretto 49.

³⁶See, for example, the recitative sections of "XVII. Trio and Ensemble."

³⁷Libretto, 41-42.

³⁸Libretto 41.

³⁹Libretto 18.

⁴⁰See esp. *De Arte Poetica* 61: "... ita verborum vetus interit aetas, / et iuvenum ritu florent modo nata vigentque." Horace, *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, with an English trans. by H. R. Fairclough (London: Heinemann, 1961).

⁴¹Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* I, 9-14: "... words came halting forth ... / Biting my trewand pen ... / 'Foole,' said my Muse to me, 'looke in thy heart and write.'" *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. W. A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford: OUP, 1962).

⁴²Rose Ausländer: "Weil Wörter mir diktieren: schreib uns. Sie wollen verbunden sein. Verbündete ... Wir sehen uns an. Wir lieben uns ... meine Brüder: ... in diesem Stil rede ich mit ihnen." Eva Zeller, "Laudatio zur Verleihung des Ida-Dehmel-Preises," *Rose Ausländer, Materialien zu Leben und Werk*, ed. H. Braun (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1997) 80.

⁴³This is a paraphrase of Emily Dickinson's *locus classicus*, 1126 "Shall I take thee, the Poet said / To the propounded word? / ... The Poet searched Philology / ... There came unsummoned in — / That portion of the Vision" *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Th. H. Johnson (London: Faber and Faber, 1975).

⁴⁴Music: Benjamin Britten, *The Little Sweep*, "XIV The Night Song," bars 73-end.

⁴⁵Peter Evans in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. S. Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980) 3: 300. The article on Britten in the new edition of the dictionary published in 2001 takes over most of the text on *Let's Make an Opera!*, but leaves out this sentence (4: 374).

⁴⁶Libretto 24.

⁴⁷Libretto 21. Music: Benjamin Britten, *The Little Sweep*, "I. The Sweep's Song," bars 1-5 and 8.

⁴⁸Music: Benjamin Britten, *The Little Sweep*, "VIII. Aria," bars 19-28.

⁴⁹See Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss, *Ariadne auf Naxos: Oper in einem Aufzug nebst einem Vorspiel*, Studyscore (London: Fürstner, 1916).

⁵⁰See Zerbinetta's recitative and aria in act II ("Großmächtige Prinzessin . . .").

⁵¹Libretto 14 and 15.

⁵²Libretto 9.

⁵³Libretto 69. Music: Benjamin Britten, *The Little Sweep*, "V. Ensemble," bars 24-27.

⁵⁴Libretto 9.

⁵⁵Libretto 18.

⁵⁶Libretto 14.

⁵⁷Music: Benjamin Britten, *The Little Sweep*, "V. Ensemble," bars 24-27.

⁵⁸Libretto 16-17.

⁵⁹Libretto 17.

⁶⁰All these formal devices converge in the discussion of the Night Song, Libretto 26, "... How many verses? ... Four. Triplets, if you can ... Any special metre? ... No—but I want it to be quiet and serene ... A sort of musical game about the things you might hear in the country at night! The ripple of the river ... Birds! ... Tu—whit tu— whoo! ..."

⁶¹See Libretto 57 and 80. See also Benjamin Britten, *The Little Sweep*, "X. Ensemble," bars 51-55.

⁶²*Simple Symphony* is akin to *Let's Make an Opera* in more than one respect. See Britten's preliminary "Note": "This 'Simple Symphony' is entirely based on material from works which the composer wrote between the ages of nine and twelve." See Benjamin Britten, *Simple Symphony for String Orchestra* (Oxford: OUP, 1935). Music: Benjamin Britten, *Simple Symphony*, "Sentimental Saraband," bars 65-73; piano reduction by Nina Sandmeier.

⁶³[Pseudo-Cicero], *Ad C. Herennium: De ratione dicendi (Rhetorica ad Herennium)*, with an English trans. by H. Caplan (London: Heinemann, 1968) IV.28, 38.

⁶⁴Libretto, 35. Music: Benjamin Britten, *The Little Sweep*, "X. Ensemble," first verse. For the complete music of the "Ensemble" see *The Little Sweep*, 51-55.

⁶⁵See Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1961) 1: 213.

⁶⁶Weinberg 1: 212, note 19.

⁶⁷See *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, with an English trans. by H. E. Butler (London: Heinemann, 1958) III. 4, 10.

⁶⁸Libretto 26.

⁶⁹Music: Benjamin Britten, *The Little Sweep*, "XIV. The Night Song," the last verse. For the complete music of "The Nightsong" see *The Little Sweep* 75-82.

Conversational Echoes in Anne Fine, *Goggle-Eyes* (1989)

THOMAS KULLMANN

Elements of conversation regularly enter literary texts both as subject-matter and narrative form. In creating an awareness of the mechanisms of conversation, literature can discuss its own discursive strategies. In children's literature this literary self-reflexion often features prominently and can be observed quite clearly.

One of the most frequent techniques of creating an awareness of discursive mechanisms is that of transferring elements of discourse from their usual place to an unusual one. To give a well-known example, I should like to refer to Beatrix Potter's *Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902).¹ At the beginning Mother Rabbit admonishes her children (Quotation No. 1):²

'Now, my dears,' said old Mrs. Rabbit one morning, 'you may go into the fields or down the lane, but don't go into Mr. McGregor's garden: your Father had an accident there; he was put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor.'

'Now run along, and don't get into mischief. I am going out.' (10, 13)

Mrs. Rabbit's way of speaking is certainly familiar to most child readers. Mothers often warn children not to transgress certain boundaries, referring to accidents caused by the failure to obey certain rules. Certain words and phrases from children's everyday lives are transferred to a different environment: paradoxically, the garden, a safe area for human children, is a dangerous place for rabbits. A certain discursive pattern is 'quoted' and marked as a quotation,³ by being given not to a human family but to a family of rabbits; this is how the child readers can recognize the words and phrases as a speech pattern, and begin to analyse this pattern critically. In allocating 'educational discourse' to animals, the narrator strips it of its

threatening quality. Phrases of admonishment are placed at a distance and can become a target of satire.⁴

Satirical quotations of discursive and conversational patterns do not only occur in Beatrix Potter's books but are also central to other children's classics, such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926). Words and phrases are taken out of their usual contexts and put to whimsical uses. Some of the phrases quoted conversationally are taken from printed texts known to children, such as fairy-tales and schoolbooks. This accounts for the surprisingly high degree of 'marked intertextuality'⁵ found in children's books.

In this article I should like to focus on a more recent text which also belongs to the category of children's or young adults' fiction but which takes place in the contemporary everyday world rather than an environment of talking animals or creatures of fantasy. In Anne Fine's *Goggle-Eyes* (1989)⁶ the teenage narrator, Kitty Killin, tells the story of her mother's involvement with a gentleman-friend, Gerald Faulkner, to a classmate, Helen, who is undergoing a crisis because of her mother's imminent second marriage. One morning at school, Helen leaves the classroom in tears, and Kitty is sent after her. She withdraws with Helen into the Lost Property cupboard and tells her how she used to hate Gerald and tried to stop him from calling, but then came to accept him as somebody who could exert a stabilizing influence on her mother as well as her younger sister Judith and finally as an indispensable member of the family. In telling her story she manages to calm Helen down. Helen doesn't change her views about her prospective stepfather but admits to feeling much better.

Peter Hunt's contention that "*Goggle-Eyes* . . . is concerned exclusively with coming to terms with divorce and the remarriage of a parent,"⁷ however, is quite mistaken: to a far greater extent it is concerned with language and conversational behaviour. As in other children's books a considerable proportion of the text is taken up by direct speech: Kitty reports her conversations with her mother and Gerald to Helen; and, of course, she reports her conversation with

Helen in the course of which she is telling her story, to the reader. Throughout the book it is the dynamics of conversation which make up the plot. Kitty first gets to know about her mother's new friend when she notices that her conversational behaviour has changed (Q. 2):

Then, one day, she met Gerald Faulkner. Don't ask me where and why and how. All I know is, one day my mother's her normal, workaday Oh-God-I-hate-my-job-I'm-going-to-resign-what's-on-the-telly self, and the next she's some radiant, energetic fashion plate who doesn't even *hear* when you tell her it's the last episode of her favourite series . . . (16)

Kitty characterizes her mother's habitual mood by quoting words which summarize it in a concise way; and she refers to her mother's new self by commenting on her failure to respond to her daughter's reminder. Some days later, Gerald asks Kitty on the phone to tell her mother that he has got cinema tickets. Kitty is disappointed, as her mother had promised "to stay in and help with Judith's cardboard Roman amphitheatre" (17). It is with the 'baby-sitter,' Mrs. Harrison, that the girls have to complete the amphitheatre. Kitty, however, gets her revenge. When her mother returns, she overhears Mrs. Harrison's question (Q. 3):

. . . 'Have you had a nice evening out with your young man?'
'Young man!' Mum snorted with amusement. 'Mrs Harrison, Gerald is over *fifty*.' (18)

Next morning, the mother addresses Kitty (Q. 4):

'How did you get along with the amphitheatre?' she asked.
'Splendid,' I told her between gritted teeth. 'Mind you, the gladiator is a wreck. His face has shrivelled and his legs are wobbly, and that carpet fluff we stuck on for his hair keeps falling out. I tell you, he looks over *fifty*.'
The toast was blackening under the grill, but she eyed me very steadily instead.
'I hope you're going to be *polite* on Thursday,' she said. (20)

In echoing the phrase "over *fifty*" Kitty, who has not seen Gerald Faulkner yet, constructs her mother's friend as an ageing monster.

Her mother cannot reprove Kitty for her cheek without betraying that Kitty's conversational shaft has found its mark. Kitty thus expresses her jealousy towards her mother's new friend without placing herself at a disadvantage. She rather asserts her superiority by putting her mother in the defensive.

Gerald Faulkner, as it turns out, is an adept at ironical quotation himself. As he calls on Thursday, Kitty's mother has to put off going to the weekly Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament meeting. Kitty, however, who used to be dragged along to these meetings by her politically-committed mother, decides to go on her own; and it is on her commitment that she is taken up by Gerald (Q. 5):

'So,' he said. 'You're all mixed up in it as well.'

Though I had no idea what he was talking about, I got the feeling he was speaking to me.

'Mixed up in what?'

'You know,' he said, grinning. 'The Woolly Hat Brigade. Close Down the Power Stations. Ban the Bomb.'

Fine, I thought. Lovely. Jolly nice for me. My mum's busy upstairs turning herself into some simpering Barbie-doll for the sort of man she'd usually take a ten mile hike to avoid, and I'm stuck downstairs with the political Neanderthal.

'I'm in the campaign for nuclear disarmament, yes.' (25-26)

Gerald ironically quotes the campaigners' slogans, thus asserting his superiority; and Kitty holds her own by frostily stating the bare fact of her political position. To the reader, the terseness of her reply is emphasized by its contrast to the metaphorical language she uses to describe her thoughts.

In spite of his reactionary views, Gerald accompanies Kitty, her mother and sister on a trip to a political demonstration at a submarine base, ostensibly to "reclaim" land fenced in by the Ministry of Defense. During the bus ride the campaigners amuse themselves singing songs like (Q. 6) "*What Shall We Do with the Nuclear Waste?*" (68) and "*Oh, Little Town of Sellafield*" (72), to the tunes of "*What Shall We Do with the Drunken Sailor*" and "*O Little Town of Bethlehem*," presumably, thus proving their sense of community and superiority. They do not impress Gerald, however, who sneers at the campaigners'

linguistic inventiveness and tries to assert his own superiority by quoting the campaigners' language in a challenging way. He tells a boy who wants to look at his newspaper (Q. 7): "Do you mind if I finish reading it before you recycle it?" (68); when they reach their destination his comment is (Q. 8): "'I don't fancy reclaiming that lot,' he said, peering over Mum out of the window. 'It looks pretty boggy'" (73).

The campaigners' metaphorical language lends itself to ridicule as its failure becomes obvious. As the bus is half-empty the "phone tree" (68), which should have ensured massive participation, has turned out to be "more like a blasted phone stump" (69), as Kitty admits. The "snowballing" (76) which replaces the "reclaiming" objective does not work out either. In snowballing, some of the campaigners volunteer to do deliberate damage to the wire fence around the military base: "Two people cut a fence, and the police arrest them. Next time it's four who do it. Then eight, sixteen, thirty-two, sixty-four —" (77). This time, sixteen of the campaigners are supposed to cut the fence and get arrested. The rest, as Inspector McGee has already been informed, "are just dying quietly" (80), i.e. lie down together in front of the gates in order to mimic the probable effect of an atomic explosion. The phrase "dying quietly" constitutes a macabre trivialization; in signifying a particular form of protest it has become part of an insiders' slang: Kitty's sister Judith warns Gerald that dying quietly might mean ruin to his best suit (80). Kitty's Mum, however, is prodding the other campaigners: "'Come on,' she said to everyone. 'Let's get moving. If we die quietly and they don't hang about at the fence, we could be home by tea-time'" (80-81). In this view she is supported by the police inspector who complains of having had to wait for the campaigners to arrive. The repetition of the phrase "dying quietly" pinpoints the discrepancy between its original meaning and its signification in the present context, which is, in fact, to both the campaigners and the police, that of a rather inconsequential outdoor game.

Part of the game is getting arrested. Of the sixteen people supposed to take part in the fence cutting one is incapacitated because of an

accident with the wire-cutters. Kitty's Mum tries to get a replacement (Q. 10):

Everyone glanced at one another with those helpless little I-would-if-I-could shrugs that make it clear they have an important engagement, or their mother-in-law happens to be staying, or, just this once, their yoga class has been changed to Sunday.

'Come on,' cajoled Mum. 'It's only a couple of hours down at the station. Your court case won't come up for weeks.' (93)

Kitty translates the campaigners' non-verbal communication into phrases quoted, quoted ironically, that is. The discrepancy between the discourses of political protest and of private engagements becomes obvious.

As no one is volunteering, Kitty's Mum finally steps forward to cut the fence. It is only after she has done so that she realizes that she has two children with her. Gerald and Kitty are horrified (Q. 11):

'Oh Kitty!' she said. 'I'm so sorry!'

'It's all right,' I told her. 'It doesn't matter. It's only a couple of hours down at the station. Your court case won't come up for weeks.' (97)

In echoing her mother's previous words ironically, Kitty brings to the fore her mother's thoughtlessness.⁸ Her rhetorical strategy is that of pinning her opponent down by using her opponent's words and showing their inappropriateness: In the mother's case it is not just a matter of herself spending a couple of hours at the police station, as three other people are involved without having been asked about it: Gerald is obliged to look after the girls till their mother gets back; and Kitty feels "shaky": "It's not so nice to watch your mother being driven off by the police, especially when your dad lives a hundred miles away" (100).

This incident serves as a turning point in the plot. On the one hand it leads to a tremendous row between Gerald and Kitty's mum, and to a temporary suspension of their relationship. On the other hand this incident marks a change in Kitty's attitude towards Gerald; she learns to appreciate him as a reliable friend and as a stabilizing factor in the

family. As Gerald explains to Kitty the evening after her mother has been arrested, his steadiness and predictability may be a side of him which her mother likes. It certainly is in the case of Judith, who is repeatedly lulled to sleep by Gerald's reading (Q. 12):

She had her arm around his neck the same way that she used to cling to Dad, and he was reading her the Stock Market report.

'The FT-SE share index finished a volatile session nursing a 44.9 points fall at 1,658.4 yesterday,' he droned. 'At one time it had been down 105.3 points.'

Jude's thumb slid in her mouth, and her eyes closed. (64)

To Judith, the Stock Market report (which sophisticated readers will consider ludicrously boring) is probably completely meaningless. What matters to her, however, is that Gerald is reading to her, thus assuring her of his presence and protection. Because of this reassurance she can fall asleep. In Roman Jakobson's terminology, the "phatic function" of language is paramount.⁹ The Stock Market report, which was intended to convey information takes on a completely new function within the interaction of a young girl and her prospective stepfather. This change of function is of course bound up with a certain amount of satire.

Kitty first realizes that her attitude towards Gerald is changing when she finds herself mentally echoing his words. When during their trip to the military base her mum expresses her exasperation with Judith's wish to go home, Gerald tells her (Q. 13): "'Do you know what you are, Rosalind? . . . You are almost *unbelievably* bossy.'" (85). Later one of the 'snowballers' gets hurt by the wire-cutters, and Kitty's mum sees to the victim (Q. 14):

Mum's good with accidents. She's got that perfect mix of being both calm and—well, yes, he's quite right—almost *unbelievably* bossy.

'Show me,' she ordered him. And when he had: 'Oh, that is nasty!' she echoed the policewoman. (Two real professionals.) (92).

In comparing her mother's bossiness with that of the policewoman Kitty not only expresses her growing emotional distance to her mother but also reduces ostensible kindness to its roots in character;

demonstrating that people like her mother and the policewoman may find themselves on opposite sides but are basically very similar. From Kitty's and the implied reader's points of view political differences turn out to be comparatively insignificant if compared to the much more interesting topic of human nature.

It is when Kitty and Judith return to their flat, with Gerald but without their mother, that the relationship between those three is brought to a crisis. The characters' habit of echoing each others' words leads to surprising discoveries: Gerald suggests that Judith should help with the dishes before going to bed. As Judith has never helped before, Kitty finds herself defending her sister, in the way her mother usually does (Q. 15):

'Can't we just leave the dishes till the morning?' I asked. (Another of Mum's great standby lines.)

'No,' Gerald said. 'No, we can not. Only sluts and drunks leave the dishes till morning.'

(I made a mental note to tell Mum this.) (110)

Kitty realizes that she is echoing what her mother uses to say to her, and she anticipates quoting Gerald's words to her mother. Gerald insists on his proposition (Q. 16):

'... And Judith doesn't need your help, you know. Everyone round here treats her as if she were still a baby, but in fact she is perfectly capable.'

Now that was *definitely* my line. If I've said that once, I've said it well over a thousand times. I had my mouth wide open when he turned to Jude.

'Aren't you?' he demanded.

...

'Yes,' she said firmly. 'And I don't need a stool. I can reach.'

'There's my girl,' Gerald said. 'I knew you could do it!'

I was left speechless, honestly I was. When someone else steals your lines, what can you say? (111)

The discussion between Gerald and Kitty about Judith's participation in the household work mirrors previous discussions between Kitty and her mother about the same topic, but unlike Kitty Gerald, who has already been accepted by Judith as a father substitute, has the

authority to enforce his views. In noticing conversational echoes Kitty realizes that Gerald could strengthen her own position in the household, and this new awareness certainly contributes to her change in attitude with regard to Gerald.

In telling the story to Helen, and in telling the story of this story-telling to the reader, Kitty displays her literary abilities. It was through the medium of literary composition that Kitty told her English teacher, Mrs. Lupey, of her problems with Gerald, working off part of her resentments and earning praise which boosted her self-confidence (Q. 17):

I'd got a really good mark for this essay. 'I hope that some parts of this, at least, spring from your very vivid imagination!' she'd written at the end. It was the essay we had to write on *Something I Hate*, and I had really gone to town. *Something I hate comes round to our house regularly*, I wrote. *Flabby and complacent, it acts as if it owns the place. When it breathes, all the little hairs that stick out of its nostrils waggle. Its teeth are going yellow from encroaching old age, but under its thinning hair, its scalp is mushy pink, like boiled baby. It has a really creepy way of looking at people, like a dog drooling hopefully over its food bowl. That's why I think of it as 'Goggle-eyes'.* (38)

This essay Kitty leaves around for Gerald to read, successfully provoking him into showing his anger, for once. The literary effect of this essay is due to the fact that Kitty sticks to the conventions of the school essay while applying them to a seemingly inappropriate topic. In parodying the genre of school essay, and in applying the pronoun *it* of its title to a person, assuming the attitude of a biologist describing an animal, Kitty manages to express her own personal attitude to Gerald, which she could not have done in any conventional way. As she admits to her father on the phone she cannot explain why she finds Gerald horrible (34-35). It is only the literary technique of parodic quoting from pre-texts which allows Kitty to verbalize her feelings and, probably, to become aware of their unreasonableness in the long run. Furthermore, literature allows Kitty to treat her situation as a game or a joke; while she is suffering from Gerald's presence she can still derive pleasure from treating it in a literary way.

Kitty keeps handing in literary work to Mrs. Lupey, including her (Q. 18) *Ode to An Unwelcome Guest* and her notes on the topic *Divorce Should be Forbidden Until the Last Child has Left Home* (38). When the relationship between Gerald and her mother is disrupted, however, she writes a sonnet, "Gerald—A Lament" and an essay on "The Person I Miss Most" (127). Kitty makes use of discursive patterns of various literary and textual genres to give voice to her change of mind. As she realizes it was her experience and literary abilities which made Mrs. Lupey send her to comfort Helen, rather than Helen's best friend, Liz. Kizzy interrupts her story to address the reader (Q. 19):

Helen hugged her knees to her chest, and stared at me. The tears on her cheeks had dried, unnoticeably, to pale little stains, and her eyes were nowhere near as pink and swollen as before. In fact, she was looking a whole lot better.

'What happened?' she asked. 'Don't stop. Go on. Tell me what *happened*.'

That's how I like my listeners — craving for more. Mrs Lupey isn't Head of English in our school for nothing. She can't have forgotten that the tears rolled down her cheeks when she read my collection of sixteenth century limericks entitled *Go Home, Old Man, from Whence Thou Camest*. She must remember that she chewed her nails down to the quick reading my essay *Will She, Won't She Marry Him?* She begged for the last instalment of my serial *Tales from a Once Happy Home*. Oh, yes. Mrs Lupey knew one thing when she passed over Liz for Mission Helen, and sent me out instead.

When it comes to a story, I just tell 'em better. (46)

Kitty's justified pride in her story-telling abilities makes her keep in view her aim, which is to comfort Helen and to reconcile her to the situation of soon having a stepfather. Even though she has so far only told of the horrors of Gerald, she has succeeded in making Helen stop crying; obviously by means of making a good story out of bad reality. Kitty then manages to engage Helen's sympathies in favour of Gerald. Helen, who Kitty thinks is waiting for a "fairy-tale ending" (120) still maintains that "Toad-shoes" (120), her own mother's gentleman-friend, is quite different from "Goggle-eyes," but Kitty thinks otherwise (Q. 20):

'Go on, then,' Helly said (rather imperiously for her, I thought). 'Quick. Get on with the story. What happened when Gerald turned up on the doorstep with armfuls of flowers? Did your mum forgive him, or did the poor old sausage get the Big Freeze?'

Inasmuch as it's possible to stare at someone through dimly-lit murk, I stared at Helly Johnston. So Goggle-eyes had been transmuted into 'Poor Old Sausage' now, had he? Honestly! If her sweet nature could, in the space of a morning, turn Gerald Faulkner into an object of tender sympathy, it probably wouldn't be more than a couple of weeks before Toad-shoes, creeping warily through the back door, found Helly's arms wrapped round him in cheerful welcome. My mission, clearly, was all but accomplished. It had been easier than I thought. (122-23)

Gerald wisely does not appear with armfuls of flowers, but he keeps writing postcards to Judith, and he attends court when Kitty's mum defends her case. At Kitty's insistence she phones Gerald afterwards and invites him back.

Kitty's literary competence becomes evident in her ability to critically analyse her interlocutor's language. This literary competence turns into social competence: Kitty's strategies of narration make Helly feel better about her own situation. In a similar way Kitty's and Gerald's habit of quotation constitutes a kind of game which helps them to defuse tension and to come to terms with one another. The element of play is certainly a decisive factor. Kitty playfully quotes from phrases which belong to literary convention; and so does Mrs. Lupey, the teacher, to whose roll-call Helen refuses to respond (Q. 21):

'Twenty-one?'

Everyone looked towards Helen, who was still trying to bury herself in her desk lid.

'Mission Control calling Twenty-one,' said Mrs Lupey. She was watching Helen closely. 'I know you're out there, Twenty-one. Speak to me. Please.'

(2)

In imitating the language of Science Fiction, Mrs. Lupey gives a playful touch to her task of calling her pupils to attention. In the present case, this technique is not sufficient; the Science Fiction discourse, however, later helps Kitty to complete her story-telling. At a break

between lessons Mrs. Lupey addresses Kitty and Helen who are hidden in the Lost Property cupboard (Q. 22):

'Mission Control calling Lost Property Capsule. How are things going in there? [...] Intergalactic time passes. Whole lessons are being missed. What are the chances of a dual return to base?'

I peered at Helen, who shook her head like a small child who thinks it's being a right daredevil.

'Not yet,' she whispered. 'I want to hear what happened to *you* first.'

'Delicate mission under way,' I yelled. 'Briefing not yet fully accomplished. This capsule needs more time before it's ordered to return to base.'

(I reckon if you play along with them, you can get anything you want.) (64-65)

The parodic use of the Science Fiction 'discourse' allows Kitty and Mrs. Lupey to communicate about the case of Helen without embarrassing her, and Mrs. Lupey can allow the two girls to miss even more lessons without losing face. As so often in Kitty's story itself, quoting helps the participants in a conversation to defuse potential tension and to come to terms with a situation.

Quoting may indicate a sense of superiority as in the case of Kitty's ironical echoes of her mother's phrases, but it may also indicate an awareness of other persons' ways of speaking and thinking, as in the case of Gerald's echoes of Kitty's words or in the case of Kitty's story as a whole. When Mrs. Lupey asks Helen in the Lost Property cupboard how things are going on she answers (Q. 23):

'I'm feeling *ever* so much better, Mrs Lupey.'

'What?'

(Helen's voice just doesn't have the same wood-penetrating qualities as mine and Mrs Lupey's.)

'She says she's feeling ever so much *better*!' I yelled. (65)

Helen is using a phrase which is both infantile and old-fashioned. Kitty would probably never use the words "ever so much" on her own, but she quotes them faithfully in order to indicate to Mrs. Lupey Helen's current state of mind.¹⁰ Her literary awareness also allows Kitty to take a tolerant attitude when her mother refers to her and Judith as "poor little toddlers" (Q. 24):

'Dragging around bleak military outposts, carrying rain-sodden placards and trailing my poor little toddlers behind me!'

I ignored 'poor little toddlers'. I took it to be what Mrs Lupey always calls 'a rather unfortunate rhetorical flourish' (96).

In quoting Mrs. Lupey, Kitty shows her knowingness and her appreciation of her teaching; in applying the phrase quoted to her mother's spoken words rather than a school essay, however, she is being ironical and patronizing.

If we survey the material discussed, we become aware of a vast range of types and functions of quotations to be found in this one children's book. The table at the end of this article is an attempt to provide a tentative classification of the conversational quotations found in *Goggle-Eyes*, with the help of Roman Jakobson's model of verbal communication.¹¹ Basically, they can be divided into two groups: There are echoes of other characters' spoken words, and there are quotations from generally-available (written) discourse. The first group includes quotations for the purpose of characterizing the mood of the original speaker (such as the mother's "Oh-God-I-hate-my-job-I'm-going-to-resign" self: quotation 2, cf. 10, 20, 23) as well as ironical echoes thrown back to the original speaker for the purpose of satire (like the phrase "over fifty", 4, cf. 11). Echoing other persons' words might also imply an unconscious similarity of attitude (Kitty's mother echoing the policewoman, 14) or an equally unconscious adoption of somebody else's role (Kitty taking over the place of her absent mother, 15). Echoing may also imply conscious assent (Kitty mentally echoing Gerald or planning to quote Gerald to her mother, 14, 15, or Gerald taking up Kitty's role in educating Judith, 16) or an ironic distancing (Kitty's mother echoing her ex-husband's guess about Kitty's Science lessons, 25). If the quotation is conscious it usually implies a change in the function of language, according to the pattern provided by Jakobson: If, for example, the predominant function of the original utterance was emotive, it can become referential when quoted; if it was referential, it can become conative, i.e. it changes its focus from the context to the addressee.

The same applies to quotations from written discourse: Texts can be read with a new purpose (as the Stock Market report, 12), phrases learnt at school can assume a new function (the "unfortunate rhetorical flourish," 24), the repetition of political slogans can express a sense of belonging (9), considered satirically by the narrator, or it could indicate an ironic distancing (5, 7, 8). Quite a few literary discourses are quoted: These include popular songs parodied ironically (6), the forms of the school essay and biological description (17), literary titles (18, 19), and motifs and phrases from Science Fiction (21, 22). The predominant function of language changes from purely referential or poetical to emotive, conative or phatic. Quoting can also mean that words and phrases are taken into discursive environments where they do not properly belong, just as in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* where a rabbit speaks to her young as a human mother to her children, or in the appropriation of folksong titles by the CND campaigners, or in the Science Fiction discourse used by the teacher to encourage the students to cooperate.

Goggle-Eyes can serve as an illustration of the linguistic fact that the adoption of existing speech patterns ('echoing' or 'quoting') is not an exception but the very basis of language, narration, and literature: Our powers of communication increase not only in proportion as we learn new words and phrases but also in proportion as we become aware of the origins of these words and phrases, and acquire the ability to indicate this awareness in talking to one another. It is at this point, I should like to contend, that conversation becomes literary. *Goggle-Eyes* appears to be a perfect illustration of the way in which literature evolves out of everyday conversation. Just as the characters echo one another to get a conversational upper hand, Kitty the storyteller establishes an ironical distance to her characters (including herself) by quoting them, and Anne Fine the author creates an awareness in her readers of distinctive speech patterns which represent attitudes which could be questioned. Kitty begins to question the aims and methods of the CND campaigners when she becomes aware of the hollowness of their language. Gerald as the political antagonist of

the campaigners, however, does not fare any better. In quoting the language of the political antagonists to her readers, conversationally, as it were, Anne Fine shows the limitations of any one side. She also states that political partisanship may be a matter of personal self-indulgence.

In taking language and conversation as its main topics, *Goggle-Eyes* is part of a rich tradition of English children's books. I should like to suggest that creating an awareness of language is one of the main features of fictional literature in general, and that texts such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Winnie-the-Pooh* or *Goggle-Eyes* show this feature in its most basic form. It is for this reason that I think that analysing children's literature is a most rewarding task for literary scholars and critics.

Universität Göttingen

NOTES

¹Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902; London: Warne, 1989).

²The numbers refer to the table at the end of this article.

³In using the term 'quotation' to denote the use of existing speech-patterns I do not wish to imply that the act of quoting is necessarily a conscious one. My use of the term is inspired by Julia Kristeva's well-known essay on intertextuality, in which Kristeva (following Bakhtin) contends that every text is a "mosaic of quotations" from other texts ("tout texte se construit comme mosaïque de citations, tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte"; Julia Kristeva, "Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman," *Critique* 23, no. 239 [1967], 438-65; 440-41, translated into English as "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," in Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* [New York: Columbia UP, 1980] 64-91; 66). Kristeva stresses the fact that human expression is limited by the discursive material available to the individual. We are 'quoting' all the time, and we may or may not be aware of it.

⁴On satiric aspects of Beatrix Potter's picture-books cf. e. g. Humphrey Carpenter, "Excessively Impertinent Bunnies: The Subversive Element in Beatrix Potter," *Children and Their Books*, ed. Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989) 271-88, and Peter Hunt, *An Introduction to Children's Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 1994) 87-89. Hunt contends that Potter's "contribution to the language of

children's literature is that of irony pitched at a level that the youngest can understand"; 87.

⁵This corresponds to the concept of intertextuality outlined by Ulrich Broich, "Formen der Markierung von Intertextualität," *Intertextualität: Formen, Funktionen, anglistische Fallstudien*, ed. Ulrich Broich and Manfred Pfister (Tübingen: Francke, 1985) 31-47.

⁶Anne Fine, *Goggle-Eyes*, Puffin Books (1989; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990)

⁷Peter Hunt, *Children's Literature*, Blackwell Guides to Literature (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) 64.

⁸On the rhetorical figure of ironic *simulatio* cf. Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik: Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft* (München: Hueber, 1960) 447 (§ 902). Kitty not only pretends to agree with her mother but also uses her mother's words.

⁹Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," *Selected Writings*, vol. 3: *Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry* (The Hague: Mouton, 1981) 18-51; 24.

¹⁰In an earlier passage, literal quoting of words just heard to a third party has a function quite different from that of Kitty's quotation: Kitty's mother complains to her ex-husband on the phone that Kitty is doing "care of the hair" in her Science lessons (Q. 25):

'Don't be so silly, Rosie,' said my father. 'She must be doing hair shafts, and follicles, and sebaceous glands and the like.'

Mum put her hand over the phone, and bellowed at me:

'Are you doing hair shafts, and follicles, and sebaceous glands and the like?'

I put my hand over the extension, and bellowed back:

'No. Just greasy hair, and normal hair, and dry, permed and damaged.' (8)

Kitty's Mum is ironically quoting her ex-husband (who has been quoting biological language to assert his superiority) to counter his calling her 'silly' and to maintain her assertion that the standard of Kitty's school is rather poor.

¹¹According to Jakobson, a set of agents in any act of verbal communication corresponds to a set of functions (22, 27):

ADDRESSER	CONTEXT	ADDRESSEE
	MESSAGE	
	CONTACT	
EMOTIVE	CODE	CONATIVE
	REFERENTIAL	
	POETIC	
	PHATIC	
	METALINGUAL	

APPENDIX

Functions of conversational echoes in *Goggle-Eyes*

passage quoted above	original pre-dominant function	predominant function when quoted	function in narrative context	discursive environment
----------------------	--------------------------------	----------------------------------	-------------------------------	------------------------

I. Echoes of spoken words:

1 by Mrs. Rabbit (by narrator)	conative	conative referential/poetic	satire	changed changed
2	emotive	referential	characterization	
4	referential	emotive/con.	satire	
10 ("I-would-if-I-could")	emotive	referential	characterization	
11	conative	emotive	irony/satire	
14a) ("bossy")	emotive/con.	referential	assent	
14b) ("nasty")	referential	referential	unconscious assent	
14b) (quoted by narrator)		ref. (change of referent)	irony	
15a) ("can't we just")	conative	referential	assuming role	
15b) ("tell Mum this")	emotive	emotive/conative	assent/triumph	
16 emotive/con.	emotive/con.	emotive/con.	assent/potl. harmony	
20	emotive	referential	ironic characterization	
23	emotive	ref./emotive	characterization/ tolerance	
24	metalingual	ref./emotive	irony	changed
25b) (qtd. by mother)	conative	emotive	irony	

II. Quotations of written discourse:

5	poetic/con.	ref./con.	irony	
6	poetic	emotive/phatic	irony	changed
7	referential	conative	irony	
8	conative	referential	irony	
9	emotive	referential	assent	
12	referential	phatic	satire/harmony	changed
17	poetic/ref.	emotive	superiority/ playfulness	changed
18, 19	poetic/emotive	emotive	irony	changed
21, 22	poetic/ref.	conative	playfulness	changed
24 (see above)				
25a) (quoted by father)	referential	conative	self-assertion	changed

'Conversation' among Pragmatist Philosophers

JOHN WHALEN-BRIDGE

As civilized human beings, we are the inheritors, neither of an enquiry about ourselves and the world, nor of an accumulating body of information, but of a conversation, begun in the primeval forests and made more articulate in the course of centuries. It is the ability to participate in this conversation, and not the ability to reason cogently, to make discoveries about the world, or to contrive a better world, which distinguishes the human being from the animal and the civilized man from the barbarian.

Michael Oakeshott, *The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind* (11)

In this essay I will examine two aspects of the conversation metaphor in pragmatist philosophy. Competing conceptions of the trope are compared in "Part I" to argue that Rorty, the most influential of the current "conversationalists," works from Michael Oakeshott's sense of conversation. Conversations, in this special sense of the term, are always inherently conflictual, since all human claims for a more or most important truth must "battle it out" in conversation.¹

In "Part II," I illustrate how pragmatists turn to literature to restore a sense of inspiring vision when faced with the problem of "undecidability" in the face of conflicting interests, e.g. when William James turns to literature for inspiration after realizing that his own feelings of moral outrage are balanced by alternative views that are, democratically considered, not less valid than his own. "Literature" can thus figure both directionlessness and direction. The conversation metaphor as used by Rorty and William James relies on these two contrasting properties of literature.² In the final section I will circle back to the writings of Emerson, from whence this conversation truly begins.

I. The Varieties of Conversational Experience: The Argument against Transcendental Truth

The "conversation metaphor" is a consequence of the belief, central to philosophical pragmatism but also common to most versions of post-modernism, that there is no absolute truth about how we should live our lives. As Rorty puts it, truth exists only within human sentences and not in a world apart from human description. Some sentences will form a more compelling narrative than others, but for a pragmatist there is no method of hitching one's sentences to any kind of transcendent truth. One consequence of this rejection of terminal truth, as we see in the Oakeshott quotation I use as an epigraph, is the celebration of verbal communion without a need to justify the conversation in terms of a march toward philosophical finality.

In critical debate "conversation" is a trope that can actually refer to the totality of human culture; this usage has been popularized in the last two decades by Rorty. In his anti-foundationalist manifesto, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty reintroduces the conversation metaphor, which he borrows from Oakeshott's essay "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind." For Oakeshott the conversation is best understood as taking place between three distinct voices, that of science, that of practicality (language in the service of business and political purpose, in Oakeshott's formulation), and that of poetry.³ Oakeshott suggested in this famous essay that the conversation was becoming boring of late (meaning in recent centuries) because instrumentalist concerns, both of a scientific and political sort, had hedged out poetry, in which language is used chiefly in order to delight.⁴

Rorty could have associated his use of the conversation metaphor with other usages, such as Kenneth Burke's. Burke's *Philosophy of Literary Form* was first published in 1941. For Burke, interlocutors enter a heated conversation already in session, catch up and shift the ground according to their wishes and desires, and then leave without knowing where the conversation will go next. Burke's use of the conversation metaphor is resumed in R. W. B. Lewis' 1955 study of the

American character as revealed in nineteenth-century American literature, *The American Adam*. Lewis urges the intellectual historian to locate not just the positive terms through which cultural interlocutors define a culture but also the dialectical terms—those aspects of an identity that come into being through opposition to another kind of identity and which shift in meaning according to the dialectical and polemical nature of the debate.

Lewis and Burke present the matter of conversation in significantly different ways: urbanity is a necessary condition for Lewis but not for Burke. Lewis presents the possibility of various communication styles ranging from dialogue to debate. For Burke the extension is not just from dialogue to debate, but also from identity to war: for Burke, conversation can easily morph into war by other means. A phrase like "the Culture Wars" makes perfect sense for Burke, whereas it verges on oxymoron in Lewis' discourse. When we proceed from Burke and Lewis' conceptions to Oakeshott's as he describes it in *The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind*, we notice that the conversation about the conversation metaphor becomes increasingly urbane. Lewis and Oakeshott define out aggressiveness. The rhetorical slide into persuasion and even combat of Kenneth Burke's version of the conversation metaphor has dropped out.

When Rorty refers to "conversation," he mentions Oakeshott but not Burke or Lentricchia, who has tried to restore this pugnacity to the conversation about conversation in his 1983 commentary on Burke, *Criticism and Social Change*.⁵ Part of the popularity of the conversation metaphor, then, stems from the release it grants us from the nastier aspects of rhetorical struggle admitted by Burke. Oakeshott, for example, allows us to distinguish between civility and barbarism. In his view, the larger conversation of mankind, like the conversations between particular human speakers, has no predetermined content, but it has a built-in methodological purpose. Through conversation we become human:

... it seems not improbable that it was the engagement of this conversation (where talk is without conclusion) that gave us our present appearance,

man's being descended from a race of apes who sat in talk so long and so late that they wore out their tails (11).

These apes, clubbish gentlemen of leisure, were too refined in their own apish ways to expend energy determining which among them was to be the alpha-male. Clearly they preferred dialogue to debate.⁶

Dialogue is, Lewis suggests in *The American Adam*, an ideal version of the cultural conversation. Lewis uses this metaphor casually, perhaps to demystify his writing by connecting "culture" to ordinary experience for the sake of a popular reading audience. Oakeshott, too, casually argues that one aspect of the conversation trope is that no particular search for truth need shape a given conversation, and in making this point Oakeshott is distinguishing the concerns of culture, which he calls "the conversation of mankind," from something like a scientific search for truth or a philosophical quest for something like a final, Platonic truth. Oakeshott writes that "In a conversation the participants are not engaged in an enquiry or a debate; there is no 'truth' to be discovered, no proposition to be proved, no conclusion sought" (10). In Oakeshott's formulation, the "conversation" is something like a long poem that we are to delight in. Notice again the mixture of humanistic civility and natural selection:

Thoughts of different species take wing and play round one another, responding to each other's movements and provoking one another to fresh exertions. Nobody asks where they have come from or on what authority they are present; nobody cares what will become of them when they have played their part. There is no symposiarch or arbiter; not even a doorkeeper to examine credentials. Every entrant is taken at its face-value and everything is permitted which can get itself accepted into the flow of speculation. (10)

The view that "voices which speak in conversation do not compose a hierarchy" will of course seem more persuasive to those who do not feel that they have been excluded from the conversation.⁷ As the exclusion of those who belong to less powerful groups (such as women, minority group members, and homosexuals) from the cultural conversation has in recent decades been a primary concern of humanistic intellectuals in America, it is safe to say that Oakeshott's

claim that no one is excluded from the conversation is, at the least, very controversial. As regards Oakeshott's use of the term "conversation," it can be argued that we ought to avoid mixing up the prescriptive and descriptive uses to which the metaphor is put. As a Darwinian description of ideas battling for supremacy, the notion of a "conversation" works better than, say, the notion of a chemical reaction or other analogies one might consider. To give Oakeshott his due, a *descriptive* sense of conversation implies that members of less powerful groups have been able to win public attention precisely because there was no transcendent position from which to exclude them. In its prescriptive uses, the metaphor is being deployed rhetorically by writers (Oakeshott, Lewis, Burke, Rorty) who are not transcendentally commenting on the world but who are, rather, trying to push the world in a certain direction—in this case toward liberal tolerance and civility among interlocutors.

Hierarchy, then, is one problem that arises frequently in discussions of the conversation metaphor, and ethics is another. The presumption that there is no absolute truth in which to ground claims made "in conversation" and thus to give the conversation a necessary terminus would seem to put a pragmatist's ethical stances at a disadvantage, since the pragmatist will be the first one to assert that, ultimately, ethical claims rest on no firmer foundation than human self-interest and storytelling: they cannot be grounded in nature, if by nature we mean something apart from subjective human interests. William James makes it quite clear that pragmatism is a method for cutting through philosophical knots by relating the questions directly to consequences, and Lentricchia argues that this is a serious limitation (*Criticism and Social Change*, 3-6). He points out that a pragmatist outlook on life could affirm equally well a ruthless robber baron or a radical democrat on the side of exploited workers, which is to say that pragmatism (like "conversation") does not give you the solution to a problem. In order to resolve this problem Lentricchia recommends marrying pragmatism with Marxism, and Rorty pragmatism with liberalism, but Rorty argues that being a liberal *ironist* means ac-

knowledging that one is not a liberal because it is *true*. Rather, we are moved by fictions rather than by a belief in truth.

The literary aspect of the "conversation of mankind" is expanded further in neo-pragmatist deployments of this metaphor, such as when Rorty subsumes *all* attempts at redemptive or edifying truth under the name literature, including writing from creative artists, social scientists, as well as the makers of films, comic books, and television soap operas. This radical expansion of the term literature is in sync with the neo-pragmatist's refusal of any sort of non-contingent truth-claims, and the expansion invites charges of relativism, but in his numerous essays Rorty presses the case for literary fiction especially. As we shall see, literature has a history within philosophical pragmatism of filling in the gap left by the vacation of transcendent truth. We do not have truth, so we tell each other stories, and some stories prevail. The pragmatist refusal of truth is sometimes called "undecidability," and the William James essay that I discuss in "Part II" gives an illustration both of this undecidability and the way literature flows into the vacuum left by truth to provide "vision."

II. Pragmatist Undecidability and "Vision"

You may be a prophet, at this rate; but you cannot be a worldly success.
William James, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" (247)

William James' essay "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" is about the blind spot that is necessary if one is to take a strong position on any controversial matter. James first delivered it to students in 1898. The essay was published in 1899 in *Talks to Teachers on Psychology: And to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*.⁸ One of the most striking questions that James' essay presents to us is this: where is the visionary in our society? In asking this question, he attacks the division between philosopher and visionary, in other words the split between calculative and meditative thinking.⁹ Furthering his claims that conventional academic philosophy has sacrificed poetic vision to sterile

logic, James scathingly dismisses analytical sophistication devoid of personal interest, which we find in much philosophical writing:

If philosophy is more a matter of passionate vision than of logic—and I believe it is, logic only finding reasons for the vision afterwards—must not such thinness come either from the vision being defective in the disciples, or from their passion, matched with Fechner's or with Hegel's own passion, being as moonlight unto sunlight or as water unto wine?

James is a rare philosopher to praise "vision" in this way. If a philosopher were to have a visionary moment, how could this moment *not* be reduced until it became "as water unto wine?" Most philosophical writing is, in James's water/wine comparison, a reverse miracle. But what does James propose to *do* about this problem?

James attempts to communicate a "vision" in what has become an essentially anti-visionary genre, the philosophical essay. He begins by announcing the problem: if values are entirely a product of particular human perspectives, how are we to have social values? If any value is merely the result of a relative, temporary position, how are we to have communal values? Does the pragmatist insight not imply that we must continually struggle to work out those values that we had taken for granted, values to which we referred when confronted with a problem? After positing that all values depend upon our *feelings*, and that our feelings about a given matter are bound to differ with differing points of view, James dramatizes a clash of values with reference to a personal experience. In the very beginning of his account, there is no disabling "undecidability":

Some years ago, while journeying in the mountains of North Carolina, I passed by a large number of 'coves,' as they call them there, or heads of small valleys between the hills, which had been newly cleared and planted. The impression on my mind was one of unmitigated squalor. (231-32)

James describes in detail how the settler has cut down trees, left charred and smouldering stumps in the ground, girdled other trees to prepare the ground for agricultural use, and build a log cabin, "plastering its chinks with clay," that is a standing eyesore within this

environmentalist's nightmare. James finds in this description of a squatter's settlement a glimpse of our primitive origins, but there are no signs yet of dandyish apes. James is disgusted. The cove is the antithesis of grace and beauty, and James can only see the landscape as a place of ruin: "Talk about going back to nature! I said to myself, oppressed by the dreariness, as I drove by. Talk of a country life for one's old age and for one's children!" (233). We should lightly note the class-contingency of James' position here, as he sees the landscape not as pure beauty apart from use (though this view tempts him), but in terms of one use rather than another: the wild, beautiful coves are for him "a country life for one's old age and for one's children."

Until this point in James' essay there has been no actual conversation between James and anyone else. As James and his driver come across a scene in which a homesteader has cut his land clear of trees so as to eradicate all natural beauty from the scene, James is baffled. What could motivate such a disturbance of "Nature's beauty"? At this point, James asks the driver, "What sort of people are they who have to make these new clearings?" "All of us," he replied. "Why, we ain't happy here, unless we are getting one of these coves under cultivation" (233). At this point the scales fall from James' eyes, as a pragmatist vision replaces his narrow-minded environmentalism—or so James would have us think:

I instantly felt that I had been losing the whole inward significance of the situation. Because to me the clearings spoke of naught but denudation, I thought that to those whose sturdy arms and obedient axes had made them they could tell no other story. But, when *they* looked on the hideous stumps, what they thought of was personal victory. The chips, the girdled trees, and the vile split rails spoke of honest sweat, persistent toil and final reward. The cabin was a warrant of safety for self and wife and babes. In short, the clearing, which to me was a mere ugly picture on the retina, was to them a symbol redolent with moral memories and sang a very pæan of duty, struggle, and success (233-34).

At the end of this introductory part of the essay, James comes to a preliminary conclusion: "I had been as blind to the peculiar ideality of

their conditions as they certainly would also have been to the ideality of mine, had they had a peep at my strange indoor academic ways of life at Cambridge" (234).

James' openness to other points of view, his willingness to see that his views are contingent upon his own circumstances, is an essential aspect of pragmatism's notion of conversability. Were this moment the end of James' essay, we could rest here. Instead, James continues, and I think this is the result of the moral relativity of pragmatism's open-minded conversability.

James, who always insisted that pragmatism was a method rather than a program, presents the problem as though it were really a solution; in fact, he stands at the moral limit of pragmatism and looks longingly at the far side, at the kind of moral resolution pragmatism can talk about only in the abstract. What are the consequences of such a view? Does he no longer view the homesteader as a vandal within the realm of Nature? If not, has he abandoned his own (primarily aesthetic) defense of Nature's integrity? He does not say, and I do not think he can. James figuratively implies that he has gone from blindness to vision when he says, "I *had* been as blind" to them as they were to me, but he is not out of the woods yet.

In the remainder of James' essay, James comes to a point of philosophical blockage that sets him on a kind of quest for other types of vision. If the initial problem is a kind of blindness, then the first vision is a vision of blindness. Only after darkness has been made visible can the quest begin. Just when it seems that James has come to a sort of conclusion in his essay—the momentary false ending in which he says "I *had* been blind," James begins, almost manically, to quote inspirational literature. A story by Robert Louis Stevenson, a parable by philosopher Josiah Royce, a quotation from Emerson and an extended memory from a French novel about a mystic. Wordsworth and Shelley are quoted, and Whitman is presented as a visionary, but James offers no road signs to connect this extended foray into imaginative literature to the ethical problem presented by the clear-cut cove. His position is ultimately one of intellectual paralysis.

So James praises the poet, the sort of variation on the visionary that our society will accept. Hungering for a source of spiritual and moral authority, James asks, "But how can one attain to the feeling of the vital significance of an experience, if one have it not to begin with? There is no receipt [recipe] which one can follow. Being a secret and a mystery, it often comes in mysteriously unexpected ways" (254). So also does the quest mysteriously present itself in James's essay.

What does James get for his time in the literary wilderness? At the close of the essay James pronounces the talk's ostensible moral: "Hands off: neither the whole of truth nor the whole of good is revealed to any single observer" (264). Skepticism about absolute truth and respect for the beliefs of others—these are certainly part of James' message, but James is hiding another kind of conclusion beneath the ostensible one. The smuggled vision has to do with the pages on which James praises "primitivism" and quotes Lao Tzu (whom James refers to as Lotze). James writes, "The savages and children of nature, to whom we deem ourselves so much superior, certainly are alive where we are often dead . . ." (258). James does not praise primitivism merely because it is exotic, but rather because primitive societies have certain cultural practices that our society disdains. Literature is James's road to this obscure realm. In a lengthy quotation from the W. H. Hudson novel *Idle Days in Patagonia*, James relates a parable on how we may attempt to re-connect with such a way of living, largely through isolation and the practice of "non-thinking":¹⁰ "Sometimes I would pass a whole day without seeing one mammal, and perhaps not more than a dozen birds of any size." Hudson achieves a sense of calm, a full rather than a partial sense of vision, from the Patagonian wilderness. The W. H. Hudson experience, as unscientific, impressionistic, and thus as academically unreliable as it is, suggests that there is an undivided human relation to nature that is general to man, though it is a sense that atrophies from disuse when we insulate ourselves from direct contact with nature. Hudson puts it like this: "My state was one of *suspense* and *watchfulness*; yet I had no expectation of meeting an adventure, and felt as free from apprehension as I feel now

while sitting in a room in London. The state seemed familiar rather than strange, and accompanied by a strong feeling of elation; and I did not know that something had come between me and my intellect until I returned to my former self, —to thinking, and the old insipid existence” (262). Calculative “thinking” is what Hudson returns to, while meditative non-thinking, a state of suspense and watchfulness devoid of self-consciousness, is what has been left behind.

James, fifty years before Oakeshott, complains that the voice of the visionary is removed from the conversation of philosophy, but “On a Certain Blindness” and other writings attempt to restore this voice. The form generally taken by scholastic philosophy defies the visionary function; however, as James tells us, there are moments of sunlight and wine, passages from Hegel—and James himself—that ask for the kind of immersion that can be given by “your mystic, your loafer.” James, in such moments, resists the formality we have come to expect from professional philosophers. He is, so to speak, “all over the map”—and this is in no way a criticism of his presentation. The quest James undertakes demands that he go *off track*, that he put himself apart from society for a period of time and in that way put to question habitual modes of thinking. We must not submit passively to habitual existence, much as we are in need of habits. We risk disorientation and paralysis when we step away from the pathways of habit, but at the same time there is value in recognizing habit for what it is, and, to this end, it is good for us to go “off the track” occasionally. Literature is inherently about going on vacation—it is a form of kenosis, an emptying of the self of instrumentalist activity, and, Oakeshott insists, it needs to be part of the conversation, lest the conversation degrade into a monologue:

In recent centuries the conversation, both in public and within ourselves, has become boring because it has been engrossed by two voices, the voice of practical activity and the voice of ‘science’: to know and to contrive are our pre-eminent occupations. (14)

It is, paradoxically, *useful* to take vacations from purely practical thinking. Literature goes off trail, and Oakeshott, distinguishing the

voice of poetry from those of utilitarian and scientific concerns, identifies poetry with contemplation, with "delighting" as opposed to "desiring," "obtaining" (39), and other instrumentalist activities, even if, as we see in William James' case, this duality between utility and delight ultimately breaks down in practice. It is, as Emerson writes, "a point outside our hodiernal circle, through which a new one may be described. The use of literature is to afford us a platform whence we may command a view of our present life, a purchase by which we may move it. . . . The field cannot be well seen from within the field" (409).

III. In Lieu of a Conclusion: Of Pentecost and Pack-saddles

This essay has traced a recursive pattern in anti-foundational/pragmatist thinking about "conversation" and the function of "literature" in the ongoing conversation of mankind. As Rorty's title "The Decline of Redemptive Truth and the Rise of a Literary Culture" suggests, literature exists in a state in which figural declension and ascension occur simultaneously. The dynamic nature of this process is made clear by Emerson in a passage from "Circles" which pushes back the genealogy of the conversation metaphor one hundred years from Burke's publication of *The Philosophy of Literary Form* in 1941 to 1841:

Conversation is a game of circles. In conversation we pluck up the *termini* which bound the common silence on every side. The parties are not to be judged by the spirit they partake and even express under this Pentecost. Tomorrow they will have receded from this high-water mark. To-morrow you shall find them stooping under the old pack-saddles. Yet let us enjoy the cloven flame whilst it glows on our walls. When each new speaker strikes a new light, emancipates us from the oppression of the last speaker, to oppress us with the greatness and exclusiveness of his own thought, then yields us to another redeemer, we seem to recover our rights, to become men. (408)

This passage is quite deliberate in denying that there is anything like a stable dualism in this conversation. Our overlapping comments are figured, by the reference to "Pentecost" from Acts 2, as the sacred

and redemptive moment when all strange tongues become understandable—the reversal of the linguistic Fall of mankind suffered after Babel. But Emerson puns on “spirit” and makes of this conversation at once a moment of divine communion and—perhaps?—a drunken shouting match: tomorrow these same speakers will be found beneath pack-saddles. For Emerson, as for James and for Rorty, neither conversation nor literature is a fallen or secular form of a previously divine language. When “each new speaker strikes a light” and “emancipates us from the last speaker,” that emancipation, tentative and temporary as it is, for Emerson, is divine:

In common hours, society sits cold and statuesque. We all stand waiting, empty,—knowing, possibly, that we can be full, surrounded by mighty symbols which are not symbols to us, but prose and trivial toys. Then cometh the god, and converts the statues into fiery men, and by a flash of his eye burns up the veil which shrouded all things, and the meaning of the very furniture, of cup and saucer, of chair and clock and tester, is manifest. The facts which loomed so large in the fogs of yesterday,—property, climate, breeding, personal beauty, and the like, have strangely changed their proportions. All that we reckoned settled shakes and rattles; and literatures, cities, climates, religions, leave their foundations, and dance before our eyes. (408)

“Therefore we value the poet,” writes Emerson (409). The poet in this instance is not merely the verse-writer but is the “maker,” the one who makes his or her own reality actively, as opposed to the one who waits to *find* something suitable. The poet is valued here, as in much Romantic and post-Romantic writing, in place of the priest.

In what ways, then, do Emerson, James, and Rorty differ, if they do at all? Each, as we have seen, is a thorough-going anti-foundationalist, and each reminds us that the self—“the first circle”—has the power to remake itself out of near-at-hand materials. But there are significant differences between their “conversational styles”, especially when we look at their uses of religious vocabulary. Rorty’s essay “The Decline of Redemptive Truth and the Rise of a Literary Culture,” with its three-phase history of the West as a movement from sacred authority (external to humans), through a transitional philosophical stage, and

thence to our present, thoroughly human "literary culture," provides us with a paradigm for understanding the progression from Emerson to James to Rorty. All three of these writers "value the poet," meaning the human maker of human meaning, but they do not have the same relationship to the vocabularies of spirituality. Emerson uses the language of the New and Old Testament iconoclastically, but we have to admit a doubleness to his purpose.¹¹ He denies a Holy Spirit independent of the human imagination,¹² but his essay can be said to have its cake and eat it too: Emerson refers to religious inspiration and even *makes* religious inspiration in the course of its iconoclastic references to Pentecost, spirit, and veil. When he refers, in lower case, to the "god" who comes and quickens our perception, his concept can certainly be called a declension of the Christian concept of God as all-powerful, and yet his use of sacred language admits also the insufficiency of everyday self-hood, in which "society sits cold and statuesque." James, working in a transitional phase, speaks of "vision," but he does so with equal measures of enthusiasm and detachment. When we come to our third-phase pragmatist, we are solidly in a "literary culture," one marked by an outright hostility to the idea of divinity.¹³ Rorty praises this literary culture in the antepenultimate sentence of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*:

The line of thought common to Blumenberg, Nietzsche, Freud, and Davidson suggests that we try to get to the point where we no longer worship *anything*, where we treat *nothing* as a quasi divinity, where we treat *everything*—our language, our conscience, our community—as a product of time and chance" (*Contingency* 22).

Rorty, and to a degree James, will tell us confidently that nothing is sacred. Emerson on the other hand will say something more like "nothing is sacred or profane but thinking makes it so."

Emerson's sense of the sacred is not less real because it is a humanly made artifact, a poem, but Rorty all too often must attack this poem. He paints himself into a corner in passages such as the one quoted above, and he tries to write his way out in essays such as "The Inspirational Value of Great Works of Literature" and its companion pieces

from *Achieving Our Country*. Contradicting the contra-religion passage from *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Rorty quotes Dorothy Allison's expression of "atheist's religion" from her essay "Believing in Literature." Allison writes of this belief, "There is a place where we are always alone with our own mortality, where we must simply have something greater than ourselves to hold onto—God or history or politics or literature or a belief in the healing power of love, or even righteous anger" (*Achieving* 132). We notice that God is mentioned as a term among terms and that the "belief" is expressed as an "atheist's religion," but we also notice that Rorty has smuggled the language of religion in via the back door. The narrative of progress in which religious sentiment is presented as an embarrassment we have outgrown is one Rorty presents most vigorously,¹⁴ but his recent return to "inspiration" demonstrates that this narrative also moves in circles.¹⁵

National University of Singapore

NOTES

¹An earlier form of this paper was presented at the *Connotations* conference in Halberstadt in August 2001. My sincere thanks to Jeff Partridge and John Holbo for helping me get my ideas in better working order. I also thank the anonymous reader for valuable assistance. While all shortcomings of the final version are mine alone, this essay has been improved in a number of ways as a direct consequence of our frequent coffee-break conversations. No battles were fought during any of these talks.

²Regarding literature, Rorty refers sometimes to specific fictional or poetic works but at other times to any kind of discourse, including philosophy and some religious texts, which could be defined as "human attempts to meet human needs, rather than as acknowledgements of the power of a being that is what it is apart from any such needs." This quotation is from an essay not yet published in a hardbound journal, "The Decline of Redemptive Truth and the Rise of a Literary Culture," accessed from Richard Rorty's web site (<http://www.stanford.edu/~rrorty/decline.htm>) on 22 October 2001.

When he writes about "literature" he often chooses texts that fit the old-fashioned sense of the term, but Rorty is careful to avoid distinguishing this sense from the more general sense that means something more like Oakeshott's "conversation." In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, he discusses *Bleak House*, *Pale Fire*, and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* amid similarly ranked works of canonical literature, but he is careful to call these "books" rather than "great works of literature." In the introduction to this book, he subverts the notion that great literature and TV talk shows differ significantly. Notice the slide from one sense of literature to the wider sense between these two sentences from the introduction: "Fiction like that of Choderlos de Laclos, Henry James, or Nabokov gives us the details about what sorts of cruelty we ourselves are capable of, and thereby lets us redescribe ourselves. That is why the novel, the movie, and the TV program have, gradually but steadily, replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principal vehicles of moral change and progress" (xvi). We notice also how this progress from sermon to treatise to literature prefigures the three phases Rorty describes in "The Decline of Redemptive Truth."

³Oakeshott divides contemporary/preterit political discourse from a prelapsarian approach to political language that was akin to "poetry."

⁴Oakeshott identified himself politically as a "conservative," not a pragmatist, but Rorty refers to Oakeshott's "Conversation of Mankind" frequently when describing his evolving sense of neo-pragmatism.

⁵Lentricchia's *Criticism and Social Change* was published in 1983, after *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1980), but in subsequent articles and books Rorty has continued to refer to Oakeshott but not Burke, Lewis, or Lentricchia. After Lentricchia, Steven Mailloux has attempted to restore the agonistic aspect of the conversation metaphor. See his *Rhetorical Power*, especially 58-60.

⁶What seems like a witty nonce-effect in Oakeshott's essay betrays a thoroughgoing humanistic teleology. The conversation did not have to go as it did, however; we might have evolved into something besides human beings. The circularity of the argument is in the pre-selection of humane conversation as the definitive characteristic of human beings. It is witty to backdate this characteristic to a time when "the people of the forest" had tails, and this delightful fancy may distract us from the fact that human communication tends to quarrelsomeness no less than toward pleasant, cooperative, aimless conversation.

⁷See S. P. Mohanty's "Us and Them: On the Philosophical Bases of Political Criticism": "If the forms and protocols of this conversation have developed historically—as they must have, given Rorty's arguments—we would need to be more attentive to the work of those feminist, anti-imperialist, and otherwise radical scholars who have been focusing on the exclusions that have shaped this conversation" (27).

⁸For a complete discussion of the philosophical and especially political importance of this essay, see George Cotkin's *William James, Public Philosopher*, which is

especially illuminating on the way in which American imperialism is a background to the talk. James does not mention the American intervention in the Philippines in this essay, but Professor Cotkin argues persuasively that James was, indirectly, attempting to teach his students about the consequences of the kind of blindness that makes imperial domination possible.

⁹In his study of interrelations between Buddhism and existentialist philosophy entitled *The Faith to Doubt: Glimpses of Buddhist Uncertainty*, Stephen Batchelor examines Heidegger's distinction between calculative and meditative thinking as articulated in his *Discourse on Thinking: A Translation of Gelassenheit*: "Calculative thinking (*rechnendes Denken*) and meditative thinking (*besinnliches Denken*) are the two principle themes running through the first part of this short book, the Memorial Address. Meditative thinking 'demands of us not to cling one-sidedly to a single idea, nor to run down a one-track course of ideas. Meditative thinking demands of us that we engage ourselves with what at first sight does not go together at all.' Heidegger regards calculative thinking as dangerous insofar that it 'may someday come to be accepted and practiced as the only way of thinking.' If this were to happen 'then man would have denied and thrown away his own special nature—that he is a meditative being. Therefore, the issue is the saving of man's essential nature. Therefore, the issue is keeping meditative thinking alive'" (Batchelor 129). Heidegger presents essentially the same idea as Oakeshott (that instrumentalist thinking is narrowing the range of human response), but he does so in the language of survival rather than in the urbane aesthetic register of better as opposed to worse after-dinner conversations. Batchelor draws the Heidegger quotations from David Farrell Krell's edition of the *Basic Writings*, pages 53 and 56.

¹⁰"'Ah! my brother,' said a chieftain to his white guest, 'thou wilt never know the happiness of both thinking and doing nothing. This, next to sleep, is the most enchanting of things. Thus we were before our birth, and thus we shall be after death . . .'" (258). In the section of the book entitled "Talks to Students," James includes the essay "The Gospel of Relaxation," in which he recommends Eastern forms of meditation as an antidote to the deleterious effects of the American work ethic: "We must change ourselves from a race that admires jerk and snap for their own sakes, and looks down upon low voices and quiet ways as dull, to one that, on the contrary, has calm for its ideal, and for their own sakes loves harmony, dignity, and ease" (217).

¹¹The torn veil echoes Hebrews 9:2-4 and several parallel moments in the synoptic gospels such as Matthew 27:50-52, in which the description of Jesus' death is followed by the rending of the veil separating God and man in the Great Temple: "behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; / And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose" (King James Version). For Emerson, the difference between "mighty symbols" and "prose and trivial toys" is entirely a matter of human perception.

¹²Richardson follows Harold Bloom's argument that Emerson's antipathy to Augustinian conceptions of divinity cost him the sympathy of the New Critics. Bloom writes, "sin, error, time, history, a God external to the self, the visiting of the crimes of the fathers upon the sons; these are the topoi of the literary cosmos of Eliot and his southern followers, and they were precisely of no interest whatever to Ralph Waldo Emerson" (qtd. in Richardson, 623-24; originally published in *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, "Introduction" 1).

¹³In "The Decline of Redemptive Truth and the Rise of a Literary Culture," Rorty refers to belief in a greater-than-human power as "the masochistic urge to submit to the non-human."

¹⁴In "Religion as Conversation-Stopper" Rorty rejects Stephen Carter's arguments presented in *Culture of Disbelief* that American culture trivializes religion inappropriately. Rorty reiterates the "Jeffersonian compromise" in which religious freedom is personally guaranteed but publicly constrained through the separation of church and state. In this essay Rorty goes out of his way, however, to associate religious belief with embarrassing topics, such as when he compares a statement of religious belief to a public iteration that one gets no pleasure anymore except through pornography—Rorty says such feelings are fine in and of themselves, but they ought to remain private.

¹⁵My exploratory comments about Rorty's philosophy of religion do not do justice to this topic, but in a future essay I hope to discuss the contrast between his utilitarian acceptance of religious beliefs for the private individual, and the rather hostile rhetorical presentation he accords such religious beliefs in specific discussions. See especially Rorty's "Religious Faith, Intellectual Responsibility and Romance," published in German in *Hoffnung statt Erkenntnis* in 1994 and for the first time in English in *Philosophy and Social Hope* (1999, 148-67).

WORKS CITED

- Batchelor, Stephen. *The Faith to Doubt: Glimpses of Buddhist Uncertainty*. Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990.
- Bloom, Harold. "Introduction." *Modern Critical Views: Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1985.
- Burke, Kenneth. *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*. Rev. ed., abridged by the author. New York: Vintage Books, 1957.
- Cotkin, George. *William James: Public Philosopher*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990.

- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays and Lectures* Ed. and with notes by Joel Porte. New York: Library of America, 1983.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Basic Writings*. Ed. David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.
- James, William. "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings." *Talks to Teachers on Psychology*. Boston: Macmillan Co., 1904.
- Lentricchia, Frank. *Criticism and Social Change*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983.
- Lewis, R. W. B. *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1955.
- Mailloux, Steven. *Rhetorical Power*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989.
- Mohanty, S. P. "Us and Them: On the Philosophical Bases of Political Criticism." *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 2.2 (1989): 1-31.
- Oakeshott, Michael. *The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind: An Essay*. London: Bowes and Bowes, 1959.
- Richardson, Robert D., Jr. *Emerson: The Mind on Fire*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1995.
- Rorty, Richard. *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*. The William E. Massey Sr. Lectures in the History of American Civilization. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997.
- . *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. New York: CUP, 1989.
- . "The Decline of Redemptive Truth and the Rise of a Literary Culture." <http://www.stanford.edu/~rrorty/decline.htm>. Accessed 22 October 2001.
- . *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980.
- . *Philosophy and Social Hope*. New York: Penguin USA, 2000.
- . "Religion as Conversation-Stopper." *Common Knowledge* 3.1 (Spring, 1994): 1-6. Also published in *Philosophy and Social Hope* 168-74.
- . "Religious Faith, Intellectual Responsibility and Romance." *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 17.2 (1996): 121-40. Also published in *Philosophy and Social Hope* 148-67.
- . "Truth without Correspondence to Reality." *Philosophy and Social Hope*. Previously published as *Hoffnung statt Erkenntnis: Einleitung in die pragmatische Philosophie* (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 1994); a French translation appeared in *Rorty's L'espoir au lieu de savoir* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995).

Poetics and Conversation

NEAL R. NORRICK

For many literary scholars, "The Poetics of Conversation in Twentieth-Century Literature and Criticism" includes looking for conversational features of the language in poetry, plays and fiction. One might argue that Frost or Williams writes poetry very close in style to real everyday American English speech, or that Mamet and Pinter approximate everyday talk in their plays in certain ways. The poetics of their productions might consist in this approximation to real talk, but it might also consist in precisely the opposite, namely in creating something beyond everyday talk, through developing its own special conventions. Burton and Fludernik have approached the poetics of conversation in literature by examining literary representations of everyday talk exchanges, using the tools of conversation analysis to investigate how well these representations approximate real spontaneous talk—or conversation, as I will call everyday talk exchanges involving two or more participants with approximately equal opportunities to contribute to the ongoing interaction. Just as one can describe literary productions by comparison with conversation, so might we also approach conversation as a literary object.

Indeed, before we can accurately judge just how close a literary work comes to natural everyday conversation or just how and where it differs from conversation, we need a good description of everyday talk to serve as our model. There will probably never be a complete description of natural conversation following the principles of literary theory, first because literary scholars have not set themselves to the task of analyzing everyday talk, and second because linguists are generally interested in other aspects of language, though Tannen and

Chafe have produced something like a literary description for certain features of transcribed conversation. Still, a worthwhile goal for literary theorists and linguists alike interested in the creation of a poetics of conversation would be just that: describing all the features of everyday talk as if it were a literary production. Just as a linguist can use the tools of conversation analysis to investigate the language in poetry, plays and literary dialogue, so one might attempt a close reading of all sorts of conversation as literary objects. Certainly, I don't intend anything quite so ambitious here.

Instead, I propose to present a few particularly interesting transcriptions of real conversation to demonstrate just how poetic our everyday talk can be at times. I hope to show that conversation contains essentially the same poetic features as literary texts. My corpus consists of many hours of audio-taped conversation recorded and transcribed by my students and me, according to conventions summarized at the end of this article. Most of the excerpts come from real conversations among family members and friends, fellow students and colleagues. Permission to tape the interactions was usually secured beforehand, and our recorders were placed in view of everyone present, though some conversations were recorded surreptitiously and permission to use them was secured after the fact. More often than not, we were ourselves participants in the conversations we recorded, so that I had access to background information about the settings and participants from the ones doing the recording in each case. I have subsequently assigned fictional names to all participants to preserve anonymity for everyone involved, as my students and I promised those we taped. These names differ in some cases from pseudonyms I used for these same speakers in excerpts from this data base analyzed in earlier talks and publications.

The so-called observer's paradox states that it is impossible to observe how people behave when they are not being observed. Won't conversationalists talk differently if they know the tape recorder is running? One response to this problem is simply to recognize that all talk obeys certain constraints. We all monitor our own speech based

on a whole range of contextual features, so that our awareness of being recorded adds just one more ingredient to the recipe. Another response could be to record conversation surreptitiously, and ask permission to use the recording after the fact. Many linguists view this method of data collection as unethical. Some of my own early recording was done surreptitiously before I became sensitized to the ethical ramifications of this practice. After incurring the wrath of two friends I had recorded and increasingly experiencing pangs of conscience, I decided always to ask in advance of taping. In any case, my comparison of openly recorded versus clandestinely recorded conversation turned up only momentary taping effects. As often as not, when I inserted a fresh tape, my subjects registered surprise that the recorder was still running—proof positive that they had forgotten they were being recorded. My experience has been that conversation-alists can only orient themselves to the tape recorder for a short period, and that their behavior returns to normal fairly rapidly. While we constantly react to the contextualization cues of our interlocutors, and we can adjust our speaking register to accommodate all sorts of changes in our visible audience, we seem hard put to key on hearers not directly present in the room. A tape recorder on a book shelf or a coffee table has little if any effect on a speaker directly engaged in conversation with a friend.

Still there are obvious effects of recording on many of my tapes. Tannen (1984) describes her host's recurrent comments on the recording equipment cluttering his Thanksgiving table. Such recording effects occur most frequently at the start of a cassette, reflecting the attention of conversationalists to the moving or restarting of the recorder. Occasionally, members of the present group state that they flatly refuse to talk while the machine is running. Sometimes someone converses only in whispers, at least for a time. The opposite effect is probably more common, namely the desire to perform for the recorder. Some speakers switch to a dramatically higher register or to a resonant stage voice. Others switch into a second or foreign language—whether to show off their language skills or to prevent under-

standing is not always clear. Of course, neither of these behaviors lasts for very long. My recordings also contain scattered examples of speakers producing a string of profanities, usually close to the microphone. Occasionally, speakers explicitly comment on their dislike for being recorded. On one tape in my corpus, a young man announces that he wants to go on record with a prediction; and in another passage, a speaker takes advantage of the recorder as a reason to tell a joke. In the final analysis, while I feel it is necessary to take explicit recording effects like these into account, I do not view the presence of taping equipment and conversationalists' awareness of being recorded as factors capable of skewing the data, particularly not now that we have large corpora to compare. The observer's paradox will not go away, but we have good reason to trust the data we have observed, even though our presence as observers was known.

All the recordings of conversation were made in the United States between 1985 and 1997. Most of the participants were native-born white Anglo-American English speakers, many of whom were born in and most of whom live in the upper Midwest, though a handful hail from the East Coast. Despite the obvious cultural bias and the particular idiosyncrasies inherent in this or any corpus of conversation, I hope to have selected passages resembling those my readers are used to hearing and telling. Furthermore, I trust that the illustrations recall strategies most readers recognize and use themselves.

On the down side, for readers unaccustomed to it, transcribed conversation initially appears rather jumbled and chaotic on the page. We feel comfortable listening to conversations, whether live, video-recorded or audio-recorded, however, everyday talk takes on a foreign aspect when transcribed. Interruptions, listener feedback, simultaneous talk and disfluencies such as false starts and self-corrections, stutters and filled pauses like "um" and "ah" all make a conversational transcript less linear and fluent than the carefully marshalled paragraphs of a short story and less orderly than the artificially discrete speeches assigned to successive characters in a play script. I have simplified the transcriptions where the minutiae of timing and over-

lap were irrelevant to the point being made, but often such details can be quite revealing. For instance, disfluencies routinely mark the openings of stories, and the particulars of audience participation correlate in interesting ways with switches from serious turn-by-turn conversation to wordplay or storytelling. Hence, I generally opt for fairly detailed transcriptions. The effort we invest in careful transcription and close attention to details of conversation repays the reader many times over in the insight so gained. Nevertheless, the transcription remains only a partial representation of the auditory record. The conversion into writing with words separated by spaces fictionalizes the spoken data in obvious ways, but transcription is necessary to enable close analysis.

Written texts are structured around complete sentences, while spoken language is organized around intonation units, for the simple reason that speakers must stop to breathe every so often. Intonation units tend to be about five words long and to contain one new idea unit each, typically a subject and a predicate, according to Chafe (1994). Thus, an intonation unit may assume the form of a grammatical sentence, though it need not. In terms of prosody, intonation units are likely to begin with a brief pause and to exhibit a coherent intonation ending in a contour interpreted as clause-final. They generally contain one or more intonation peaks. The three sequential intonation units from a conversation I recorded are typical in all these respects, where bolding marks intonation peaks.

Sybil:	We were trying to define-
Tom:	Was that just last night ?
Sybil:	some aspects of healthy food .

Intonation units from conversational stories generally pattern the same way, as the example below, again from my corpus, illustrates.

and I was so **interested**,
the **fire** was all **gone**,

In terms of function, intonation units typically identify some referent given in the foregoing discourse or the physical setting of the utterance and say something new about it. A second pair of intonation units from the same story illustrates this principle. In the first unit, *we* identifies the protagonists of the story already active in the foregoing text and says something new about them, namely that they could see a glow. Then the second unit picks out *the glow* in the previous unit for attention with the pronoun *it* and predicates new information of it, namely that it should not have been there.

we could see the glow in the western sky
and it shouldn't have been there.

This characteristic flow from given to new information is based on intonation, and thus distinguishes talk from written language, according to Halliday (1967). Language in both mediums can be analyzed into clauses with Themes and Rhemes, but written language lacks the organization into Given and New information characteristic for spoken language with its patterns of intonation. Printing each intonation unit on a separate line and using punctuation and italic print to suggest intonation contours yields a reasonable representation of speech and information flow for most purposes.

I use standard spelling with appropriate contractions for normal-speed casual talk even when a spelling like *hafta* or *gotcha* comes closer to the actual pronunciation than *have to* or *got you* respectively. This lets me reserve such markers for especially rapid and exaggeratedly careless speech, where they signal a style switch by the speaker. The only exception I have made to this rule is the rather frequent single unit *y'know*, which must remain distinct from the two-word phrase *you know* to reflect the rhythm of talk and to avoid confusion.

I will use the phrase "poetic language" equivalently with "poetic-ity" in the sense of Jakobson (1960) to mean language focused on the message itself. This definition grew out of the Prague School of linguistics and is shared by many representatives of Russian Formalist literary theory. Jakobson specified this definition to mean language

produced by a speaker projecting the paradigmatic axis of selection onto the syntagmatic axis of combination, that is: the attention the speaker usually focusses on combining structurally appropriate elements is now focused on choosing elements associated in other ways. Thus, the formulation *boys buy toys* would score quite high on Jakobson's scale of poeticity, due to its alliteration, assonance and end rhymes; compare the otherwise similar clause *kids buy playthings*. The associations between words do not end with sound similarities: according to Saussure (1911), associations include all sorts of parallelism from alliteration and rhyme to similar spellings, shared suffixes, puns and allusions.

In the paragraphs below, I will explore how conversationalists employ such rhetorical devices as parallel structures, simile and paradox, how they create complex patterns of wordplay, and how they weave their turns together in co-narrating stories.

Let's start off with a straightforward example of parallel structures, taken from a conversation collect in the ground-breaking *Corpus of English Conversation*, edited by Svartvik and Quirk (1980), the so-called "London Corpus."

Cecilia: And this was in a stone castle, you see.

Bloody cold.

Basil: A stone castle,
and excessively bloody cold.

Here already we see the interactive nature of conversation. Of course, conversationalists repeat their own words and structures, not just those of other speakers, as in the next example taken from another corpus of transcribed taped conversation, namely Erickson (1984):

- A He was talkin' about
 how they was corruptin' the votin'.
 They threw him out.
- B Yeah.
- C He told us about that at a B.Y.F. meetin' too.
- A **Threw him out** {louder}
- B Uh huh.

- D Y'know what is this dude-
 A I mean
 threw him out
 I don't just mean put him,
 I mean **threw him out** {increasingly loud}

Erickson calls this a "crescendo sequence" constructed to compel audience response, typical of the competitive interaction between the African American teenagers in the group he studied. Even when the other participants contribute no words to the figure as such, their responses and interruptions contribute to its overall effect.

Moving from figures of form to figures of content, let us now consider a very effective example of paradox in spontaneous conversation, an exchange which I recorded myself.

FARMER'S WIFE

- Pat: So I married a farmer,
 but I'm not a farmer's wife
 Others: {laugh}
 Tom: Well, that's certainly nicely put.
 I really like that.

Just because this conversation was spontaneous, that does not mean we must assume that Pat invented this figure on the spot. Indeed, because of the unplanned face-to-face character of conversation, participants often recall clever turns of phrase and recycle them in later conversation. Note also that Pat's paradoxical statement consists of two intonation units, each analyzable as a grammatical clause, consisting of five and seven words respectively—quite typical for conversation, as we have seen.

Similes are far more frequent in everyday talk than metaphors, discounting, of course, all the dead, basic-level and constitutive metaphors found everywhere in language, as described by Lakoff (1987), Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and others. Conversationists naturally set off explicit images with *like* in most cases, as in the passage below, where the simile *I was just like a leaf in the wind* summarizes preceding talk and collects separate figurative possibilities into a single image,

which plays itself out in the narrative. Darrel is recounting how he came to study physics, in particular how his father sought to guide him into engineering.

LEAF

Darrel: he said

“you might want to think about engineering
as a major
because you’re just pretty flexible when you get out.”
now I don’t think he was actually twisting my arm,

Ellen: right.

Darrel: but I was-

I was just like a leaf in the wind at that point.
o I majored in engineering,
but all the time I was majoring in engineering
I- I felt like
I really didn’t want to go out and be an engineer,
and part of it was I didn’t want to
but part of it was
I- I just felt like I couldn’t uh
be like the other engineering majors
and really y’know get into that kind of job.
I had sort of a sense of inferiority
about some aspects of technical things even then.
but anyway, I pushed
I got into a major
where I got to take a lot of physics.
and I liked the physics stuff
because it was more abstract.

Ellen: right.

Darrel has a doctorate in physics, and has worked as a physicist in a research facility, but he has returned to graduate school to work on a second Ph.D. in English. The *leaf in the wind* offers a particularly apt image for the story Darrel tells about his undergraduate days, especially since he still has not determined his final career choice. He reports feeling that he “really didn’t want to go out and be an engineer”; that he “couldn’t be like the other engineering majors and really get into that kind of job”; and that he had “sort of a sense of

inferiority about some aspects of technical things." Darrel comes off as defensive about his scientific background in conversation with Ellen, a fellow doctoral student in English. Notice in particular the repeated stutters on the pronoun *I*. Perhaps the physical scientist chooses an image like the leaf in the wind in conversation with a life-long philologist precisely to underline his insecurity in the world of engineers and to ratify his membership in the confederation of English students. As we see here, storytellers may build their narratives around a formulaic phrase. The phrase may stand near the beginning of a story, or it may appear closer to the middle, where it can draw together the threads of the narrative to that point and provide a controlling image for what follows.

Punning is a special sort of wordplay generally associated with humor, and characteristically polyphonous and interactive in conversation. In the next transcription of a passage of recorded conversation, Roger is talking about dolphins within an extended discussion of human and animal intelligence, and already playing with the word *pod* to form the nonce diminutive *poddy*, which may suggest *potty*. Then Jason creates an explicit pun by re-analyzing the word *poddy* due to its phonetic similarity with *party*, and cleverly combines it with *animal* in reference to the dolphins being discussed to echo the popular phrase *party animal*.

PODDY ANIMALS

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Roger: | And it seems to be a completely egalitarian band.
There isn't a leader in a dolphin-
do they have pods? |
| Jason: | I don't know what they're called. |
| Roger: | Whales are pods.
I don't know what dolphins are.
I guess they're pods too.
Poddies. (1.3)
Anyway {laughing}.
Yeah but I mean- |
| Jason: | They're poddy animals. |
| Roger: | {laughs} |
| Jason: | {laughs} |

Roger: Oooh.
That's- that's like a blow to the midriff,
Y'know. {laughing}

Roger's response to the pun, claiming physical pain, is not untypical for conversationalists who pun competitively and avoid praising each other's productions—even as they laughingly enjoy them.

This passage not only illustrates spontaneous punning, but also demonstrates the potential of joking to change a topic and to influence the direction of conversation, in this particular case to transform an impending monologue into a more balanced conversation, and so to move from information exchange to group rapport as the goal of the talk exchange. Instead of continuing his speculations on dolphins, Roger feels compelled to comment on Jason's pun, and his hyperbole is met in turn with laughter, which further illustrates the potential of joking to affect the course of a conversation.

Conversationalists play shifting roles, exaggerate, feign hostility and offense, and pretend misunderstanding to create humorous talk. In the passage below, Teddy brings out an unexpected interpretation for the idiomatic phrase *see more of someone*, pretending to have understood *more* in reference to physical quantity. Vera repeats the line to show her appreciation, then closes the interchange with an imitation of a drum riff ending in a rim-shot.

MORE OF HIM

Vera: I thought I'd get to see more of him
once we got married.
Teddy: But there wasn't any more of him.
Jim: {laughs}
Vera: {laughing} there wasn't any more of him.
Okay.
Bum bi bumbum, cha.

Teddy's humorous intrusion not only disrupts the prevailing turn-taking structure, and realigns the participants to include him, but also changes the topic. Since puns are tied into the sequentiality of turn-taking, they can have a wide range of effects on the organization of

the conversation in progress. This differentiates punning based on intentional misunderstanding of previous talk from other strategies such as irony, overstatement and sarcasm for the creation of conversational joking.

Rather complex patterns of wordplay are also fairly common in everyday conversation, although, admittedly, the next example is far more successful than most. In the passage below, two brothers, Brandon and Ned, are laughing about what they consider an illogical remark by their mother, Lydia, overheard from the adjoining room, where Lydia is talking to Brandon's daughter. Visiting at the home of their parents, Brandon and Ned fall back into patterns of talk developed when they were young: they laugh about their mother's habits of unreflected speech and at each other's verbal slips, as well as engaging in word play freely.

HURRY AND GET RESTED

Lydia:	We had such a nice day today, so you hurry and get rested. Because you're going to have a big nice day tomorrow.
Brandon:	Hurry and get rested.
Ned:	{laughs}
Brandon:	That's oxymoronic.
Ned:	{laughing} Yeah. Can you imagine the ox?
Brandon:	No, but I've spotted the moron.
Ned:	I see. {laughing} You'd think as dumb as oxes are, to call one a moron would be tautological.

Certainly, the two speakers here conspire to co-create a highly poetic little composition. Brandon overlaps with the end of Lydia's sentence, but it does not count as an interruption, since Lydia cannot hear it in the next room, and the others have not been attending to what she is saying anyway. Once Ned shows his appreciation with

laughter, Brandon goes on to comment precisely on the nature of Lydia's infelicitous utterance. This comment sets off some complex verbal fireworks, which shows how word play itself may become the primary cohesive element in a conversation. Ned begins to reanalyze *oxymoron* into its folk-etymological elements with *Can you imagine the ox?*; then Brandon takes over with a new suggestion: *I've spotted the moron*. Finally, Ned draws the proposed *ox* and *moron* segments together and rounds out the whole exchange with a reference to tautology, which resonates with the original meaning of *oxymoron*. Punning ceases to count as disruptive in conversation when the goal of talk itself consists in word play, rather than in the exchange of information and narratives. If we engage in conversation to enhance rapport and pass the time of day pleasantly, then punning may amount to the cohesive force in a stretch of conversation.

Beyond its function of shifting topics and realigning the participants in a conversation, wordplay may possess a metalingual thrust, in the sense of Jakobson (1960). Brandon's mocking repeat and comment serve a metalingual function in commenting on the form of talk, and its social or group control function of labeling some sorts of talk as inappropriate within the ongoing interaction. Significantly, Brandon and Ned share the joke and the metalingual comment on Lydia's seemingly contradictory speech, but Lydia herself receives no feedback from them in this instance.

In the next passage, we can observe allusion during the co-creation of a scenario characterized by hyperbole and aeronautical imagery. Once a pun has introduced a play frame, all kinds of humor become acceptable. In the passage below, Frank establishes a humorous key with hyperbole, first in his choice of vocabulary like *take off* and *payload*, then in his grossly exaggerated *twenty tons*, though no laughter ensues until he commences his claim to have *never seen an insect that big*. The play frame takes firm hold when Ned and Brandon begin suggesting inappropriate names for the insect. Frank enlists Brandon as a witness to his hyperbole, then extends his aeronautical metaphor, using the specifically aircraft term *fuselage* twice and *wingspan* once.

Finally, he puts an end to his own extended metaphor and hyperbole in offering an objectively appropriate comparison with a hummingbird.

BIG BUG

Ned: I keep hearing people call them things like hornets.

Frank: Let me tell you.

That dude was big enough
to take off with a payload
of about twenty tons.

Ned: Well what do you call it?

Frank: I didn't know what to call it.

I had never seen an insect that big.
Ever.

Ned: {laughs}

Frank: The only thing I could think to call it-

Ned: {laughing} Call it, "get thee hence."

Brandon: Call it sir.

Ned: {laughs}

Frank: Let me tell you what I call it.

"My God look at that big bug."

It had a fuselage that big. {holds up fingers}

Ned: {laughs}

Frank: Yeah.

Brandon, I'm not exaggerating, am I?

Brandon: Oh no, no.

Easy.

Frank: It had a fuselage like that.

Ned: {laughs}

Frank: And a wingspan like that.

Oh man.

Never seen one like that.

Ned: So we're talking primordial here.

Frank: It was just slightly smaller than a hummingbird.

Notice particularly that Brandon's *call it sir* echoes a line from an old riddle joke, one version of which goes as follows:

Question: What do you call a seven-foot, three-hundred-pound bully armed to the teeth?

Answer: Sir.

The allusion works on several levels at once in conversational humor. First of all, conversationalists gain prestige any time they can successfully weave an allusion into the fabric of spontaneous conversation. According to Freud (1905), we derive a childlike pleasure from the serendipity of finding old acquaintances in new environments. Thus, even unfunny allusion can excite a laugh of recognition and a moment of rapport between participants in a conversation, because they can bask in their shared ability to identify the relevant piece of pre-existing text.

Further, reference to a joke makes Brandon's line a special type of allusion for purposes of conversational humor. Allusion to a text funny in itself has an obvious double humorous potential, first in its actual contribution to the current text, and second by recalling the original text for listeners in the know. Moreover, in the present case, the original joke revolves around a pun. In the question, *what do you call* has the force of 'how do you designate,' whereas *sir* in the answer reanalyzes the question as something like 'how do you address.' Brandon's turn also works as a pun itself along with the allusion and word play proper based on the inappropriateness of *sir* as a class name. Finally, the allusion is especially apt in its reference to a rather large member of the species as well, so that it works on several levels simultaneously.

Any unannounced intertextual reference or allusion poses an understanding test, which can elicit laughter and enhance rapport in its own right. And Brandon's turn combines allusion with punning and word play, so it should pose a compound test. Interestingly, Ned responds to the test immediately and appreciatively, while Frank fails to react to it, perhaps because he was intent on delivering his own line, though he may simply have been unfamiliar with the joke in question as well. This appreciation for a witty allusion and the differential reaction to it are the sorts of data participants take more or less conscious note of, and they ultimately accrue to the personalities conveyed in humorous conversational interaction.

Let's turn now to narrative. Conversation is the natural home of storytelling, and so it comes as no surprise that conversational narratives rate high on the scale of poeticity. The following example of conversational storytelling reveals especially interesting patterns of repetition and parallelism. In this excerpt, Vivian tells the story of a neighbor who mistook her two sons for twins. One of those sons, Earl, and his wife Alice are Vivian's conversational partners. The humor she finds in the recounted events and her enjoyment of the memory entice Vivian into repeating salient elements of her story during the initial telling. Vivian then repeats two pivotal utterances of her story once again to summarize and conclude the topic, after Earl tells a related story of his own two similar looking children. Notice that Vivian is already repeating from Alice's introductory passage, which contains three separate wordings for the same state of affairs, namely: "are they twins?"; "they're twins"; and "our kids are twins." Thus, there is definitely a formulaic feel to the phrase by the time Vivian repeats it in the second version of the story.

TWINS

{Alice and Vivian looking at pictures of (grand)children}

Alice: people have asked us,
 "are they twins?"
 not just once.
 {to Earl} how often have people asked us
 if they're twins,
 if our kids are twins.

Earl: well.

Alice: I mean seriously.

Earl: fairly often.

Alice: fairly often.

Earl: more often than I would've imagined.
 yeah, I consider it such a stupid question.
 for me it's=

Vivian: when we moved to Pennsylvania,
 Delbert and Earl walked to school by some neighbors,
 and I met that lady one day
 when we were very new,

and she said,
 "oh, you're the one with the twins."
 and I said, "oh no,
 maybe you mean my boys
 that are a year and a half apart."
 "oh no, they're twins."
 {laughing} this lady was telling me,
 "oh no, they're twins."
 I said,
 "I have sons a year and a half apart."
 "ah, well I think they look like twins."
 and I could've just throttled that woman=
 Earl: this was like the woman who said to me,
 when I said Lilly has just turned three
 "oh, you mean four."
 Vivian: isn't that charming,
 Earl: I said,
 Vivian: when somebody tells the parents what-
 Earl: "she's my daughter.
 She's three."
 Vivian: I could've just **kicked** that woman.
 "oh, no, they're twins." {laughing}

Looking just at the story Vivian tells, abstracting away from Earl's intervening story, and eliminating all repetition, we might propose the following structure as the basic narrative.

- 1 when we moved to Pennsylvania,
 Delbert and Earl walked to school by some neighbors,
- 2 and I met that lady one day when we were very new,
- 3 and she said, "oh, you're the one with the twins."
- 4 and I said, "oh no,
 maybe you mean my boys that are a year and a half apart."
- 5 "oh no, they're twins." {laughing}
- 6 and I could've just throttled that woman

But this stripped-down version leaves out much of interest in the story. Labeling the first five units Vivian produces without interruption as A-E, we see that the next three elements appear to paraphrase B-D in reverse order. Alternatively, the second clause labeled as C may be heard as a separate statement attributed to the neighbor with

no important consequences for the point at issue here. Labeling the resolution as F, the two final elements following Earl's story also repeat E and F nearly verbatim, though in reverse order:

- A when we moved to Pennsylvania,
 Delbert and Earl walked to school by some neighbors,
 B and I met that lady one day when we were very new,
 C and she said, "oh, you're the one with the twins."
 D and I said, "oh no,
 maybe you mean my boys that are a year and a half apart."
 E "oh no, they're twins." {laughing}
- E this lady was telling me, "oh no, they're twins."
 D I said, "I have sons a year and a half apart."
 C "ah, well I think they look like twins."
- F and I could've just throttled that woman=
- F I could've just **kicked** that woman.
 E "oh, no, they're twins." {laughing}

The repetition of elements F and E practically verbatim following Earl's response story nicely illustrates the salience of dialogue and evaluation in personal anecdotes. At the same time, it shows how Vivian gets the final word on her own story, rather than letting Earl determine its interpretation with his comment and response story. Clearly, different representations and labelings of a story can reveal new insights into its organization, as I demonstrate in Norrick (2000).

Finally, let's look at two examples of conversational co-narration. The first passage below shows multiple participants recounting a recurrent past experience. Annie and Jean are cousins in their late twenties or early thirties; Helen is Annie's mother and Jean's aunt. All three have lived in close proximity their whole lives, so that they may be said to form a loose family group. They are gathered before a late-afternoon Thanksgiving dinner in the living room of the house where Annie and Helen live.

TIPSY

- Annie: And I always thought
that her and Vance
just were great together.
- Jean: Yeah.
Used to get s-
- Helen: They were both good.
- Annie: Yeah.
They were really good.
- Jean: You could go over there around the holidays
and get **smashed** before you left the place.
- Helen: Oh yeah.
- Jean: We used to have the last appointment, right?
Remember, the two of us would go?
- Annie: Yeah, yeah.
- Jean: "Want some wine girls?"
"Sure we'll have a glass of wine."
You walk out of there you're half **tipsy**.
- Annie: You were under the **dryers**.
- Jean: Well sure.
And he'd be pouring the wine
and we were tipsy
by the time we walked out of that place.
- Annie: Then he moved all the way out at Rand Road.
- Jean: Near the town show, remember?
- Annie: Yeah.
- Jean: We went there.
- Annie: We used to go there.
And then we went on to Union Road,
when he was there.
- Jean: Yeah, yeah.
We followed him around.

Here we find many devices characterizing the exchange as a recollection of shared past experience. Jean initiates the co-telling with an ostensible request for confirmation in the tag question "We used to have the last appointment, right?" though she does not pause long for a reply and receives none, so that the question stands simply as a marker of shared background knowledge. Then with "Remember, the two of us would go?" Jean explicitly seeks testimony from Annie, who

this time complies with "Yeah, yeah." Jean again questions Annie with *remember* later in the exchange, again receiving a positive *yeah* in return. Then Jean's "Well sure" in response to Annie's "You were under the dryers" and Annie's near repetition of Jean's "We went there" as "We used to go there" count as instances of checking details and coordinating accounts of the shared experience. All these markers of shared experience also serve as cues in the creation of a joint production.

Co-telling is quite prevalent, though Jean clearly remains the primary narrator. Helen confirms Jean's basic point about drinking at the hairdresser's at the outset with "Oh yeah," and Annie not only confirms Jean's claims but adds the salient detail about being "under the dryers" as well. Annie's co-telling, however, veers off in the direction of telling what happened to Vance and his partner, which suggests another point about collaborative family tales, namely that disagreements during co-narration tend to arise especially about the point of the story.

From Jean's perspective, the story focusses on the availability, consumption and effects of alcohol at the hair-dresser's, but Annie is far more concerned with Vance as a good hairdresser and how the sisters followed him as he moved around. Jean comes around to this point of view in the end, agreeing with Annie and summarizing the story in line with her interpretation: "Yeah. Yeah. We followed him around." This final agreement about the point of the narration caps off an interaction already filled with signals of shared group identity and high rapport.

The next and final excerpt was recorded in the same setting as the previous one, but now Lynne is present as well. This story with its focus on the immediate family demonstrates how group dynamics can shift based on family membership. Annie's younger sister Lynn had remained silent during the foregoing talk of hair-dressing because she had at the time been too young to accompany her older sister, aunt and mother on trips to the beauty parlor. But as this conversation continues, Lynn finds occasion to introduce a story of a third sister,

Jennifer, who is not present in the group, which suddenly makes their aunt Jean a partial outsider for the moment as someone not living in the same house when the reported events took place.

During most of the preceding interaction, Jean had controlled the floor, and she holds out as long as she can while Lynn attempts to begin her story. Even then, Jean waits only till the first pause before attempting to ratify her status as a family member by hopefully contributing a detail to the story, albeit in the form of an uncertain request for confirmation: "She put something on her head, a bag or something?" And as soon as Lynn appears to have finished her story, Jean again wrests control of the floor with a comment about her own hair, which leads back into more general talk not focussed on the nuclear family.

POODLE

Jean: Annie gave me a permanent once, too.

Lynn: Annie did?

Jean: Once and only once.

{general laughter}

I would never allow her to touch my hair again.

Lynn: Well remember the time-

Jean: Yoooh.

Talk about afro

when afro wasn't even in **style**.

My god.

Annie: Well see I **started** [something.]

Jean: [Frizz ball.]

I was a frizz ball.

It wasn't even afro.

I was just **frizz**.

Lynn: Remember [when-]

Jean: [It was] **terrible**.

Lynn: Jennifer,

the first time Jennifer had a perm
when she came home.

It was the funniest thing.

Jean: She put something on her head,
a bag or something?

Lynn: She wore her-

Annie: {laughs}.

- Lynn: Well she wore her-
 Helen: "Hair ball, hair ball."
 Yeah. Because she-
 Annie: She just always had this **hood** on.
 And she ran right upstairs,
 Lynn: **No.**
First she threw her bag up the stairs,
 almost **hit** me.
 Annie: Oh yeah.
 Lynn: Then "**bang.**"
 The door slams.
 And I'm like-
 I was on the **phone.**
 I was like
 "Ah I don't know.
 My sister just walked in.
 I think something's wrong."
 And [then she ran up the stairs.]
 Annie: [Oh that's it.]
 "I look like a damn **poodle.**"
 {general laughter}
 Lynn: Like **sobbing,**
 "I look like a poodle."
 Helen: Aw {laughing}
 Annie: Then she came down to eat
 and she'd **wrapped** a towel around her head.
 Helen: Aw {laughing}
 Lynn: She barricaded herself for a while in her room.
 Jean: **My hair takes like this.**
 I mean.
 Annie: Yeah.

Lynn first announces her story with: "Well remember the time—," before Jean will let her have the floor. As we saw above, the preface with *remember* provides a way of explicitly marking a story as familiar to at least some participants. When Jean again seems to have finished, Lynn reiterates her *remember*-preface and allows Jean one final evaluative comment before plunging into the story about Jennifer's first perm.

Both Annie and Helen are involved in co-telling the story. Helen adds only a bit of dialogue and sympathetic *aws*, but she makes the

most of this contribution, since, as Tannen notes, animating dialogue illustrates shared experience (1989: 11). By contrast, Annie makes extensive contributions but receives corrections from Lynn on almost every detail she adds. Thus Annie's description "She just always had this *hood* on" is allowed to stand, but her following statement that "She ran right upstairs" elicits a prompt *no* from Lynn, who proceeds to place herself in the center of the story's action. Again when Annie attempts to add a piece of dialogue: "I look like a damn *poodle*," Lynn objects to her tone, saying it was "Like sobbing" and rendering Jennifer's sentence as sad rather than angry, and deleting the *damn*. Finally, even Annie's statement beginning "Then she came down to eat" displeases Lynn, who insists that Jennifer first "barricaded herself for a while in her room." Although Lynn has a hard time getting started and has difficulty responding to Jean's query about what Jennifer wore on her head, she controls the story through to the end, as becomes quite clear in Annie's acquiescent responses to Lynn's corrections: "Oh yeah." and "Oh that's it." Lynn further cements her own authority as teller by strategically deploying details only she could have access to, for instance the bag thrown up the stairs, the slamming door and the fact that she was on the phone at the time.

Even without a final coda expressing agreement on the evaluation of a past event or on the point of the story about it, collaborative narration serves to ratify group membership and modulate rapport in multiple ways, first because it allows participants to re-live pleasant common experiences, second because it confirms the long-term bond they share, and third because the experience of collaborative narration itself redounds to feelings of belonging.

In conclusion, we have seen that conversation illustrates many features we generally associate with poetry and literary texts, though it necessarily adheres to conventions of its own. Spontaneous everyday talk displays characteristic patterns of line, rhythm, stress and information distribution; it thrives on a polyphonous coherence compounded of listener feedback, simultaneous talk and disfluencies. Conversation typically takes place in face-to-face interaction between

two or more participants in real time. The participants generally share roughly equal speaking rights but pursue distinct goals and needs evident in their sometime collaborative, sometime competing voices. A fuller description of the structures found in spontaneous everyday talk would be necessary for a complete, well-grounded consideration of "the Poetics of Conversation in Twentieth-Century Literature and Criticism."

University of the Saarland
Saarbrücken

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Each line of transcription contains a single intonation unit.

She's out.	Period shows falling tone in the preceding element.
Oh yeah?	Question mark shows rising tone in the preceding element.
well, okay	Comma indicates a continuing intonation, drawling out the preceding element.
Damn	Bold typeface indicates heavy stress.
bu- but	A single dash indicates a cutoff with a glottal stop.
says "Oh"	Double quotes mark speech set off by a shift in the speaker's voice.
[and so-]	Square brackets on successive lines mark beginning and end of overlapping talk.
[Why] her?	
and=	Equals signs on successive lines shows latching between turns.
=then	
(2.0)	Numbers in parentheses indicate timed pauses.
{sigh}	Curly braces enclose editorial comments and untranscribable elements.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article represents a revised version of the paper I presented at the International Symposium "The Poetics of Conversation in 20th-Century Literature and Criticism" held at the historic Gleimhaus in Halberstadt, Germany, 5-9 August

2001 under the auspices of Connotations and with the generous support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. I would like to thank the organizers, sponsors and our gracious hosts in Halberstadt as well as the participants for the pleasant, productive conference. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Connotations-Editors Inge Leimberg and Matthias Bauer for their valuable, thought-provoking suggestions on the final form of this contribution.

WORKS CITED

- Burton, Deidre. *Dialogue and Discourse*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.
- Chafe, Wallace. *Discourse, Consciousness, and Time*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994.
- Erickson, F. "Rhetoric, Anecdote, and Rhapsody." *Coherence in Spoken and Written Discourse*. Ed. D. Tannen. Norwood: Ablex, 1984. 91-102.
- Fludernik, Monika. *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. New York: Norton, 1905 (1989).
- Halliday, M. A. K. "Notes on Transitivity and Theme in English, Part 2." *Journal of Linguistics* 3 (1967): 199-244.
- Jakobson, Roman. "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics." *Style in Language*. Ed. Thomas Sebeok. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960. 350-77.
- Lakoff, George. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live by*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980.
- Norrick, Neal R. *Conversational Narrative*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2000.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1911 (1966).
- Svartvik, Jan, and Randolph Quirk. *A Corpus of English Conversation*. Lund: Gleerup, 1980.
- Tannen, Deborah. *Talking Voices*. Cambridge: CUP, 1989.

“Momentary visions of permanence” in the Stuart Masque or the Eloquence of Speech through Picture

THIERRY DEMAUBUS

The Stuart masque has often been viewed as a performing art born of the collaboration between a poet and a stage designer. As far as Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones are concerned, this collaboration soon became a competition between two defenders of distinct cultures: the literary one for the poet, and the visual one for the architect, Inigo Jones, who strove to initiate a reluctant audience to the wonder of the Renaissance perspective designs. The “High and mightie Prince the architector”¹ could then assume his rightful intellectual and artistic sovereignty. Accordingly, we shall try and define the conditions of emergence of a new form of eloquence within the masque, that bears witness to the complex theatricality which would have been in the air at court shows.

In the preface to *Tethys Festival* (1610), Samuel Daniel already acknowledged the secondary role of the poet :

... in these things wherein the only life consists in show, the art and invention of the architect gives the greatest grace, and is of most importance: ours (i.e., the poet's) the least part and of least note in the time of performance thereof; and therefor I have interseded the description of the artificial part, which only speaks M. Inigo Jones.²

It is worth pointing out that Daniel makes a clear distinction between the masque-in-performance, which has several authors, of whom the stage designer was the most important, and the printed text that has only one author, the narrative “I” of the quoted passage. Moreover the authorial dramatic text, when adapted for the stage, was often changed beyond the author's control during the actual perform-

ance, sometimes by the king himself. James I and Charles I both acted as censors for the masques—the latter did not even need a license from the Master of the Revels—and were responsible for the obliteration of whole passages that they found unsuitable for their tastes or incompatible with the "present occasion."

Moreover the unpredictability of the kings's reactions and behaviour during the performance, James's in particular, made it impossible to forecast and include in the lead up to the performance that actually happened. Sometimes King James would find the masque boring, as during the performance of Ben Jonson's *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1618), which he interrupted in the middle with a shout, "What did they make me come here for? Devil take you, all dance."³ Of course, the printed text includes the dialogues which the spectators did not hear and does not include any indication of the king's behaviour. While it sometimes lacks accuracy as an account of the actual performance it shows its independence as an artistic text. This was a feature that Jonson stressed in his later masques, when he had turned away from what was initially a narration of the actual performance, with the poetic parts added to the dominating narrative text, to literary masques that are independent of their past staging. Sometimes these texts even pretended to have been staged when in fact they were not.

In other words, the text that has come down in print did not exist before the performance, as Jerzy Limon clearly explained. What did exist was a pre-text, or dramatic masque, that was also a part of a larger script for the performance, and which cannot be identified with the printed or literary masque.

Sometimes the stage machinery did not work properly, ruining the development of stage action. The printed version of Thomas Campion's *Lord Hayes Masque* (1607) describes a change of scenery that actually did not take place. A marginal note tells us that "Either by the simplicity, negligence or conspiracy of the painter, the passing away of the trees was somewhat hazarded, the patterne of them the same day having bene showne with much admiration, and the nine trees

being left unsettled together even to the same night."⁴ This implies that the description in the main text is anything but faithful, for it includes the change of scenery that should have taken place but actually did not. The printed masques often consider the actual performances as they ought to have been staged but not as they really were. Nearly all the printed texts do not anticipate their staging. In other words a theatrical production at court brings the dramatic masque to an end: it stops to exist once the production had ended. Because of its peculiar features, it cannot be repeated without significant changes in the text: the meanings produced during the particular performance are unique for the particular occasion and cannot be retrieved. On the other hand, the meanings created by the printed text are never the same as those of the performance.

From the beginning, the masques created *coups de théâtre*—amazing transformations, appearances, disappearances, and other special effects to make the audience gasp in astonishment. Such artifice was hardly in the tradition of ascetic Palladianism, but it might be said to be in one kind of classical tradition. Even Vitruvius speaks of revolving machinery.⁵ Splendid and surprising effects, moreover, had a long tradition in court entertainments, and Jones seems to have been willing to meet the demand within the conventions of the new stage, where theatrical aces could easily be kept up one's sleeve. The vacuity of *mere* spectacle was famously mocked by Jonson :

and I have met with those
That do cry up the machine, and the shows,
The majesty of Juno in the clouds,
And peering-forth of Iris in the shrouds!
The ascent of Lady Fame, which none could spy,
Not they that sided her, Dame Poetry,
Dame History, Dame Architecture, too,
And Goody Sculpture, brought with much ado
To hold her up. O shows! Shows! Mighty shows!
The eloquence of masques! What need of prose,
Or verse, or sense, to express immortal you?⁶

All the effects Jonson refers to were staged in *Chloridia* (1631), the last Whitehall masque on which Jonson worked, and in which he clearly felt his own (rather few) words had been overwhelmed by Jones's celestial spectacle, as they probably were.

That the printed masques have hitherto been treated by a number of critics as a minor dramatic form was partly due to the typographical similarity of the extant texts to printed drama. In the printed, or literary masques there are no stage directions; instead of the projected staging we find descriptions of performances that have already taken place. These are not just any performances but the ones that took place on the night and in the place disclosed in the title.

In most cases the grammatical tense used in the descriptions in the masques is the simple past, which never happens in dramatic stage directions. Even when the present tense is used occasionally, it is what we call "praesens historicum." The "stage directions" Ben Jonson uses in a masque such as *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1618) do not forecast their own staging and are in fact narrative relations about a single performance that had already taken place. The poet is the only masque writer who tried at one point to discard the narrative character of printed masques in order to create a new literary form that would be independent of the past theatrical representation. He also more than once compared the art of writing with that of building. A writer, he declared, arranges words within a sentence much the same way that a builder brings stones together to form a wall: "The congruent and harmonious fitting of parts in a sentence, hath almost the fastning, and force of knitting, and connexion" Jonson wrote in *Discoveries*. "As in stones well squar'd, which will rise strong a great way without mortar."⁷ What a writer finally created was an object like a house. It is characteristic of Jonson to speak of literary works as objects which are consciously, solidly and monumentally constructed: built to last. Jonson often uttered the word "Architect" with contempt but also with praise.⁸ Architect and poet may have certain aims and functions for Jonson: each is concerned with construction and commemoration, and, up to a point, the terminology of the one art may be

equally appropriated for the other. It was not a coincidence that Jonson himself had actually worked as a builder in the early 1590s. But building in itself is nothing: what matters is the life that animates a building. No one before him so instinctively perceived the correspondence between the fixed space of a house and the fixed space of the stage on which the masquers did their performance. This resulted in composite works made of poetic, dramatic, and narrative elements.

The narrative character of most of the extant texts is also strengthened by the appearance of a first-person narrator who often reminds the reader that he is not omniscient and that he describes the performance in the best way he can. The narration is always selective, and it may be treated as the author's account of what had actually happened during the performance. For instance, in Thomas Campion's *Lord Hayes Masque* (London, 1607) there is a typical example of the narrator's neglecting some of his material: ". . . about it [the stage] were plac't on wyer artificial Battes, and Owles, continually moving: with many other inuentions, the which for breuitie sake I pass by with silence."

The selective character of the printed texts is also evidenced by omissions. For instance, one of the characters, Antaeus, does not appear in the printed text of Jonson's *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, although his battle with Hercules obviously was a part of the masque-in-performance, for it is mentioned by an eye-witness in his description of the spectacle and is also alluded to in a sequel masque, *For the Honour of Wales*. In most masques the descriptions of dances and music are very brief, if mentioned at all.

The narrative descriptions are often very lengthy and detailed, for they tend to include the miracles of changing scenery, the wonders of costumes, stage action, and, occasionally, dances and music. This narrative part dominates the dialogues and lyrics in a number of printed texts, and it seems that the poetic parts function as "quotations" or illustrations of the narrative as the following excerpt from Inigo Jones's and James Shirley's *The Triumph of Peace* (1633) clearly shows:

After him rode Opinion and Confidence together; Opinion in an old-fashioned doublet of black velvet and trunk hose, a short cloak of the same with an antique cape, a black velvet cap pinched up, with a white fall, and a staff in his hand; Confidence in a slashed doublet parti-coloured, breeches suitable with points at knees, favours upon his breast and arm; a broad-brimmed hat, tied up on one side, banded with a feather; a long lock of hair, trimmed with several coloured ribbons; wide boots, and great spurs with bells of rowels.⁹

There would perhaps be nothing special in the quoted passage if it were not merely an excerpt from a lengthy description of more than twenty stage characters.

The dialogues often operate as an illustration of or an appendix to the main narrative part. Samuel Daniel himself, in *Tethys Festival*, declared that :

For so much shewes and spectacles of this nature are vsually registered, among the memorable acts of the time, being complements of State, both to shew magnificence and to celebrate the feasts to our greatest respects: it is expected (according now of the custome) that I, beeing employed in the busines, should publish a description and forme of the late Mask where with all it pleased the Queenes most excellent Maiestie to solemnize the creation of the high and mightie Prince Henry, Prince of Wales, in regard to preserve the memorie thereof, and to satisfy their desires, who could have no other notice, but by others report of what was done¹⁰

Thus the text defines itself not as a masque but as "a description and forme" of a masque. There is also no doubt that following the performance, the texts were especially prepared for publication. In other words, they were written in their final form once the performance was over. These texts are basically journalistic in character, a feature that makes a number of printed masques resemble the descriptions of other courtly or civic events. Even their typographical layout is similar. As Paula Johnson pointed out :

The relative literary merits of a masque and pageant books are . . . less striking . . . than the common impulse to turn ephemeral entertainment into enduring text . . . the booklets share with another new phenomenon, the earliest "newspapers", an implicit assumption that the printed report validates the event.¹¹

Of course, only some of the masques had this ambition of being a precise account of a performance. However it was Ben Jonson who first noticed the potential of these journalistic narratives to become a new literary form, or even a new genre. For this new genre, the description would also play an important role in allegorizing the created world, which, in turn, creates several layers of meaning. In fact, it took some time before Ben Jonson found the results he expected. Stephen Orgel has noted:

Just as it is clear that Jonson alone conceived of the masque as literature, so it is equally clear that this was his primary concern for it. . . . Nevertheless, there is a curious uncertainty in his theorizing, as if he did not know quite when to begin to establish his new literary form. In the learned footnotes and prefaces we sense that Jonson somehow felt a need to vindicate his attempt to treat the masques as significant didactic poetry.¹²

In this sense one may define the literary masque as a form dealing with a spectacle, specifically the court spectacle of the early Stuart epoch. The literary masque reconstructs but at the same time postulates specific attitudes to court performances. It intervenes in the process of perception, by explaining, for instance, the complex symbolism of the non-verbal spectacle signs. Sometimes the 'meaning' of music was explained, as in Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Queens* (1609), where loud and triumphant music wins over "strange music," to which the hags dance wildly. And the author of the printed text explains to the reader that the meaning of this was "that the sounde of a virtuous fame is able to scatter and affright all that threaten yt."¹³ In all of his masques Jonson quotes (or refers to) over seventy authors, which makes him exceptional among masque writers.

The shift from the fully annotated and narrative text to a poetic text is well illustrated by the development of Ben Jonson's masques. In his study of Ben Jonson's *Workes*, Timothy Murray discusses at length the masques included in the first volume. Murray notes that "long and detailed descriptions of masquers and machines often dominate the space and figure of the poetry, performing visually and linguistically

as the dominant element of spectacle." Evoking the digressive character of Jonson's descriptions, he infers that :

Jonson's frequent digressions distinguish his masques printed in the folio of 1616 from other printed accounts of spectacles and masques. Printed descriptions of masques normally focus on loyal reports of the events, costumes, and scenery without lapsing into interpretation or discussion of historical precedents. While most descriptive reports call attention to the figure of the prince, Jonson's annotative accounts display the presence of the author.¹⁴

None of the masques written after 1610 and printed in the first folio, and very few added to the second folio of 1640, include elaborate descriptions or notes. Moreover, it seems that all masques written by other poets are selective interpretations of actual performances, so this feature does not make Jonson distinct. We must also bear in mind that the laws that govern the literary masque are to a large extent the laws of the constantly improved illusionistic stage, where, quite contrary to the laws of empirical reality, stars can sing and dance; islands can float like sailboats; huge rocks can open and close, disclosing beautiful palaces, where the bottom of the ocean will uncover mysterious worlds and people will undergo miraculous transformations and metamorphoses, as in Ovid, turning into animals, plants, and beasts.

One has to remember that the illusionistic stage was not at all easy for contemporaries to capture. Every now and then uninitiated spectators complained that, for instance, on the stage "there were fish but no water."¹⁵ For the knowledgeable reader the laws that govern the literary masque are not the creation of a flamboyant imagination but refer to a specific stage tradition and to artistic reality, where they can actually operate. The created world of a literary text is thus created on the basis of rules taken from a different system—that of the theatre. Different literary traditions lie behind mottos, quotations, and explanatory notes. These range from the Bible and ancient Roman and Greek authors through medieval theologians to contemporary commentators on these authors. Contemporary emblem books are also a very important, if not essential, source for nearly all the masques and

especially for the masques-in-performance, to the point that makes it possible to see the latter as three-dimensional "theatrical emblems". The fact that a literary text draws from both spectacle and literature may also be an attribute of drama. But the literary masque is anything but drama. It does not forecast its own staging. On the contrary, it is a single courtly spectacle that is "transmuted," into the language of literature. In other words, without the performance, the literary masque would not be created. Yet there have been some exceptions such as Jonson's *Neptune's Triumph* (1624), the staging of which had been postponed, due to a diplomatic quarrel. Jonson's text is not drama because it pretends to have been staged and as such is a description of a fictional performance, and it does not forecast its own staging. What Jonson did here is of great significance: he consciously created a text that has been defined as a literary masque by including in the created world a description of a court performance that never took place. Thus his text pretends to have been staged. Interestingly, following the rules of the convention, Jonson gives fictitious details concerning the time and place of the performance on the title page. Furthermore, he even includes King James in his text and describes the monarch as taking part in the performance, which he never did. This example shows that it was still considered impossible to create a literary masque without the performance. At the same time, however, the absence of an actual performance could suggest an evolution of the genre in the direction of full autonomy, all in accordance with Jonson's views on the masque and his deep conviction that real values are unnecessarily suppressed by the dominance of the spectacle. To preserve these values he turned to strictly literary means of expression, for which the performance was not relevant at all.

Text was not antithetic to visual images during the Renaissance. As Ben Jonson put it: "*Whosoever loves not Picture is injurious to Truth: and all the wisdom of Poetry.*"¹⁶

For Jonson there is a link between text and image without which there is no possible truth. Every visual image evokes a symbol, the expression of a literary metaphor. Hence Jonson's interest in and his

time for hieroglyphics, the oldest language, and the closest to wisdom in so far as it unifies the image with the word and creates a link between reality, image and thought.

The conceits of the mind are Pictures of things, and the tongue is the interpreter of those pictures.¹⁷

Ben Jonson could not but show his admiration for the wonders of image:

Yet it doth so enter, and penetrate the inmost affection (being done by an excellent Artificer) as sometimes it orecomes the power of speech and oratory.¹⁸

For Jonson, an image directly addresses the soul:¹⁹ there could never be any spectacle which would not speak to the eye or to the ear, as Prospero would have it in the *Tempest* (4.1.59). In his analysis of Aristotle's philosophy, Francesco Robortello (1548) observed that the spectacle ("apparatus") represents the very essence of drama and must embody all the elements defined by Aristotle: melody, diction, thought, characters, plot.²⁰ According to Robortello, the quality of a play lies in its capacity to arouse feelings of wonder and admiration through the description of magic. And as far as Aristotle is concerned, poetry aims at filling the mind with wonder. For, as far as the Renaissance viewer is concerned, reality and wonder were neither distinct nor antithetic words. Thus, in the masque, the wonder of this spectacular stage machinery lay in the accuracy and veracity of its optical illusions.

Yet, the eloquence of the masque may not necessarily lie in the literary form of the printed text. There is undoubtedly, as we shall see while evoking Inigo Jones's role in the masque-in-performance, a true eloquence of speech through picture coinciding with the development of a visual culture in the masque.

As the marginal notes in his books indicate, Jones obviously took seriously Vitruvius's idea "that the Architect should be a man of letters," and Daniele Barbaro's comment, "So it is needful to read, and

what he reads turn over in his mind."²¹ These notes, and the longer ones in the *Roman Sketchbook*, give evidence of that skill for individual expression which is shared by so many contemporaries of Shakespeare; but it is significant that he left no important piece of writing—the study of Stonehenge remained in note form, and it was his pupil Webb rather than Jones himself who seems to have planned a treatise on architecture.²² And the annotations are private, not public utterances. One of them is revealing of Jones's attitude to artists interpreting and justifying their work in public. It refers to a story in Plutarch:

... as happened in Athens with two architects, summoned to carry out a public commission, and wishing to debate which of them was the more excellent master; one, who was a very capable speaker and knew exactly how to expound his ideas, by a prepared speech got the people to choose him, as he was so skilful at telling them how he would deal with the project; the other, who was a much more excellent master, but incompetent at putting two words together, said: Athenians, everything which that man has talked about so ably I would show you with the actual work itself.²³

Jones's note sums this up quite abruptly: "of too Athenia[n] / architectes. The / one could spe/ake. The other / could do ye thinge."²⁴

This intricate silence is somehow rather logical. By becoming a writer, Jones would have created doubts about his overall purpose, whereas by refraining from doing so, he secured its clarity. That clarity is emphasised in the moment of crisis, the quarrel with Jonson, which has often been considered by critics as a quarrel with the magnified literariness of English culture. D. J. Gordon has shown that the proscenium of *Albion's Triumph* (1632), the first masque after the break, with its symbolic figures of Theory and Practice, is Jones's argument against his abandoned colleague.²⁵ And the full force of the retort lies not just in the concepts represented but in the medium of representation, painting. Paolo Pino has long since suggested that painting was a language unto itself, and not translatable into words.²⁶ Jones for his part demonstrates quite simply that words are not essential to the production of a discourse, and refers implicitly to a whole body of discourse produced by non-verbal means—his own designs.

To reinforce this, Jones permits one pointed utterance at the beginning of the text (written by Aurelian Townshend, probably under his close supervision). The action opens with the descent of "Mercury, the messenger of Jove," to announce the coming triumph of the Emperor Albanactus (Charles I), whose heroic virtues are "infinite." He makes his message brief, declaring that the triumph itself will be a visible demonstration, making words unnecessary: "we speak in acts, and scorn words trifling scenes."²⁷ The self-conscious play on notions of speaking and enacting, and the tone of aphoristic authority, make this into a general statement about meaning in the masque, following close after Jones's pictured statement on the proscenium. Under the guise of Mercury the mediator—the role which Bolton had assigned to him at the very beginning of his career, and which he takes up again at the beginning of this new phase—Jones declares that the new visual discourse he is introducing into England (Albion in the masque) is not a language of words but a more potent language of acts. The god's 'embassage' is welcomed by a chorus of poets, from their duly subordinate position.²⁸ Masques were always full of political allusions, and Jones is simply expanding this practice into the politics of culture, as those courtiers who were on the same wavelength as him—a growing number by this time, including the King—would have recognised.

In his *Expostulation with Inigo Jones* Jonson refutes the idea that the eyes alone can be organs of understanding; or that the visual element in the masques can be understandable in its own right without the aid of a text.²⁹

Jones could utter such a radical statement because for the last quarter-century his pictorial discourse had been in a sense underestimated by Jonson. The spectators of the masque, for most of whom reading was the paradigm of interpretation, were able to read Jones's designs with the help of Jonson's texts, which sometimes interpreted the spectacle directly and always accompanied it significantly. Working in this assured context, Jones proceeded to acquaint them with unfamiliar advances in the 'language' of art, some so unfamiliar as to force them to rethink their ideas about his 'language,' to the extent of seeing

that it was *sui generis* and not to be read as words are read. An enlarged knowledge of the new art of the Renaissance involved for the English a new conception of art itself, and of how it worked; which in turn led to a new way of looking at the world.

These new perceptions were brought about by Jones's use of perspective, which, Roy Strong has suggested, radically changed his public's sense of vision.³⁰ Most of them had been conditioned by the non-realist aesthetic of Elizabethan painting, where the representation of space was subjected to bold two-dimensional design, as if the intricate researches of the Italian Quattrocento into linear perspective had never taken place. This aesthetic was powerfully exemplified in the numerous portraits of the Queen, becoming by association the style of majesty, and sharing the authority of the monarchy; and that style's tendency to abstraction was reinforced by the doctrine of representing monarchs according to abstract principles.³¹

It was left to Jones, in his set designs, to take the courtiers in effect through the history of perspective since the fifteenth century. Very gradually, they acquired what Franciscus Junius called "*eruditus oculus*,"³² began to look with new eyes. The old conventions of pictorial space went on flourishing in Jacobean painting. One especially ironic throwback is Paul van Somer's portrait of James I in about 1620. The King stands in front of Jones's new Banqueting House, imagined as complete although still under construction, the foreground and background images being pressed together à la Hilliard, and the point emphasised by the inscription on an intervening window "*Dieu et mon droit*," making the building part of a metaphor of divine right. There is a contradiction between the meaning of Jones's revolutionary new structure and the antiquated composition into which it is drafted. Van Somer's deference to the conservative tendencies in English taste shows what an uphill battle Jones had in bringing about a "rebirth of pictorial space."

Jones's carefully composed pictures gave the theatrical gimmickry a new kind of focus, enhanced—in theory—by special lighting effects,

while the scenic stage allowed the machinery to be more easily concealed.

The strategy of reproducing the work of others was a means of reanimating it to new effect. A good example of this is the way he enlisted the great art collections of the Whitehall group, bringing them literally onto the public stage so as to extend their influence. In *Albion's Triumph* he made a grand scenic tableau out of the Arundel marbles, as a setting for a pastiche of Mantegna's *Triumph of Caesar*, which had only just arrived in the royal collection.³³ Jones often takes very small or reticent items from the collections and gives them a new impact by magnifying them. The Albani drawing used for *Coelum Britannicum* is a case in point. Another is the Elsheimer landscape background used in *Luminalia*. Elsheimer's tiny pictures were strongly represented in the Arundel collection.³⁴

But the masque scenes were not only vehicles for staging other works of art: they were works of art in themselves. Jones made the point clearly in 1632, at the start of the new era of his own ascendancy, after Jonson's dismissal. Describing the proscenium and opening scene of *Tempe Restored* (the companion piece to *Albion's Triumph*) he wrote:

lest I should be too long in the description of the frame, I will go to the picture itself; and indeed these shows are nothing else but pictures with light and motion.³⁵

The idea of seeing stage scenery not just as a mixed product to which painting contributes but as, overall, a mode of painting in itself comes out of sixteenth-century Italy. The general view of painting and its development which is taken by Italian theorists implicitly points forward to Jones's idea of masques as pictures. Vasari himself required that a successful composition should not seem merely painted but have the appearance of three-dimensionality and be "living and truthful."³⁶ The logical issue of Vasari's history of painting in the *Lives* would necessarily be that eventually it should literally come to life, as it did in the *tableaux vivants* of the baroque theatre. Jones's conception

of the masque in performance fits in with this context when he mentions his "shows" as "pictures with light and motion." Yet, cut off from the general radiance of the auditorium in an enclosed box, the painted pictures risked becoming virtually invisible at much distance from the stage: the farther upstage scenery or performers were placed the more obscure they would have become. Changes in the levels of luminosity were nothing comparable to the effects obtainable in the modern theatre, and light which could be neither concentrated nor projected, save with the means of reflectors, would have produced a glow rather than, as Jonson enthusiastically describes an effect in *The Masque of Blackness*, "a glorious beam." Nonetheless, relative changes in light levels would have been registered by those watching, and however diffuse the light may have been, Jones certainly grouped oil lamps and candles on and around scenic pieces to create concentrated radiance, sometimes to reflect back on the masquers and sometimes in full view, as part of the decoration of the scene. Such effects were frequently reserved for the moment when masques were revealed, retaining the old connection between masked entries and light.³⁷

To assert that the masques are pictures is to ask the spectators to think up new ways of viewing them. Because the action at times moved out of the proscenium frame into the hall, and the masquers finally danced with chosen spectators, the pictures were not lastingly enclosed within a separate world of art. And because most spectators sat to the side of the stage, they could not scan and interpret the perspective as comfortably as the privileged group who had a frontal view. By making a point about "pictures," Jones is asking for a more subtle response than he had done in the past when requiring an understanding of perspective. What is called for is a more sophisticated notion of what a picture is, of an organised but also dynamic representation which includes and transcends its own limits—a notion which is typically baroque. This is the time, just after the conflict with Jonson, when Jones seems to leave the more detailed technical execution of the masques to John Webb. The descriptions in the published texts now depict effects rather than causes, not wondrous feats of

scenic engineering so much as beautiful visual compositions. The masques are described as if they were pictures. When Rubens's allegories were set in the ceiling of the Banqueting House in 1635, they must have looked close in scale and content to the masque scenes displayed year after year in the same place. Jones's alleged contribution to the ceiling programme³⁸ can hardly be put into question: he had definitely become an expert in the conception of such programmes for large-scale pictures. For, as John Astington reminds us, "painters at court were expected to be able to work on both detailed and large-scale decorative projects in a variety of media, to be capable of executing designs and figurative representations, to create *trompe-l'œil* effects, to have knowledge of classical and mannerist styles of ornament, to have some skill in "prospective," and to be able to work successfully on a variety of surfaces, including wood, stone, metal, plaster, and cloth."³⁹

It is worth pointing out that the baroque dimension of the Stuart masques has not yet been thoroughly explored; a subject that seems worth our attention in spite of the fact that the concept of the baroque is itself open to question.

University of Artois

NOTES

¹This comes from an ironical judgement by Jonson clearly alluding to the original preface of *The King James Version of the Bible* (1611) which begins thus: "To the most high and mightie Prince."

²Samuel Daniel, *Tethys Festival: or the Qvenes Wake. Celebrated at Whitehall, the fifth day of June 1610* (London, 1610).

³See the performance reported by Orazio Busino, *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian* (London, 1909) 15: 111-14, quoted in Jerzy Limon, *The Masque of Stuart Culture* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1990) 202.

⁴Thomas Campion, *The description of A Masque Presented before the Kinges Majestie at White-Hall, on Twelfth Night last, in Honour of the Lord Hayes, and his Bride. . . . Invented and set forth by Thomas Campion Doctor of Phisicke* (London, 1607).

⁵Vitruvius, *The Ten Books of Architecture*, trans. M. H. Morgan (New York: Dover, 1960) 150.

⁶"An Expostulation with Inigo Jones" ll. 31-41. Quoted from *Ben Jonson*, The Oxford Authors, ed. Ian Donaldson (Oxford: OUP, 1985).

⁷*Timber: or, Discoveries*; quoted from *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford, P. and E. Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1926-52), vol. 8 (1947) 623, ll. 1976-80.

⁸See Ian Donaldson, *Jonson's Magic Houses: Essays in Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1997) 67.

⁹James Shirley, *The Triumph of Peace. A Masque, presented by the Four Honourable Houses, or Innes of Court. Before the King and Queenes Majesties, in the Banqueting house at Whitehall. February the third, 1633. Invented and Written, By James Shirley* (London, 1633).

¹⁰Daniel (note 2 above).

¹¹"Jacobean Ephemerata and the Immortal Word," *Renaissance Drama* 8 (1977): 158. One has to remember, of course, that the earliest 'newsbooks' appeared in England in the early 1620s—long after the first masques had appeared in print.

¹²Orgel, Stephen. *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge: CUP, 1965) 106.

¹³Quoted from *Court Masques*, The World's Classics, ed. David Lindley (Oxford: OUP, 1995) 43.

¹⁴Orgel 87.

¹⁵John Nichols, *Progresses, Processions and Festivities*, vol. 1 (London, 1828) 472-73.

¹⁶*Timber: or, Discoveries*; *Ben Jonson* 8: 610, ll. 1522-23.

¹⁷*Timber: or, Discoveries*; *Ben Jonson* 8: 628, l. 2128.

¹⁸*Timber: or, Discoveries*; *Ben Jonson* 8: 610, ll. 1526-28. This quotation is, as it were echoed by Mikel Dufrenne's remark about the relationship between the word and the object it refers to: "Words are not more a 'trompe-l'oreille' than authentic painting is a trompe-l'œil but a living resemblance between word and object, through which the word designs the object before naming it. This is due to the fact that we adopt the same attitude when we are confronted either with the word or the object." See Dufrenne's *Phénoménologie de l'Esthétique*, 2 vols. (Paris: P.U.F, 1970) 1: 176.

¹⁹See Marie-Thérèse Jones-Davies, *Inigo Jones, Ben Jonson et le masque* (Paris: M. Didier, 1967) 70.

²⁰Francesco Robortello, *In Librum Aristotelis De Arte Poetica Explicationes* (Florence, 1548).

²¹Daniele Barbaro, *I Dieci Libri Dell'Architettura Di M Vitruvio* (Venice, 1567) 12: "Bisogna adunque leggere, & le cose lette, per la mente rivolgere . . ."

²²See Rudolf Wittkower, "Inigo Jones, Architect and Man of Letters," *Palladio and English Palladianism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974) 60; John Bold, *John*

Webb: *Architectural Theory and Practice in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1989) 23.

²³See note 24.

²⁴*La Seconda Parte De Gli Opusculi Morali Di Plutarco*, trans. Giovanni Trachagnota (Venice, 1567; Worcester College), fol. 7v. The passage was underlined in Jones's copy of Plutarch.

²⁵D. J. Gordon, "Poet and Architect: The Intellectual Setting of the Quarrel between Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones," *The Renaissance Imagination* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1975) 87-90.

²⁶*Dialogo di pittura* (1548), *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, ed. Paola Barocchi, 3 vols. (Milan: Ricciardi, 1971-77) 1: 117: "Sono infinite le cose appertinenti al colorire et impossibil è isplicarle con parole . . ."

²⁷Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court, 1603-1642*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973) 2: 454, l. 99.

²⁸Orgel and Strong, l. 102

²⁹*Ben Jonson*, ed. Herford and Simpson, 8: 402-06. There is something fundamentally Protestant about the refusal to leave imagery to its own devices, without an accompanying text. In the Elizabethan homily on idolatry, narrative religious art, explained by a text, is admitted as tolerable. "And a process of a story, painted with the gestures and actions of many persons, and commonly the sum of the story, written withal, hath another use in it, than one dumb idol or image standing by itself," *Certain Sermons and Homilies* (Oxford, 1844) 178, quoted in Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, vol. 1, *Laws Against Images* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988) 405, see John Peacock, *The Stage Designs of Inigo Jones* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995) 337.

³⁰Roy Strong, "Some Early Portraits at Arundel Castle," *The Connoisseur* 197 (1978): 202.

³¹Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, *A Tracte Containing The Artes of Curious Paintinge Caruinge Buildinge*, trans. Richard Haydocke (Oxford, 1598) 23: "The skilfull Painter in drawing a King or Emperor, expressesthem grave and full of Maiestie, although peradventure they bee not so naturallie . . . So that the precepts of Arts permit us to represent the Pope, the Emperor . . . or anie other person, with that Decorum which truely belongeth to them." Quoted in Peacock, *Stage Designs* 337-38.

³²Franciscus Junius, *The Painting of the Ancients, The Literature of Classical Art*, ed. Keith Aldrich, Philipp Fehl and Raina Fehl, 2 vols. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1991) 1: 66.

³³John Peacock, "Inigo Jones and the Arundel Marbles," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 16 (1986): 78.

³⁴Keith Andrews, *Adam Elsheimer* (London: Harper Collins, 1982) 10, 26, 36, 141, 151, 166.

³⁵Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones*, 2: 480, l. 47-50. See Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion: Queen Henrietta-Maria and Court Entertainments* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989) 112-19.

³⁶*Le opere di Giorgio Vasari*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi, 9 vols. (Florence, 1878-85) 4: 9-12.

³⁷Allardyce Nicoll, *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage* (1938; New York: Blom, 1963) 129-37, quoted by John Astington, *English Court Theatre 1558-1642* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999) 148.

³⁸Roy Strong, *Britannia Triumphans: Inigo Jones, Rubens and Whitehall Palace* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980) 15.

³⁹Astington 136.

Vaughan and Divine Inspiration: A Reply to Donald Dickson*

JONATHAN NAUMAN

Donald Dickson's recent examination of agency in Henry Vaughan's sacred poetry attempts with unusual straightforwardness to explore what Vaughan meant when he claimed to have "copied" his verses under the force of divine inspiration. The preface and the poetry of the enlarged *Silex Scintillans* (1655), issued when this theory of Vaughan's reached its highest development, certainly deserve further attention along such lines. One might wonder what happened to Vaughan's poetic technique when he attempted to ground his verses in authentic spiritual experience, and how this vatic conception of the poet's role related to his strong endorsement of Anglican form and tradition.

Dickson suggests that Vaughan at first embraced the Jonsonian and classical convention of describing poems as a poet's offspring, and then rejected the trope to claim God as the agent who produced *Silex Scintillans*. There is certainly evidence that the regime of Vaughan's religious rigorism included a change in how he perceived the relations between himself and his poems. In the 1654 Preface to *Silex Scintillans*, the poet speaks of "idle books" as "another *body*, in which [the author] always *lives*, and *sins* (after *death*) as *fast* and as *foul*, as ever he did in his *life*."¹ Vaughan did not endorse such a stringent view of authorial responsibility when he attacked the anti-literary biases of the Puritans in "Upon Mr. *Fletcher's Playes*" (54-55), and scruples of this sort seem far away when we read "*In amicū fœneratorem*" (43-44) and "To his retired friend, an Invitation to *Brecknock*" (46-48). The differentiation between physical life and literary fame in Vaughan's Latin poem to

*Reference: Donald R. Dickson, "Agency in Vaughan's Sacred Poetry: Creative Acts or Divine Gifts," *Connotations* 9.2 (1999/2000): 174-89.

Matthew Herbert (93), apparently an early poem, is not as clearly to me "a paean to the poet's *two bodies*" as it seems to Dickson; but the "*posthuma vita*" is close enough to "another *body*" to make me wonder whether Vaughan's tutor could have experienced some unease while reading the 1654 Preface. Vaughan's rigorism seems to have been little more to the tastes of worldly and temporizing seventeenth-century Royalists than it has been to nineteenth and twentieth-century scholars in English; and I suspect that Anthony Wood did not mean to compliment Vaughan when he neglected to mention *Silex Scintillans* in the *Athenæ Oxonienses* and called him by the name of his unapproved verse collection.²

A couple of biographical points might be made in response to Donald Dickson's account of the onset of Vaughan's rigorism and Herbertian poetic. First, there is really no evidence that Vaughan experienced any illness "shortly after finishing"³ the 1647 version of *Olor Iscanus*, although the idea has been repeated many times. Vaughan's first modern editors, Henry Lyte and Alexander Grosart, disagreed with Vaughan's moralistic repudiation of his earlier verse, and attempted to ameliorate the poet's action by characterizing it as an utterance under crisis. One of the ways they accomplished this was to lengthen backward a severe illness that Vaughan did indeed experience during the mid-1650s. So far as I know, the only chronologically established event that can safely be recognized as pivotal for the poet's redirection toward sacred verse is the death of his younger brother William in 1648. For my second point, Vaughan's "one-stanza dedicatory poem used in the first edition of *Silex*" (177) was not headed "To My Most Merciful, My Most Loving, and Dearly Loved Redeemer," but bore rather the terse title "The Dedication," an introductory strategy lifted directly from Herbert's *The Temple*. Neither of these details compromises Dickson's arguments; but since the confusions over Vaughan's biography and over the differences between the two issues of *Silex Scintillans* have been so persistent historically, it can't hurt to mention them again.

Donald Dickson does not think that Vaughan's ascription of *Silex Scintillans* to God implies a denial of real writerly agency on the part of the poet. Such an interpretation, Dickson says, would ally Vaughan with distinctively Presbyterian positions on man's freedom, thus associating the poet with a theological faction he repudiated. I agree, and think the emblematic metaphor epitomizing Vaughan's collection certainly supports our placing of him in the scholastic and patristic mainstream on such questions. The poems are sparks specifically from Vaughan's flinty heart, and are thus produced by a divinely-initiated synergy—or, as Dickson puts it, a supernatural "sufficiency" as described by St. Paul in II Corinthians. This implicit account of divine-human relations differs in emphasis from the doctrine of the Divine Decree typically associated with Puritanism.

However, there are further consequences of this theory of divinely-initiated synergy that have raised even more doubts and comments about Vaughan's theology. The poet's remarkable conviction that any catering to the literary motive would necessarily frustrate the proper ends of sacred poetry (391-92), his claims that his newly-written poems depict and enable immediate experience of "heavenly refreshments" (392), his urging of his fellow poets to leave off "*vain and vitious subjects, for divine Themes and Celestial praise*" (391), strike many contemporary readers as "more characteristic of radical forms of Puritanism than of the Anglo-Catholic tradition which [Vaughan] inherited"⁴—indeed, not merely as curiously Puritan, but as downright nonconformist in their implications that one can "unite with God personally"⁵ outside of traditionally developed religious form. I rather think that much of this puzzlement emanates from the post-industrial tendency to array liturgical and hierarchical Christianity in simple opposition to cultural innovation and individualism, and from the related tendency to classify Vaughan's episcopal Anglican faction as the party of essentially mediated religion. A helpful colleague once suggested to me that Vaughan's oeuvre had (in addition to its significant literary value) the virtue of helping us to question our usual historical and theoretical categories. Vaughan makes us remember, for

instance, that however many or few sacramental “helps” are employed, serious Christianity invariably aims toward a personal, irreducibly individual uniting with God. I agree with Donald Dickson’s refusal to accept Jonathan Goldberg’s recent denial of individual poetic voice in Herbert, and would even question whether the poet who wrote

And now in age I bud again,
After so many deaths I live and write;
I once more smell the dew and rain,
And relish versing;⁶

is done sufficient justice by Dickson’s own claims about surrendering one’s personal story to typology.⁷ Much of Herbert is about giving up worldly ambition and personal pride, but personal pleasure and individual accomplishment seem in this passage to be “more ours for being” Christ’s.

When Vaughan advocated the emulation of “*Hierotheus* and holy *Herbert*” (392), he was implying that the liturgical “helps” he respected had their basis in inspired experience, and that those who accepted the authority of such experience could participate in it and, if God allowed, add to it. In *The Divine Names* of Dionysius the Areopagite, Vaughan had found the following episode in the life of the vatic poet Hierotheus:

As you know, we and he and many of our holy brothers met together for a vision of that mortal body, that source of life, which bore God.⁸ James, the brother of God, was there. So too was Peter, that summit, that chief of all those who speak of God. After the vision, all these hierarchs chose, each as he was able, to praise the omnipotent goodness of that divine frailty. But next to the sacred writers themselves was my teacher [Hierotheus]. He surpassed all the divinely rapt hierarchs, all the other sacred initiators. Yes indeed. He was so caught up, so taken out of himself, experiencing communion with the things praised, that everyone who heard him, everyone who knew him (or, rather, did not know him) considered him to be inspired, to be speaking with divine praises.⁹

One can see why Vaughan saw such a radical divide between his secular versifying with eye toward Donne, Jonson, and Randolph, and his sacred emulations of Herbert, whom he believed to have recorded moments of “true, practick piety” (391), inspired experience along Hierotheus’s lines. For Vaughan as a sacred poet, a good poem was measured by remarkably different standards from those he had recognized as a would-be Son of Ben¹⁰; and despite his claim in the 1654 Preface that holy “*performance is easie*” (391), Vaughan seems also to have experienced some difficulties with it. I do not think that previous secular work was troubling Vaughan when he pleaded for “true, unfeigned verse” in his poem “Anguish” (526), an explication that Dickson seems to infer. “Anguish” rather admits the danger of sacred writing becoming a literary exercise when it ought to result from what John Henry Newman called “real assent,”¹¹ from Hierotheus’s experienced “communion with the things praised.” Vaughan’s best poems, the highlight selections from *Silex Scintillans* that have kept him an audience since the mid-1800s, act precisely within this ideal, communicating remarkable spiritual authenticity through “astounding, if erratic, visionary and aural powers.”¹²

Donald Dickson’s willingness to take Vaughan’s claims about *Silex Scintillans* seriously includes, I’m glad to say, clear recognition of the connections between the poet’s commitment to inspired Christian poetry, his endorsement of Welsh bardic traditions, and his involvement with the Platonic supernaturalisms of the hermetica. Work on Vaughan that can unify these aspects of the poet’s thinking promises an accurately contextualized and helpfully appreciative aid to our enjoyment of Vaughan’s poetry.

Usk Valley Vaughan Association

NOTES

¹L. C. Martin, ed., *The Works of Henry Vaughan*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1957) 390. Citations below from Vaughan's poetry and prose are by page and/or line from this edition.

²See F. E. Hutchinson, *Henry Vaughan: A Life and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1947) 207-10 for Wood's reaction to Vaughan in correspondence.

³Donald Dickson, "Agency in Vaughan's Sacred Poetry: Creative Acts or Divine Gifts?" *Connotations* 9 (1999/2000): 177. Citations from Dickson below are from this article.

⁴James D. Simmonds, *Masques of God: Form and Theme in the Poetry of Henry Vaughan* (Pittsburgh, PA: U of Pittsburgh P, 1972) 209.

⁵Ronald Hutton, *The British Republic, 1649-1660* (London: Macmillan, 1990) 11, quoted in Alan Rudrum, "Paradoxical Persona: Vaughan's Self-Fashioning," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 62 (2000): 366.

⁶F. E. Hutchinson, ed., *The Works of George Herbert* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1941) 166 ("The Flower," ll. 36-39).

⁷"Herbert struggled to reconcile himself to the fact that true representation was possible only when he surrendered his personal story for the typological one that represented his true life's story. What he struggled to understand was that his own story had already been laid out for him" (180).

⁸That is, for the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

⁹Colin Luibheid, tr., *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987) 70.

¹⁰But there can be no doubt that Vaughan's secular poetic apprenticeship stood him in good stead when he turned to the sacred.

¹¹Ross Garner, *Henry Vaughan: Experience and the Tradition* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago, 1959) 146.

¹²Joseph H. Summers, *The Heirs of Donne and Jonson* (New York: OUP, 1970) 121.

The Visuality of Personification in Richard Savage's *The Wanderer: A Vision* (1729)¹

SANDRO JUNG

Richard Savage's masterpiece, *The Wanderer: A Vision*,² has hardly received any critical attention.³ Published in 1729, it is a poem that is innovative and in many respects unconventional in an age that stressed the predominance of reason, the intellect, order and perfection. Praised by Pope, *The Wanderer* recalls the "tastes of his friend Thomson"⁴ whom he visited at Richmond and whose magnum opus, *The Seasons*, Savage might have influenced.⁵ "Though *The Wanderer* may reveal the influence of Thomson and the new school of Augustan nature poets, Pope's connection with it is . . . close."⁶ While it can be called a "contemplative poem"⁷ one should not overlook the fact that *The Wanderer* possesses certain poetological features that were to find clearer expression in the mid-eighteenth century, e.g. in the poems of Collins, the Wartons and Akenside.⁸ These features of *The Wanderer* help elucidate the common eighteenth-century understanding of personification as well as the central role of the imagination. Savage introduces a kind of visuality to his personifications which serves to animate them and—rather than presenting them merely as lifeless deities—bridges the gap between human life and the qualities personified.

Bonamy Dobrée, in his criticism of *The Wanderer*, does not take into account the central role played by the imagination in the perception of the reality Savage creates for the solitary wanderer. The initial plan of the poem, that is, "O'er ample Nature I extend my Views" emphasises, together with the subtitle *A Vision*, the significance of visual perception in *The Wanderer*. To help him to arrive at these 'views', the personification of Contemplation has to be invoked, for "Thy-self the

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <http://www.connotations.de/debjung01023.htm>.

various View can'st find / Of Sea, Land, Air, and Heav'n, and human Kind." Contemplation alone, however, is not able to provide the vision the poet-speaker longs for, but has to be supported by Fancy:

Oh, leave a-while thy lov'd, sequester'd Shade!
 A-while in wintry Wilds vouchsafe thy Aid!
 Then waft me to some olive, bow'ry Green;
 Where, cloath'd in white, thou shew'st a Mind serene;
 Where kind Content from Noise, and Court retires,
 And smiling sits, while Muses tune their Lyres:
 Where Zephyrs gently breathe, while Sleep profound
 To their soft Fanning nods, with Poppies crown'd
 Sleep on a Treasure of bright Dreams reclines,
 By thee bestow'd; whence Fancy colour'd shines
 And flutters round his Brow a hov'ring Flight,
 Varying her Plumes in visionary Light.

Savage's defining Contemplation in terms of the imagination may have served as a model for Mark Akenside's *Ode to Cheerfulness*, in which Cheerfulness is used metonymically for the imagination. Contemplation, in Savage's poem, not only implies rational thinking, reasoning and deduction but also the creative and imaginative reworking of reality. Contemplation can enrich and redefine the "wintry Wilds" and provide "Aid" for the speaker by transporting him to "some olive, bow'ry Green," a place of retirement where it can show a "Mind serene." Though retired, this is not a place of confinement, for the Muses' songs and the sparkling "Treasure of bright Dreams" on which "Sleep . . . reclines" are the origin ("whence") of colourful Fancy, which is presented as a bird that "flutters round his [i.e. Sleep's] Brow a hov'ring Flight, / Varying her Plumes in visionary Light." The ability to change in the light of vision makes the embodiment of Fancy partake of its visionary nature and thus provides a perspective transcending the self-enclosed state of Sleep. By combining Fancy with the visions he will perceive, the speaker seems to anticipate, for example, Mrs. Barbauld's poetological definition of the creative faculty of the mind, according to which the "Imagination is

the very source and well-head of Poetry, and nothing forced or foreign to the Muse could easily flow from such a subject."⁹

Savage goes on to juxtapose the personification of Frost with Fancy and emphasises the clear contrast between the statuesqueness of Frost, his inability to move and his intention of freezing the whole scene, and the very active and inspiring bird of Fancy that tries to dissolve the "deform[ation]" of the scene that had been caused by Frost. Fancy tries to dissolve the gloom and the paralysis Frost has inspired, who "O'er cheerless Scenes by Desolation own'd, / High on an Alp of Ice he sits enthron'd." The animated and organic quality of Fancy is thus meant to warm and reanimate the icy scene and destroy the foundation and source of Frost's power. At the same time, by playing on the homophonic qualities of "freeze" and "frees" Savage implicitly suggests that Frost can certainly hinder the imagination from giving new life, whilst to old age Frost might even be a source of hope in that paralysis and death mean deliverance.

The ardent desire of the poet-speaker for a vision that takes him beyond Sleep (and his mother country) is expressed by the invocation of Contemplation, in which the speaker articulates the function it ought to assume in his quest:

O Contemplation, teach me to explore,
From *Britain* far remote, some distant Shore!
From Sleep a Dream distinct, and lively Claim;
Clear let the Vision strike the Moral's Aim!
It comes! I feel it o'er my Soul serene!
Still Morn begins, and Frost retains the Scene!

Contemplation is needed to succeed in "explor[ing]" those countries that are "far remote" from Britain. It is a quest that is motivated by the urge to experiencing a vision that had partly been foreshadowed and incompletely painted by the imagination. The "Dream distinct" refers to a specific understanding of this vision that in turn has moral implications for the poet-speaker's existence. Contemplation, and consequently the imagination, thus fulfil a moral purpose by helping the speaker to let his vision come true. The short exclamatory sentences

express the rashness and immediacy of the poet-speaker's sensation. The dream, however, is juxtaposed with the sad realisation that "Frost [still] retains the Scene" and that the speaker has not yet managed to reconquer the scene and establish, as it were, a *paysage moralisé*.

The imagination does not have the power to fight the negative imagination of Frost which sets free all "secret Terrors" imaginable. The spleen as an extreme and unhealthy representation of the imagination produces deceptions that "strike [...] the mental Eye" and not only harass the speaker but torture him. The sanative powers of the imagination are not as strong as the fear incited by Frost, who exerts mental as well as psychological torture on the speaker.

By the Blue Fires, pale Phantoms grin severe!
 Shrill-fancied Echoes wound th'affrighted Ear!
 Air-banish'd Spirits flag in Fogs profound,
 And all-obscene, shed baneful Damps around!
 Now Whispers, trembling in some feeble Wind,
 Sigh out prophetic Fears, and freeze the Mind!

His imagination has now been turned into an instrument with which Frost takes control of the speaker. The "pale Phantoms" as well as the "Shrill-fancied Echoes" that are produced by spirits all serve to intimidate him and make him approach a state of insanity. The whole scene assumes a mysterious character in that the only concrete colour adjective ("Blue") refers to the "Fires." The "affrighted Ear" appears to evoke the "Shrill-fancied Echoes" itself through the great psychological tension and stress the speaker is under. The "Fogs profound" are impenetrable, that is, the speaker cannot see through them but has to speculate what might be hidden within them. The "baneful Damps" as well as the "Whispers" contribute to the animation of the whole landscape and the speaker's discovering evil in practically every object or sound he perceives. The coldness of the whole scene, indicated by the "Blue Fires," the Fogs and the "baneful Damps" illustrate the way in which Frost proceeds to "freeze the Mind."

This entire vision of horror culminates in one of the most interesting personifications of the eighteenth century,¹⁰ that is, the personification

of suicide, the Hag. The depiction of the Hag corresponds to what Steven Knapp has called "sublime personification":

With its individuality utterly absorbed by the ideal it embodies, the personification is the perfect fanatic. It is both devoid of empirical consciousness and perfectly, formally conscious of itself. But the reassuring condition of such perfection is its sheer and obvious fictionality.¹¹

James J. Paxson refers to Lord Kames and his distinction between "passionate" and "descriptive" personification. He points out that what Ruskin called "pathetic fallacy" may be considered the essential quality of Kames's "passionate" personification. Paxson's definition of Ruskin's idea implies the "verbal externalization of an intensified interior state,"¹² a state that seems to be reflected in Savage's presentation of the Hag:

Loud laughs the Hag!—She mocks Complaint away,
Unroofs the Den, and lets in more than Day.
Swarms of Wild Fancies, wing'd in various Flight,
Seek emblematic Shades, and mystic Light!
Some drive with rapid Steeds the shining Car!
These nod from Thrones! Those thunder in the War!
Till, tir'd, they turn from the delusive Show,
Start from wild Joy, and fix in stupid Woe.
Here the lone Hour, a Blank of Life, displays,
Till now bad Thoughts a Fiend more active raise;
Death in her Hand, and Frenzy in her Eye!
With Life's Calamities embroider'd o'er.
A Mirror in one Hand collective shows,
Varied, and multiplied that Group of Woes.
This endless Foe to gen'rous Toil and Pain
Lolls on a Couch for Ease; but lolls in vain;
She muses o'er her woe-embroider'd Vest,
And Self-Abhorrence heightens in her Breast.
To shun her Care, the Force of Sleep she tries,
Still wakes her Mind, though Slumbers doze her Eyes:
She dreams, starts, rises, stalks from Place to Place,
With restless, thoughtful, interrupted Pace;
Now eyes the Sun, and curses ev'ry Ray,
Now the green Ground, where Colour fades away,
Dim Spectres dance! Again her Eyes she rears;

Then from the blood-shot Ball wipes purpled Tears;
 Then presses hard her Brow, with Mischief fraught,
 Her Brow half bursts with Agony of Thought!
 From me (she cries) pale Wretch thy Comfort claim,
 Born of Despair, and Suicide my Name!
 [...]
 Here e'vry Object proffers Grief a Cure.
 She points where Leaves of Hemlock black'ning shoot!
 Fear not! Pluck! Eat (said she) the sov'reign Root!
 Then Death, revers'd, shall bear his ebon Lance;
 Or leap yon Rock, possess a watry Grave,
 And leave wild Sorrow to the Wind and Wave!
 Or mark—this Ponyard thus from Mis'ry frees!
 She wounds her Breast!—the guilty Steel I seize!
 Straight, where she struck, a smocking Spring of Gore
 Wells from the Wound, and floats the crimson'd Floor.
 She faints! She fades!

The hag, clearly reminiscent of Spenser's Duessa (*Faerie Queene* I.viii.46 ff.), is only a phantom evoked by the speaker's irritated and bewildered imagination. The term 'hag' derives from OE 'hægtesse' and has a variety of different meanings the most prominent of which defines it as "the nightmare."¹³ Another definition reads: "A woman supposed to have dealings with Satan and the infernal world; a witch; sometimes, an infernally wicked woman."¹⁴ The personification may also be understood as the embodiment of "evil or vice."¹⁵ The Hag of Savage's poem, however, is clearly the personification of the grief and the helplessness the poet-speaker cannot utter. Her supernatural and non-human character is revealed when she "Unroofs the Den, and lets more in than Day." Day, which earlier on had been associated with the light of vision is here suddenly linked with those evil spirits the Hag has invoked. "Swarms of Wild Fancies" intrude the speaker's mind and "Seek emblematic Shades" in which they can live and produce even greater horrors. "[E]mblematic Shades" supposes a pictorial and symbolic quality of the shade that is conferred to it by means of the speaker's imagination. He appears to discover various meaningful pictures that lie concealed in these shades and are thrown into relief by a "mystic Light." The speaker's fancies seek these shades,

however, only to emerge from them again in order to perform their "delusive Show." The "shining Car" on which they come might be associated 'emblematically' with the mythological car of Phoebus, even though it is hardly expressive of the brightness of the Sun-god but rather underscores the aggressiveness and "thunder" of the "War" in which it is used. This car is actively involved in the process of establishing dominance over the speaker's mind.

It is the primary task of the imagination to discover and create a "strange visionary Land" that is not exposed to the cruel coldness of Winter. Winter will have to be confined in a cave and "bound in icy Chains" in order for him not to do any harm to the scene Fancy inspires. The "Morn" as well as the "glorious Sun" are meant to be life-affirming and accordingly the "orient Beauty" of "Morn" not only indicates the east where the sun rises but also for the "brilliant, lustrous, shining, glowing, radiant [and] resplendent"¹⁶ character of Nature that has now returned to an imaginary pre-lapsarian state. "Orient" may thus be read as implying a new beginning¹⁷ and, especially if one bears in mind the implications of Latin *oriri* ('to rise'), going back to Greek *oros* ('mountain'), it may also refer to a protected place that lies far above the level of the surrounding country.¹⁸

The Sun is central not only because it stands for the warmth that destroys frost but also because it is evident that Savage regards it as the ultimate source of "vegetative Life." The personification of the Sun is unique in that it departs from the statuesqueness and formulaic character frequently associated with eighteenth-century personification.

Now in his Tabernacle rouz'd, the Sun
Is warn'd the blue, ætherial Steep to run:
While on his Couch of floating Jasper laid,
From his bright Eye *Sleep* calls the dewy Shade.
The crystal Dome transparent Pillars raise,
Whence beam'd from Saphirs living Azure plays;
The liquid Floor, in-wrought with Pearls divine,
Where all his Labours in Mosaic shine,
His Coronet, a Cloud of Silver-white;
His Robe with unconsuming Crimson bright,

Varied with Gems, all Heaven's collected Store;
While his loose Locks descend, a golden Shower.

Unlike the "shining Car," the Sun is not presented in terms of destruction but of life and ornament. The brightness and radiance that surrounds the personification are underscored by the various royal attributes such as a crown or gems. The crimson of his robe is "unconsuming," that is it does not consume the objects it touches but only provides them with the light and warmth they need to grow. The "golden Shower" thus may be understood as rain that goes down onto the earth, fertilises and nourishes it and at the same time provides the light so necessary for "vegetative Life." This life-giving role of the personified sun corresponds to Savage's belief in the animation and interrelatedness of all elements of the cosmos. In *Windsor Forest*,¹⁹ Pope had already asked Nature to "unlock [her] Springs" and to reveal the ordering principle of life to him. Savage, like Pope, attempts to discover a harmonic order inherent in nature but for him this goes together with a mysticism that Pope and the Augustans, in general, avoided. As Pope was to maintain in his *Essay on Man* that "All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee" and "All Discord, Harmony, not understood,"²⁰ the speaker of *The Wanderer* points out that "Were the whole known, what we uncouth suppose, / Doubtless, wou'd beautiful Symmetry disclose." This view, however, is given up later in the poem in favour of the wonder and the mysticism the speaker discovers in Nature. He focuses on the imaginative reworking of elements of Nature which he transforms into personifications and adorns with attributes they naturally do not possess. Neither does Savage share the Augustan ideal of clarity and regularity, symmetry and order in poetry: it has been noted repeatedly that *The Wanderer* lacks any precise plan,²¹ that the poem is a "kaleidoscope of disconnected images succeed[ing] each other"²² and "uses the solemn diction of Augustan ceremony to describe those intensely introverted states of elation, despair and wish-fulfilment which we have come to associate with Romanticism."²³ We are thus reminded that the fragment as a literary genre is not an exclusively Romantic genre but a traditional one and

includes compositions as Savage's *The Wanderer* and Collins's *Ode to Evening* (1746).²⁴

In *The Wanderer*, it is the whole ensemble of colours and of bright hues that attract the poet-speaker's imagination and help him overcome the grief he first experienced on the occasion of his beloved Olympia's death. His "wand'ring Eye," however, is not only led by the visuality of the colourful objects he perceives but also by the visions that are partly perceived through his real eyes, partly through those of Fancy. Like a phoenix, "He sunk a Mortal, and a Seraph rose": this juxtaposition of "Mortal" and "Seraph" already alludes to the great change that has taken place within the poet-speaker, for the imagination has helped him overcome his immediate grief and rise above the common station of man by becoming a "Bard." The bard himself has managed to be rewarded with immortality and a position that resembles an angel's. He has thus found a way of being reunited with Olympia without having to wait for his death, a thought that would have been deeply impious. The "Bard, now [...] apotheosized into a seraph, his rags transformed into shining vestments, delivers himself of an harangue suggestive of the words of the Almighty at the Last Judgment."²⁵ Savage's speaker thus succeeds in bridging the gap between his own existence and that of the personifications he encounters—including the Hag, who is turned into a deity who may grant his wish of being reunited with his deceased wife. His quest is rewarded in the end in that he achieves a state of existence that resembles the spiritual realm in which he encounters the personifications. On his quest, the poet-speaker has discovered the spirituality of life in various manifestations and it is now Savage, the "Poet [who] seeks a *Body*, to *maintain* and *support* that Spirit."²⁶

University of Durham

NOTES

¹A shorter version of this paper was presented at the conference of the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies at Oxford, 3-5 January 2001.

²The standard edition of the poetical works of Savage will be used. All references are to this edition: Clarence Tracy (ed.), *The Poetical Works of Richard Savage* (Cambridge: CUP, 1962) 94-159.

³Cf. Heinrich Döring, *Richard Savage: Ein Genrebild* (Jena: Friedrich Mauke, 1840); S. V. Makower, *Richard Savage: A Mystery in Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 1909) and Clarence Tracy, *The Artificial Bastard: A Biography of Richard Savage* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1953); B. Boyce, "Johnson's Life of Savage and its Literary Background," *Studies in Philology* 53 (1956): 576-98; Richard Holmes, *Dr Johnson and Mr Savage* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993).

⁴Tracy, *Artificial Bastard* 81.

⁵Edmund Gosse, *A History of Eighteenth-Century Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1896) 217 commented on Thomson's influence on Savage: "The influence of Thomson, enlarging the range of poetic observation, and encouraging an exacter portraiture of natural objects. The last book of Savage's poem is remarkably full of brilliant if often crude colour, and the reader is startled to meet with [...] attempts to give new landscape-features"; cf. Makower 181.

⁶Tracy, *Artificial Bastard* 104.

⁷Bonamy Dobrée, *English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century, 1700-1740*, *The Oxford History of English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1959) 512.

⁸But cf. Dobrée's critical view (512): "The poem [...] tends to resolve itself into phrases which were commonplace even in Savage's day, though now and again he uses or invents a rare word."

⁹*The Pleasures of Imagination by Mark Akenside to which is prefixed a Critical Essay on the Poem by Mrs. Barbauld* (London: T. Cadell, 1825) 8.

¹⁰Good discussions of 'personification' include Rachel Trickett, "The Augustan Pantheon: Mythology and Personification in Eighteenth-Century Poetry," *Essays and Studies* ns 6 (1953): 71-86; Bertrand H. Bronson, "Personification Reconsidered," *ELH* 14 (1947): 163-77; Earl R. Wasserman, "The Inherent Values of Eighteenth-Century Personification," *PMLA* 65 (1960): 435-63 as well as Chester F. Chapin, *Personification in Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (New York: Octagon, 1974).

¹¹Steven Knapp, *Personification and the Sublime: Milton to Coleridge* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1985) 83.

¹²James J. Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999) 29.

¹³OED "hag" n.¹ 1.c.

¹⁴OED "hag" n.¹ 2.

¹⁵OED "hag" n.¹ 3.b.

¹⁶OED "Orient" B. adj. 2.b.

¹⁷Eric Partridge, *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966) 457.

¹⁸Partridge 458.

¹⁹As Warton points out the principal aim of 'descriptive poetry' and thus of *Windsor Forest* as the "greatest and most pleasing arts" is "to introduce moral sentences and instructions in an oblique and indirect manner, in places where one naturally expects only painting and amusement." Cf. Joseph Warton, *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Maiden, 1806) 1: 29.

²⁰"Epistle I" 289 and 291; quoted from Alexander Pope, *Poetical Works*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford: OUP, 1978) 249.

²¹Cf. Sir A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, *From Steele and Addison to Pope and Swift*, *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 1964) 9: 186: "The *Wanderer* may not be the worst of the descriptive didactic verse-tractates of its century, but, to the usual enquiry whether, as poems, they have any particular reason for existence, and the usual answer in the negative, there has to be added, in this case, the discovery that it has really no plan at all."

²²Holmes 149.

²³Holmes 151.

²⁴Cf. Sandro Jung, "The Allusiveness of the Mid-Eighteenth-Century Poetry: William Collins' *Ode to Evening* and the Visuality of Landscape," *Symbolism: A Journal of Critical Aesthetics* 4 (forthcoming). As Richard Holmes has shown, Savage, together with Mallet, Hill and Thomson, belonged to a circle of literati that were called "The Brotherhood of Sublime-Obscure." Their "agreed aim was to develop a genre of long, meditative, Nature poems capable of carrying deep personal feeling, and observation, but also with a unified dramatic structure and philosophy" (88).

²⁵Tracy, *Artificial Bastard* 100.

²⁶Hildebrand Jacob, *Of the Sister Arts: An Essay* (London: William Lewis, 1734) 4.

Hopkins's Portraits of the Artist: Between the Biographical and the Ideological

DENNIS SOBOLEV

Hopkins's letters written in the Dublin period¹ testify that in the last years of his life he suffered from anaemia and periods of deep depression verging on madness.² Different and heterogeneous factors contributed to Hopkins's mental condition: his intellectual loneliness and incessant self-scrutiny, the growing feeling of the disappearance of God from his life and his alleged failure both as a preacher and as a poet. But, in addition to these internal causes, Hopkins's anaemia and recurrent depressions resulted from a much more mundane one: from constant overwork. Shortly after his arrival to Dublin in March 1884, Hopkins wrote to Bridges: "I have been elected Fellow of the Royal University of Ireland in the department of classics. I have a salary of £400 a year, but when I first contemplated the six examinations I have yearly to conduct, five of them running, and to the Matriculation there came up last year 750 candidates, I thought that Stephen's Green (the biggest square in Europe) paved with gold would not pay for it."³ Hopkins did not exaggerate the amount of his future work; the contemporary study of his work has shown that in 1887 he checked 1795 exams, and in the rest of his Dublin years their numbers oscillated between 1300 and 1800 (O'Flynn 176).

In addition, Hopkins was overscrupulous as an examiner (he often divided points into fractions); and, as a result, he constantly felt that since his arrival to Dublin he had almost no spare time.⁴ Moreover, his drudgery frequently deprived him of the only type of intellectual communication he had until then: his correspondence. It often happened that Hopkins was unable even to write a letter; already in 1884 he complained to Bridges: "I cannot spend more time writing now"

(LI 192) and two weeks later: "I too am engaged on examination and must therefore be brief" (LI 192). In addition, the pressure of unfinished work caused the feeling of constant anxiety; Hopkins wrote to Baillie that one form of his "melancholy" "is daily anxiety about work to be done, which makes [him] break off or never finish all that lies outside that work" (LIII 256). Similarly, contemplating upon his ostensible lack of inspiration, which was one of Hopkins's most torturing thoughts,⁵ he ascribed it to overwork and the resultant feeling of exhaustion (LI 222).

In the light of this situation it is little wonder that Hopkins felt that he was not fit for his work (LII 132) and that this work gradually killed him. Already in his first letter to Bridges written in Dublin, Hopkins says: "I am not at all strong, not strong enough for the requirements" (LI 190). A half year later he writes: "I am in the very thick of examination work and in danger of permanently injuring my eyes. I shall have no time at all till past the middle of the next month" (LI 198). In the Spring of the next year, a season which always fascinated him, he continues: "I am in a low way of health, indeed I always am . . . The delightful old French Father . . . will have it that I am dying of anaemia" (LI 208). Two years later he remarks that he is "in a prostration" and almost unable to perform his "day's work" (LI 251). In 1888, although he is on vacation, Hopkins writes: "I cannot sleep (which is the very mischief) . . . and I am feeling very old and looking very wrinkled and altogether . . ." (LI 278, dots are Hopkins's).

Another problem to do with Hopkins's work in Dublin was associated with the quality of the work he was employed to do. Commenting upon Hopkins's notes on the exams he was checking ('Dublin Notebook'; Campion Hall ms.), Norman White writes: "Confronted with endless piles of examination scripts, he was shocked by the poor standard of answers, and by their grammar, expression, and spelling . . . Hopkins's bewildered and hopeless remarks reveal the fastidious distance between his standards and those of the students . . ." (White 371-72). In addition to all this, he was isolated in a place completely unfit for his intense intellectual life. "For the books," he wrote to

Ignatius Ryder, "I can answer: *they* at least are not at the Catholic University" (LIII 65). Furthermore, at the time when he was appointed to the University College, the Catholic University was a Jesuit myth rather than a real institution. "I am writing from where I never thought to be," he wrote to Cardinal Newman, "in a University for Catholic Ireland begun under your leadership, which since those days indeed long and unhappy languished . . . These buildings since you knew them have fallen into a deep dilapidation. They were a sort of wreck or ruin" (LIII 63). In his letter to Bridges, he was even more pessimistic: "The house we are in, the College, is a sort of ruin and for purposes of study very nearly naked" (LI 190). The drains of the college were infested with rats (White 365), and the surrounding city was even worse: dirty and extremely poor. After Hopkins's death his sister told Bridges that "he was made miserable by the untidiness, disorder & dirt of Irish ways, the ugliness of it all" (Martin 368).

But the worst of all was that this unceasing examination work in an empty and half-ruined institution was hardly useful. Hopkins complained to his mother: "I labour for what is worth little . . . And in doing this almost fruitless work I use up all opportunity of doing any other" (LIII 185). In 1887 he wrote to Bridges: "Tomorrow morning I shall have been three years in Ireland, three hard wearing wasting wasted years" (LI 250). The next year he remarked in the autobiographical part of the retreat notes of 1888:

The question is how I advance the side I serve on. This may be inwardly or outwardly. Outwardly I often think I am employed to do what is of little or no use . . . What is my wretched life? Five wasted years almost have passed in Ireland. I am ashamed of the little I have done, of my waste of time. (S 261-62)

Moreover, this work not only gave Hopkins the feeling of wasted efforts, it was also complicit with torturing moral doubts. "The Catholic Church in Ireland," he wrote, "and the Irish Province in it and our College in that are greatly given over to a partly unlawful cause, promoted by partly unlawful means, and against my will my pains,

laborious and distasteful, like prisoners made to serve the enemies' gunners, go to help on this cause" (S 262).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Hopkins, as a Jesuit, had no right to the money he ostensibly received: his salary was automatically transferred to the college's funds; to his mother Hopkins wrote that his "salary helps to support [his] college" (LIII 185). As Robert Martin explains, "since Jesuits were prohibited by vow from having money, the sum [reverted] to the College as part of the much-needed funds for running the establishment" (363). Norman White adds some interesting details about the appointment of Hopkins to Dublin; Delaney [the president of the college] wrote for advice to a friend, Dr. Kavanagh, who replied: "Take Hopkins, if you cannot get a better. The £400 a year you will find useful, being an S.J." (360). This was one of the most important reasons for choosing Hopkins: the University College was extremely short of money. In all probability, Hopkins was aware, at least partly, of the financial considerations behind the decision to transfer him to Dublin. Certainly, he never said what part of his salary was actually spent on his needs (subsistence, personal necessities and vacations), but everything indicates that this was only a small part of it.⁶

Now the question to be asked is what were Hopkins's reasons for working as he did: what were the reasons that made him agree to his perennial, useless and profitless drudgery, which, as he believed, gradually killed him, and to do this work as diligently as he could. The answer to this question, quite predictable in the Victorian context, is the sense of duty.⁷ It is clear enough from both Hopkins's poetry and his letters that, like most Victorians, he admired those who fulfill their duties at all costs. In the poem "What shall I do for the land that bred me" he writes: "Immortal beauty is death with duty, / If under her banner I fall for her honor." In "The Loss of the Eurydice" he depicts the literal physical beauty (as opposed to the metaphorical one in "What shall I do") that is miraculously gained by the fulfillment of duties at life's cost; he describes the dead body of a sailor and then exclaims:

Look, foot to forelock, how all things suit! he
Is strung by duty, is strained to beauty . . . (77-78)

This sailor has fulfilled his duties to the very end; and this fulfillment of duty is reflected by the ultimate beauty of his body.

At the same time, there is an additional element of Hopkins's conception of duty, which distinguishes him from many of his contemporaries: in most cases Hopkins's contemplations upon duty are inseparable from metaphysical overtones. Thus, in his commentary on the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* he opposes the 'elective' and the 'affective' will; he says that the former, which eventually leads to God, is almost always opposed by the latter, by desire (S 146-59). In other words, the correct metaphysical and moral choice must be guided by the sense of duty exclusively. Furthermore, in the sonnet "The Soldier," which will be analyzed below, Hopkins explains that not only he, Gerard Manley Hopkins, but Christ himself admires those who fulfill their duties, whether religious or mundane, at all costs:

Mark Christ our King . . .
. . . seeing somewhere some man do all that man can do,
For love he leans forth, needs his neck must fall on, kiss,
And cry 'o Christ-done deed! So God-made-flesh does too:
Were I come o'er again' cries Christ 'it should be this'.

In other words, in Hopkins's poetic world the unconditional fulfillment of duties is not only an admirable way of life in itself but also a proleptic image of the world to come.

Divine love for those who fulfill their duties and the representation of the world to come as the world of duty, though strange at first sight, become more comprehensible when one realizes that Hopkins tends to equate duty and spiritual love. In one of his sermons he says:

Duty is love . . . There is nothing higher than duty in creatures or in God: God the Son's love for God the Father is duty. Only when I speak thus highly of duty I mean duty done because it *is* duty and not mainly from either hope or fear. (S 53)

In other words, according to Hopkins, the sense of duty is spiritual love, and as such it must be the highest goal of man's free will.

Finally, it should be mentioned that Hopkins attempted to apply this conception to himself as well; in the retreat notes of 1888 he wrote:

The Incarnation was for my salvation and that of the world: the work goes on in a great system and machinery which even drags me on with collar round my neck though I could and do neglect my duty in it . . . I am not willing enough for the piece of work assigned me, the only work I am given to do, though I could do others if they were given. This is my work at Stephen's Green. And though I thought that the Royal University was to me what Augustus's enrolment was to St Joseph: *exiit sermo a Caesare Augusto etc.*; so resolution of the senate of the R.U. came to me, inconvenient and painful, but the journey to Bethlehem was inconvenient and painful (S 263)

A brief commentary on these lines seems to be necessary: Stephen's Green refers to University College, Dublin, a part of the Royal University (also "R.U." in the text), where Hopkins taught. The passage evokes an episode from the beginning of the second chapter of Luke, which says that because of the Roman census Joseph had to go to Bethlehem, where Jesus was eventually born. This tiresome and useless journey was necessary in order to fulfill the prophesy of the Hebrew Bible with regard to the birth of the Messiah. Evoking it, Hopkins stresses that a seemingly meaningless and undoubtedly painful requirement may serve a divine plan. And if the Roman census did, Hopkins's examination work even more so. If the former was a result of the decision made by a Roman emperor, the latter was assigned by Hopkins's own superiors in the order, whose decisions were certainly closer to the will of God than those of Augustus.

To put it another way, in the passage above Hopkins implies that he must not only fulfill his duties, but do so willingly. In reality, being a Jesuit he had little choice what to do; but he could choose how to do it and how to respond to his work. This response was especially significant in the light of Hopkins's conception of personality, duty and moral responsibility, articulated in his commentary on the Ignatian

Spiritual Exercises (S 146-59). According to Hopkins, what matters is not only the deed, but the choice, the action of the free will (of the *arbitrium* in his scholastic terms), which is the direct continuation of the self in the realm of inner spiritual freedom. Moreover, the gradual perfection of the self, which is manifested in the choices made, turns it into Christ (S 154-58). In full accordance with this philosophy, Hopkins felt that, in order to make his self Christlike, he must willingly embrace his duties, which, though seemingly meaningless, must somehow accord with the divine plan. But, as has been already shown, although he forced himself to fulfill all his exhausting and wearisome academic duties as diligently as he could, he was never able to do this eagerly. In the passage quoted above Hopkins describes his inability to accept his work, his inner resistance to it, and, moreover, depicts himself as a slave or a prisoner of providence; he says that divine will "drags [him] on with collar round [his] neck."

Paradoxically enough, it is not in the world of human existence but rather in the poetic universe that Hopkins becomes capable of blindly accepting his duties. The poetic universe gives him the possibility of both the mediated representation of his existential situation and of the symbolic acceptance of his drudgery.⁸ Among Hopkins's Dublin poems there are several about common men from the lowest orders of society: a soldier in "The Soldier" ("Yes. Why do we all"), a peasant in "Harry Ploughman," a navvy in "Tom's Garland," a lonely and ill doorkeeper in "St. Alphonsus Rodriguez."⁹ Like Hopkins, all of them have to perform hard and exhausting work. Moreover, St. Alphonsus was even canonized for his harsh life (White 440) and Hopkins's description of the peasant in "Harry Ploughman" focuses on the visible signs of his hard work and existence (e.g. "the rack of ribs; the scooped flank," "each limb's barrowy-brawned thew / That onewhere curded, onewhere sucked or sank," "back, elbow, and liquid waist / In him, all quail to the wallowing o' the plough"). It should be also noticed that all the characters of Hopkins's "poems of men," as these poems are sometimes called, are almost completely deprived of the pecuniary fruits of their work—like Hopkins himself. Moreover, like

him, they are all alone: nothing is said about their friends or families. Finally, to push the point a little further, like Hopkins, soldiers and navvys are devoid of a home which could console them in the moments of tiredness. In brief, the existential situation of Hopkins's characters is strikingly similar to his own.

But, unlike Hopkins, they have enough resilience to do their duties without complaints. Unlike Hopkins, Harry Ploughman is "hard as hurdle arms," "churlsgrace," "cragiron"; Tom Navvy is "seldom sick / Seldomer heartsore"; Alphonsus Rodriguez possessed "the heroic breast not outward-steeled" (version 'c') that enabled him, though seriously ill, to withstand pain and to lead perennial internal war with demonic visions (MacKenzie 499). Consequently, all of them are able to perform their hard duties in this world: Tom tirelessly works with his "pick", Harry "quail[s] to the wallowing o' the plough," the nameless soldier does "all that man can do." For forty years Rodriguez was faithful to his humble duties of a doorkeeper, despite his incessant internal torture. In other words, Hopkins repeats the same portrait of the common man: poor and deprived, but resilient and faithful to his duties. This portrait echoes, though in a changed and detached form, Hopkins's existential situation, and, at the same time, it becomes the symbolic gesture of the blind acceptance of his work and his duties: the acceptance he required from himself and of which he was incapable. Thus, if Hopkins always felt that he lacked necessary resilience and ability to resist his tiredness, it is only in the poetic space that he was able to regain them. The poetic space became both the mirror and the symbolic alternative to Hopkins's existential situation.

In most cases, however, this symbolic function of Hopkins's portraits remains invisible. His portraits of common men have other poetic goals in addition to the inscription of his existential presence within their poetic space. Moreover, although Hopkins praises the resilience of Tom, Harry and the unnamed soldier, their faithfulness to duty and hard work, he also complicates their presentation from the moral point of view. To begin with, Hopkins's attitude towards Tom the navvy is deeply ambivalent; Tom is represented as rude and

indifferent to the suffering of others; furthermore, his work (and his garlands that represent it) are turned into the symbol of the destruction of the environment, of the "mammoth[ing]" of nature (LI 373; for the detailed analysis of the poem see Zonneveld 115-39). A concordant, though less pronounced, ambivalence characterizes Hopkins's attitude towards Harry Ploughman, as the adjective "churlsgace" indicates. Similarly, Hopkins says that the soldier is "nay but foul clay." It is only with the Jesuit saint Alphonsus Rodriguez that Hopkins expresses implicit self-identification. This self-identification was noted by Norman White, who also suggested that the fact that Rodriguez was accepted to the Society of Jesus at the age of 44 (at the same age when Hopkins wrote the poem about him) may have fostered this self-identification (440-41). This is, without a doubt, one of Hopkins's complementary strategies of the inscription of his existential presence within the space of his portraits. Another, much more sophisticated strategy is used in the description of the most deprived of Hopkins's characters, a soldier.

The members of the Catholic Church on earth (who are still fighting for salvation) are called the 'Church Militant,' as opposed to the 'Church Triumphant' of the world to come.¹⁰ This traditional name gets special resonance in the literature of the Society of Jesus: a religious order whose founder was a soldier, and whose members often called themselves "the soldiers of Christ." In the meditation on 'The Kingdom of Christ,' a key meditation in *The Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius writes:

The First Point. I will place before my mind a human king

The Second Point. I will observe how this king speaks to all his people, saying, "My will is to conquer the whole land of the infidels. Hence, whoever wishes to come with me has to be content with the same food I eat, and the drink, and the clothing which I wear, and so forth. So too he or she must labor with me during the day, and keep watch in the night, and so on, so that later they may have a part with me in the victory, just as they have shared in the toil."

The Third Point. I will consider what good subjects ought to respond to a king so generous and kind; and how, consequently, if someone did not an-

swer his call, he would be scorned and upbraided by everyone and accounted as an unworthy knight. (146)

This is the first, 'preparatory,' part of the meditation; the 'Second Part' of the same exercise (147) requires to apply this parable of the king and his knights to the moral warfare of Christ. This application should elucidate to every believer his spiritual duties, which thus become spelled out by means of military metaphors.

Once again, this is the pivotal meditation of *The Spiritual Exercises*, well known to every Jesuit; and this meditation has become one of the most important sources of military tropes in Jesuit literature. The examples of its influence are numerous; Jesuit writings are replete with military metaphors.¹¹ In this respect, Hopkins is not an exception. In his retreat notes, for example, he writes that he is "enlisted 20 years in the Society of Jesus" (S 261). He frequently presents Christ as a commander and himself as Christ's soldier.¹² In one of his sermons Hopkins says:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, my brethren, is our hero, a hero all the world wants . . . Christ, he is a hero . . . He is a warrior and a conqueror; of whom it is written he went forth conquering and to conquer. He is a king . . . (S 34)

Many other passages are concordant with this sermon. "Christ is my king," he says, "Christ is my hero, I am at Christ's orders, I am his to command" (S 17). About the faithfulness to religious duty, he writes: "Cowardly it would be and a wretched inconsistency in a knight . . . to decline a glorious campaign from dislike of the hardships to be borne in securing its success, dislike of being obliged to *share his general's lot*" (S 163). "As we are soldiers," he adds, "earnestness means . . . ready obedience to our Captain Christ" (S 234). He writes that "Confirmation is spiritual knighthood" (S 163) and that Christ "led the way, went before his troops, was himself the vanguard, was the forlorn hope, bore the brunt of battle alone, died upon the field, on Calvary hill, and bought the victory by his blood" (S 70). In "The Windhover" he addresses Christ as his "chevalier," in "Carriion Comfort" as "the hero," in *The Wreck of the Deutschland* as the "hero of Calvary." To put

it briefly, Hopkins's Christ is a metaphorical general, who despite his high rank knows all the hardships that accompany the life of a soldier, and Hopkins is a metaphorical private in Christ's metaphorical army.

However, this is not the only sense in which Hopkins considered himself a soldier. It is clear enough from his letters that he was a zealous adherent of the empire. Having come to the conclusion that "Gladstone negotiates his surrenders of the empire" (LI 210), he wrote to Baillie that "Gladstone is a traitor" (LIII 263) and that "he ought to be beheaded on Tower Hill" (LIII 257). He painfully suffered from British military failures; he emphasized that "Transval is an unredeemed disgrace" (LI 131) and that the Englishmen "have been shamefully beaten by Boers" (LI 128). On the alleged lack of courage on the part of the British soldiers he commented with unusual indignation:

Do you know and realize what happened at Majuba Hill? 500 British troops after 8 hours' firing, on the Dutch reaching the top, ran without offering hand to hand resistance before, it is said, 80 men. (LIII 293)

Yet the real issue of the time was not the Boer war, but rather, as usual, the Irish problem. The British Empire might be defeated in a local conflict, and still remain the same country; but without Ireland it would never be the same again. At the same time, by the end of the eighties the Irish problem became so serious that most people felt that something should be immediately done: as Hopkins himself wrote in a letter to Baillie from 1887, to this situation "must be put an end either by the sword or by Home Rule" (LIII 281).

Hopkins's attitude towards Home Rule was rather ambivalent. He wrote to Baillie that Home Rule of itself is a blow for England and will do no good to Ireland" (LIII 281), "but still they must have Home Rule" (LIII 283). Clearly, this paradoxical conclusion required explanations. The Irish, he continued, "allow neither the justice of the law nor the honesty of its administrators. Be assured of this, that the mass of Irish people own no allegiance to any existing law or government" (LIII 283). In order to substantiate this conclusion he told his friend a

long story of a local feud which, according to him, illustrated the Irish disregard for any civil obligations (LIII 282-83). It is clear enough that such a people must be ruled by brutal force rather than by law; and if one is unwilling to do this, he must not rule this people at all. Therefore, he concluded, Home Rule "will have some good effects and it will deliver England from the strain of an odious and impossible task, the task of attempting to govern a people who own no principle of civil allegiance" (LIII 282).

At the same time, according to Hopkins, in the long run this autonomy was unable to solve the Irish problem and had to become extremely dangerous. In the letter quoted above Hopkins stressed that the goal of the Irish is not autonomy but rather an independent state ("Nationhood" LIII 281), and that the institution of an autonomous government only "has inflamed" this passion. However, he wrote, this passion "is of its nature insatiable" (LIII 281). It is not difficult to understand why he considered this desire insatiable: the independence of Ireland would become a precedent which could immediately entail the collapse of the empire. And this, in turn, means, though Hopkins did not say it explicitly, that, despite the institution of Home Rule, the war with Ireland is inevitable. Moreover, on the basis of his Dublin experience Hopkins came to the conclusion that Ireland is already "in a peaceful rebellion" (LIII 281). And as an Englishman in a rebellious province of the empire and as the arduous adherent of this empire, he could not but consider himself a kind of soldier.

At the same time, it is evident from Hopkins's letters and retreat notes cited above (LI 250; LIII 185; S 262) that he was acutely aware of the fact that his work at the university did not serve the British Empire, and perhaps, even the other way round. In the light of this situation it was not so simple for Hopkins to decide how he could help his country without violating the duties appointed by his order. But, eventually, he found a solution. As mentioned above, he maintained that his contemporaries were gradually losing their courage, which once had made possible British military successes (e.g. LI 128, LIII 293). Therefore, on the verge of a war with Ireland, it was vital for the

British soldiers to regain their lost courage. And for a moment Hopkins began to believe that as a poet he could contribute to this. He wrote to Bridges: "I had a great light. I had in my mind the first verse of a patriotic song for soldiers, the words I mean: heaven knows it is needed" (LI 283). His passion was so intense that for a moment Hopkins seemed to forget not only about his *ultima solitudo*, but also about his religious and geographical alienation from England—the alienation of which he often complained. Moreover, he even forgot what he himself said in the sonnet "To seem the stranger," forgot that his England will not hear his words.

For a moment this project gave him the feeling that he could seriously help his troubled country. But this mixture of enthusiasm and self-delusion could be sustained only for a while; the poem ("What shall I do for the land that bred me") was written and buried with the rest of Hopkins's poems. And, consequently, he had to find another way to relate his poetry and his politics. In order to do this, Hopkins turns to the crucial question of the justification of the existence of the British Empire and, correspondingly, of his political convictions. The first answer to this question that, according to Hopkins, may be propounded is Christianity; "but," he writes, "our Empire is less and less Christian as it grows" (LIII 367). Another answer may be freedom; but "to that cry there is the telling answer: No freedom you can give us is equal to the freedom of letting us alone . . . let us first be free of you" (LIII 367). The last possibility Hopkins discusses is civilization; but taking into account his utterly negative attitude towards contemporary urban civilization,¹³ one can easily guess that this possibility could hardly satisfy him.¹⁴ In the last analysis, Hopkins was able to find only one justification:

What marked and striking excellence has England to shew to make her civilization attractive? Her literature is one of her excellences and attractions and I believe that criticism will tend to make this more and more felt; but there must be more of that literature, a continued supply and in quality excellent. This is why I hold that fine works of art . . . are really a great power in the world, an element of strength even to empire (LIII 368).

Consequently, a poet is also a soldier of the empire; his existence is its *raison d'être*; on his activity hinges its strength. And that is why he can write to Patmore: "Your poems are a good deed done . . . for the British Empire"; hence also his famous dictum: "A great work by an Englishman is like a great battle won by England" (LI 231). It must not be forgotten that, in the last analysis, Hopkins and Kipling were almost contemporaries.

The above description of Hopkins's existential situation, his conception of duty and the 'poems of men,' as well as the foregoing analysis of his military rhetoric and political views, can help to unravel the semantic tissue of one of his most strange and obscure sonnets, "Yes. Why do we all," which is known as "The Soldier." The design of this sonnet is both simple and enigmatic. The octave puts one central question: "Why do we all seeing a soldier bless him? bless / Our redcoats, our tars?" At first sight, there is no reason to distinguish a soldier from other human beings: he is as weak, vulnerable and mortal as they are: "but frail clay, nay but foul clay." Therefore, Hopkins's answer to his own question is that men tend to believe that a soldier must be similar to his harsh profession, and thus that they create his 'ideal' heroic image in their imagination. The second quatrain ends with the renunciation of this self-deception.

But then a volta, both structural and thematic, follows. At the beginning of the sestet the speaker points to the example of Christ and says that he is the best soldier: "He knows war, served this soldiering through; / He of all can reeve a rope best." Then, at the end of the poem, as at the end of *Apocalypse* (21:5-8; 22:11-16), Christ himself begins to speak; he says that he loves and blesses everyone who fulfills his duties, does "all that man can do"; and this evidently includes soldiers. Evoking Apocalyptic motifs, now almost explicitly, Christ adds that this unconditional fulfillment of duties is the proleptic image of the world to come: "'Were I come o'er again' cries Christ 'it should be this.'" Thus, though Hopkins does not say this explicitly, the uncanny feeling that Christ blesses soldiers and mariners, is the real reason why "we" follow his example and bless them too.

Several questions may be asked about the poem. The most important of them is why Christ is represented as the best soldier, why he can "reeve a rope best," and, above all, why he, the Lord of Peace, should bless soldiers, whose work is accompanied by bloodshed and destruction. In the light of the analysis above, the answer to these questions is rather evident, though not without difficulties. It has been shown that Hopkins, drawing upon the discursive practice of the Jesuits, often represents Christ as a metaphoric general of his moral warfare, who, despite his high rank, fights shoulder to shoulder with his soldiers. These metaphoric references to Christ as a soldier-general are able to account for several features of the poem. First, they explain why the example of Christ is mentioned in the discussion of soldiers at all. Secondly, this recurrent metaphoric representation can explain why, according to Hopkins, Christ knows war better than anyone else: as a captain or a general he must know it better than ordinary soldiers. Finally, one can surmise that soldiers must be in some way similar to the eternal image of the soldier-general, to Christ, and this is another reason why people bless them. Thus, the understanding of Jesuit rhetorical conventions and Hopkins's use of them explains many of the peculiarities of the sonnet. At the same time, it is worth noting that the above explanations foreground not only the structure of meaning behind the surface of the sonnet, but also the fact that the whole semantic construction of the poem turns on one specific rhetorical effect: on the effacement of the boundary between the literal and the metaphorical.¹⁵ The argument of the sonnet is based on a connection between soldiers, in the literal sense of the word, and the metaphorical soldier-general Christ.

The structural peculiarities of the poem make this even clearer. "The Soldier" is one of those poems which reproduce the recurrent structure of Hopkins's poetry, the structure developed in his 'nature sonnets' (the celebrated sonnets of 1877-78): from a description of the world of human experience the sonnet proceeds to the appearance of Christ. Moreover, it seems that, at least in one sense, "The Soldier" is a more pronounced example of this structure than the 'nature sonnets':

if these sonnets end with the invocation of God or sometimes with a simple benediction, at the end of the sonnet under consideration Christ appears himself and speaks in his own voice. However, there is a marked, though invisible, difference. The recurrent structure of Hopkins's nature poetry is sustained by the elaborate building of his philosophy:¹⁶ the appearance of God from nature is made possible by Hopkins's sophisticated philosophy of the univocity of being (Miller 273-324) and by his conception of the unified aesthetic-religious vision. Unlike these sonnets, "The Soldier" does not describe a series of the inscapes of nature¹⁷ but rather a social role a man might have. And, therefore, Hopkins's philosophical views cannot help to account for Christ's emergence from Hopkins's initial contemplation.

In other words, in this sonnet the seemingly familiar connection between the octave and the sestet is essentially different. Here the appearance of Christ, who is both a soldier and (primarily) a general in his metaphorical moral warfare, is introduced by the description of a literal soldier. Thus, unlike the appearance of Christ from nature, which in Hopkins's poetry is mediated by the hidden semantic structure of nature itself, the appearance of Christ after Hopkins's remarks about the causes of the admiration for soldiers is made possible by the structure of a specific discursive practice: it happens not in nature but rather in language.¹⁸ A soldier whose alleged virtues are renounced in the literal space of the octave is redeemed in the metaphorical space of the sestet: in the space which is created by a conventional discursive practice of the Jesuits. Thus, it is only in the world of rhetoric that this poem as a unified semantic structure can exist. This conclusion, however, has unexpected hermeneutic implications.

Paradoxically enough, the understanding of the rhetorical character of the relation between the two parts of the sonnet can help the critic to find the missing existential element that mediates between the octave and the sestet and regulates their metaphoric exchange. This element is Hopkins's own presence: his non-literary life with its biographical relations to the major discursive practices which mould the rhetoric of the sonnet. To begin with, it is the conventional discursive

practice of Jesuit Catholicism that underpins the poem. Within this discourse, Hopkins is a soldier of Christ. As such a soldier, he is faithful to his soldiery: he tries to fulfill his duties at the University College, which he considers completely useless, if not subversive, and which slowly kill him, at all costs. And so it is he, private Hopkins, whom his general Christ blesses among other soldiers at the end of the sestet. In other words, the conventional discursive practice of the Jesuits turns the sestet with its seemingly impersonal contemplation upon duty and its religious significance into a fragment of Hopkins's meditations upon his own life in Dublin, its meaning and its justification.

But there is another important sense in which Hopkins considered himself a soldier: he was a soldier of the empire in a rebellious province. It has been already shown that the rhetorical justification of this conception was at hand: it is precisely because Hopkins was a poet that he could consider himself a soldier. Furthermore, the fragility of the body that he stresses in his description of the soldier ("the greater part / But frail clay, nay but foul clay") echoes his self-presentation in the 'terrible sonnets': his feebleness, mortality, his vulnerable and 'fragmented' body. In addition, describing the wide-spread mythologization of the soldiers, Hopkins says that people "dear . . . the artist after his art." This reference to art is inserted in the most unexpected place and suddenly foregrounds the poet's own presence. The noun 'artist,' which is metaphoric when it is applied to the soldier, becomes literal when it is applied to Hopkins himself. What must be interpreted as a far-fetched trope when the poem is read without reference to extratextual reality, becomes a trace of Hopkins's acute and incessant self-scrutiny, so important for his late writings,¹⁹ when the sonnet is placed in its existential context.

Moreover, it is also noteworthy that the use of the metaphors of 'artist' and 'art' in relation to soldiers creates a conspicuous semantic discrepancy, which entails further questions on the part of the critic. There are two senses that the word 'art' may have: art as profession and art as its aesthetic products. When this word is applied to the

soldier, it must be understood in its first sense, for the soldier produces nothing; the art Hopkins mentions must be glossed as the art of war. However, in this case the comparison becomes bizarre: if the difficulties of war indeed allow us to suspect that soldiers are stronger and more resilient than other people, there is nothing in art as profession (say, in the art of poetry) that can make an artist dear to other men: art may be merciless, obnoxious and even vicious. It is only a given artistic object, say *Alice in Wonderland*, that may endear its author to us.

In other words, when the phrase "dears the artist after his art" is used in its literary sense, it implies the interpretation of the noun 'art' as 'the object of art,' whereas when it is applied metaphorically to a soldier, it must be based on the understanding of 'art' as profession. Thus, this metaphorical application is made possible by a diaphoric shift. Consequently, it seems that there is a marked semantic gap in the middle of the poem. However, the hypothesis that Hopkins's contemplation upon the meaning of the admiration for soldiers masks the gesture of self-portrayal, as well as the moment of introspection and self-scrutiny, can help the critic to account for this semantic discrepancy without resorting to the concept of diaphora. In his poems Hopkins repeatedly stresses strength and resilience,²⁰ and so his imaginary, non-existent, readers may suspect, like some readers of Nietzsche, that he is strong and resilient, creating "the artist after his art" (now in the most literal sense of the word) in their imagination. Taking into account this 'underthought,' to use Hopkins's own poetic term,²¹ a deeper and 'bi-lateral' meaning may be read in his use of the metaphors of 'art' and 'artist' in the denunciation of the mythologized image of the soldier. This implicit comparison between soldiers and artists suggests that the imaginary figure of an artist, which is created 'after his art,' is not only a product of the self-delusion on the part of the reader; this imaginary figure can be 'redeemed' in the same fashion as Hopkins's admiration for soldiers, which, at first sight, seems to be nothing but self-deception. Indeed, he, Gerard Manley Hopkins, like any other English soldier, is only "frail clay," but his personal

vulnerability is overcome in the harsh world of his poetry, and transfigured by its strength and resilience—precisely as the vulnerability of any given soldier is transfigured by their common faithfulness to duty, which has made possible British military glory.

Thus, there is one crucial, though invisible, point in which the octave and the sestet cross: Hopkins's presence. The octave and the sestet circulate within different discursive practices: within the discourses of British Politics and Jesuit Catholicism. And it is only the presence of Hopkins, who is simultaneously an English poet in rebellious Ireland and a Jesuit priest who fulfills his meaningless duties at all cost, that enables the crossing of these referential contexts; it is only Hopkins, with his rare and deeply problematic existential situation, who is a soldier in both discursive domains. The transition from the octave to the sestet is the transition from one referential field to another, which becomes possible due to the pivotal point of Hopkins's constant self-reference, introspection and self-portrayal. It is Hopkins's singular existential situation and, consequently, his unique position in relation to different discursive practices that structures the configuration of the ideological elements of his sonnet. Or, to put it another way, it is the shadow of his invisible presence that Hopkins retains by the act of writing.

Haifa University

NOTES

¹For a more detailed discussion of Hopkins's life in Dublin and for a picture of Hopkins's Dublin in general see: Pick, Bergonzi, Kitchen, Feeney, Storey and especially two recent biographies of Hopkins written by Martin and White.

²See, for example, S 262, LI 168, LI 183, LI 192, LI 214-15, LI 216, LI 222, LI 282, LII 139, LIII 256. For the analysis of the representation of insanity in Hopkins's late poetry see Sobolev 2001.

³In October 1884 (the year of his arrival to Dublin) Hopkins already complained to Dixon: "I have 557 papers on hand: let those who have been thro' the like say what this means" (LII 123). Two years later he described his "examination-work, six or seven weeks of it without any break, Sundays and weekdays"; in the same

year he called his exams the "attack of the plague" (LI 236). Moreover, this overwhelming and exhausting work penetrated into his private notes. "In the battered exercise-book called Hopkins's 'Dublin Notebook' there are pages and pages containing thousands of examination ticks, marks, and occasional comments" (White 372).

⁴Hopkins wrote to Dixon that "in school time [he] can scarcely undertake anything" (LII 149). He pointed out to Bridges that he could not leave Ireland because of exams: "I should be about beginning my examination work and it would be altogether impossible for me to be out of Ireland" (LI 193).

⁵In his well-known letter to Bridges Hopkins writes: "All impulse fails me. If I could but produce work I should not mind its being buried, silenced, and going no further; but it kills me to be time's eunuch and never to beget" (LI 222). Hopkins's late writings are replete with similar complaints.

⁶Thus, for example, describing one of his rare vacations (his only occasions to return to calmness if not happiness), Hopkins wrote that in order "to save journey money we went to Wales" (LI 228). He added that they "lived cheap, too cheap, so that nearly £8 is left out of £20, and that is mismanagement" (LI 228). It is not clear from this passage whose initiative it was 'to save journey money'; but, in any case, the felt necessity 'to live cheap, too cheap' indicates that the sum which was at their disposal was very limited.

⁷One should remember that an unwavering devotion to the burdens of duty is practically a byword of "Victorianism." After all, few ideas so thoroughly suffused Victorian life as Carlyle's exhortation, "Work, for the night cometh wherein no man may work."

⁸The meaning of the term 'existential,' which is used several times in this essay, must be specified. Speaking about Hopkins's 'existential situation' or contrasting the existential to the ideological, I try to underscore the unique alloy of materiality and meaning, which makes up one's life—by contrast to its pure 'physical' facticity, on the one hand, and the trans-subjective universality of the philosophical and ideological, on the other. Therefore, in the analysis of Hopkins's existential situation, which has been carried out above, I often emphasized those of its aspects which are 'burdened' with subjectively important meaning more than others—tragic, painful, problematic. At the same time, it should be stressed that no 'ready-made' philosophical or literary context is implied by the term 'existential' as it is used in this paper.

⁹Alphonsus Rodriguez "was a temporal coadjutor, a lay brother . . . His entire Jesuit career was spent in the role of college porter, and he died after years of physical and spiritual suffering" (White 440-41). "When Alphonsus Rodriguez (c. 1533-1617), a devout Spaniard whose wife and children had died, first applied in his late thirties for admission as a Jesuit, he was rejected as . . . too frail after many austerities to become a lay brother"; "his fragmentary spiritual writings . . . recount his heroic struggles against demonic visions" (MacKenzie 499).

¹⁰The problem of the military aspect of the Jesuit discourse and the problem of Hopkins's political views, which will be discussed a little later, are only a part of a more general problem: one of the relationship between Hopkins's writings and his ideological milieu. Hopkins was, without a doubt, one of the poets for whom ideology was of paramount significance; and hence the problem of ideologies and their relationship is crucial for the understanding of his poetry. Moreover, from the end of the sixties, when the search for the philosophical unity of Hopkins's poetry was abandoned, Hopkins critics tend to represent it as a superposition of diverse and heterogeneous ideologies (in the wide sense of the term) to which Hopkins was exposed: the discourses of Classical scholarship, Scholastic philosophy, Jesuit metaphysics, Romantic poetry, Oxford aestheticism, Victorian particularism and, finally, emerging modernism. For the analysis of the influence of ideology in the narrow, socio-political, sense of term on Hopkins's ideas and writings see Bowra, Lucas, Marucci, Mizener, Sutherland, Thesing 1977 and 1993 and Zonneveld.

¹¹It should be mentioned that the question of the relative importance of the 'military' aspect of the Society of Jesus is controversial; and the answers to this question seem to be different for different periods. Moreover, it seems that the conception of the Jesuits as a military or paramilitary order was often played up by their opponents as a part of anti-Jesuit polemics. At the same time, there can be little doubt that the Jesuits do resort to military ideas and metaphors much more than any other Christian order.

¹²In the choice of quotations from Hopkins's devotional writings which represent Christ as a military commander I follow, in most cases, the suggestions made by Norman H. MacKenzie (459).

¹³See, for example, LI 127, LI 135, LII 97, LIII 393, the sonnet "Duns Scotus's Oxford" and the elegiac "Binsey Poplars."

¹⁴"Of course," writes Hopkins, "those who live in our civilization and belong to it praise it: it is not hard, as Socrates said, among the Athenians to praise the Athenians; but how will it be represented by critics bent on making the worst of it or even not bent on making the best of it? It is good to be in Ireland to hear how enemies, and those rhetoricians, can treat the things that are unquestioned at home" (LIII 367).

¹⁵One can argue that from the point of view of Hopkins's philosophy there is no essential difference between the literal and the metaphorical, substance and rhetoric, nature and language, for Hopkins believed in the origin of both language and the world in the Word. I cannot agree with this. Two years ago I analyzed this problem in the essay "Hopkins, Language, Meaning" (Sobolev 2000). The conclusion that I reached there says that despite the use of onomatopoeic effects Hopkins did not believe in the immanence of meaning in language, and that his poetic space implies no intrinsic connection between the Word and the words of human languages. To put it another way, in Hopkins's poetic world there is an essential difference between nature, whose diverse (generic and singular, eternal and

transient) forms are closely associated with God, and language, which is bereft of such relation. And, correspondingly, there is an essential difference between the literal and metaphorical application of language. Thus, for example, Christ as the Word is not a metaphor for Hopkins, but Christ as the word "soldier" or the word "general" is still a metaphor—from the biographical point of view Christ was neither a soldier nor a general.

¹⁶For different analyses of Hopkins's philosophy of God and nature, which, in my view, is most similar to panentheism, see, for example, Gardner, Heuser, Hartman, Loomis and Miller.

¹⁷It is well known that the concept of 'inscape' is central to both Hopkins's poetics and his philosophical views. Moreover, one can often hear that in the context of Hopkins's philosophy this notion ensures the identity between God and nature, God and language, nature and language. In my view, however, this is not the case. I analyzed the meaning and the use of this notion in a long essay "Inscape Revisited," which will be published in *English: the Journal of the English Association* (UK) in 2002. The analysis carried out in this paper has shown that the meaning of this notion is much wider than most critics admit; in general terms it can be paraphrased as "embodied organized form," and its more exact meaning is specified only by its actual application. Therefore, 'inscape' as such does not imply a necessary metaphysical relation, but only its possibility. It is only in the context of Hopkins's 'panentheism' (see note 16) that 'inscape' becomes capable of mediating between God and nature, retaining both their identity and their difference. In another context, like that of Hopkins's philosophy of language (see note 15), the meaning of 'inscape' becomes essentially different. It is partly because of this potential semantic multiplicity that analyzing Hopkins's portraits, I used the term 'inscape' only in relation to Hopkins's 'nature sonnets,' where this term is indispensable. In addition, it should be said that this notion has become an overdetermined one—in my essay I quoted more than twenty existing definitions of 'inscape', most of which are mutually contradictory.

¹⁸It may be argued that in Hopkins's poetic world there is no essential difference between nature and language. I cannot agree with this. See note 15 for a brief discussion of this problem. For a more detailed analysis of Hopkins's philosophy of language see Sobolev 2000.

¹⁹Constant self-scrutiny and long meditations upon the problem of the self belong to the most important components of Hopkins's late poetry. See, for example, Hopkins's celebrated 'terrible sonnets' or his last sonnets, the most famous of which is "Thou art" ("Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend / With Thee . . ."). For a critical assessment of these poems with reference to the problem of the self see Wolfe.

²⁰See, for example, Hopkins's sonnet "The Windhover," which he considered his best poem. After the description of the flight of a kestrel, Hopkins turns to his own response to it and says that his "heart in hiding stirred for" "the achieve of, the mastery of" the bird, which managed to retain the unique trajectory of its

flight—despite “the big wind.” For the analysis of the poem from the perspective of strength and resilience, see Hartman.

²¹‘Underthought’ is one of the most famous and most obscure terms in Hopkins’s poetics. It is used in a letter to A. W. M. Baillie from 1883 (LIII 252-53) and designates a motif or an idea which is not manifested explicitly, but revealed in the choice of diction and imagery.

WORKS CITED

- Bergonzi, Bernard. *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. London: Macmillan, 1977.
- Bowra, C. M. *Poetry and Politics*. Cambridge: CUP, 1966.
- Feeney, Joseph J. “Hopkins in Community: How His Jesuit Contemporaries Viewed Him.” *Saving Beauty: Further Studies in Hopkins*. Eds. Michael E. Allsopp and David Anthony Downes. New York: Garland, 1994. 253-94.
- Gardner, William H. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition*. 2 vols. London: Secker & Warburg, 1948-49.
- Hartman, Geoffrey H. *The Unmediated Vision: An Interpretation of Wordsworth, Hopkins, Rilke, and Valery*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1954. 48-67. Reprinted in *Hopkins: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Geoffrey Hartman. Englewood Cliffs, N J: Prentice-Hall, 1966. 117-30.
- Heuser, Alan. *The Shaping Vision of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. London: OUP, 1958.
- Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon*. Ed. Claude Colleer Abbott. London: OUP, 1955 (‘LII’).
- Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Including His Correspondence with Coventry Patmore*. 2nd ed. Revised and enlarged. Ed. Claude Colleer Abbott. London: OUP, 1956 (‘LIII’).
- Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Eds. Humphry House and Graham Storey. Oxford: OUP, 1959 (‘J’).
- Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*. Ed. Claude Colleer Abbott. London: OUP, 1955 (‘LI’).
- Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Ed. Norman H. MacKenzie. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1990 (‘P’).
- Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Ed. Christopher Devlin. London: OUP, 1959 (‘S’).
- Ignatius of Loyola. *The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*. New York: Paulist P, 1991.
- Kitchen, Paddy. *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978.
- Loomis, Jeffrey B. *Dayspring in Darkness: Sacrament in Hopkins*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1988.

- Lucas, John. *English and Englishness: Ideas of Nationhood in English Poetry 1688-1900*. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1990.
- MacKenzie, Norman H. Commentary. *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1990. 213-513.
- Martin, Robert Bernard. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Very Private Life*. London: Flamingo, 1992.
- Marucci, Franco. "Hopkins's Political Ideas." *The Hopkins Quarterly* 14 (1987-88): 127-43.
- Miller, Joseph Hillis. *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth Century Writers*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1963. 270-360.
- Mizener, Arthur. "Victorian Hopkins." *The Kenyon Critics. Gerard Manley Hopkins*. London: Dobson, 1949. 95-112.
- O'Flynn, Grainne. "Hopkins's Teaching." *The Hopkins Quarterly* 14 (1987-88): 163-78.
- Pick, John. *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet*. London: OUP, 1942.
- Sobolev, Dennis. "Hopkins, Language, Meaning." *The Victorian Newsletter* 98 (Fall 2000): 11-14.
- . "Hopkins's Mind: Between Allegory and Madness." *English Studies* 82 (Winter 2001): 34-43.
- Storey, Graham. *Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Windsor, Berkshire: Profile, 1984.
- Sutherland, John. "'Tom's Garland': Hopkins's Political Poem." *Victorian Poetry* 10 (1972): 111-21.
- Thesing, William B. "Gerard Manley Hopkins and Politics: Patterns of Engagement and Disengagement." *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Critical Discourse*. Ed. Eugene Hollahan. New York: AMS, 1993. 263-76.
- Thesing, William B. *The London Muse: Victorian Responses to the City*. Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1982.
- Thesing, William B. "'Tom's Garland' and Hopkins's Inscapes of Humanity." *Victorian Poetry* 15 (1977): 37-48.
- White, Norman. *Hopkins: A Literary Biography*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1992.
- Wolfe, Patricia A. "The Paradox of Self: A Study of Hopkins's Spiritual Conflict in the 'Terrible' Sonnets." *Victorian Poetry* 6 (1968): 85-103.
- Zonneveld, Sjaak. *The Random Grim Forge: A Study of Social Ideas in the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Maastricht: Van Gorcum, Assen, 1992.

College Literature

has gone quarterly!

College Literature has changed from a triannual to a quarterly format, maintaining the same high standard in publishing.

We are currently accepting manuscripts dealing with textual analysis, literary theory, and pedagogy for today's changing college classrooms.

For subscription or submission information, please visit our website at **www.collegeliterature.org**.

Kostas Myrslades, Editor

**College Literature
210 East Rosedale Avenue
West Chester University
West Chester, PA 19393
collit@wcupa.edu**

Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate

Contents of Volume 10 (2000/2001)

Verse Satire: Its Form, Genre, and Mode JOHN T. SHAWCROSS	18
*	
'Conversation' among Pragmatist Philosophers JOHN WHALEN-BRIDGE	224
*	
Poetics and Conversation NEAL R. NORRICK	243
*	
The Vertue of Spectacle in Shakespeare's <i>Titus Andronicus</i> DANIEL KANE	1
*	
"Momentary visions of permanence" in the Stuart Masque or the Eloquence of Speech through Picture THIERRY DEMAUBUS	268
*	

Vaughan and Divine Inspiration: A Reply to Donald Dickson JONATHAN NAUMAN	287
---	-----

*

The Visuality of Personification in Richard Savage's <i>The Wanderer: A Vision</i> SANDRO JUNG	293
--	-----

*

Hopkins's Portraits of the Artist: Between the Biographical and the Ideological DENNIS SOBOLEV	304
--	-----

*

A Response to "Dracula and the Idea of Europe" by Eleni Coundouriotis CAROL A. SENF	47
---	----

*

<i>The Turn of the Screw, King Lear, and Tragedy</i> EDWARD LOBB	31
---	----

*

<i>Wuthering Heights</i> for Children: Frances Hodgson Burnett's <i>The Secret Garden</i> SUSAN E. JAMES	59
--	----

*

Conversation and the Poetics of Modernism LOTHAR HÖNNIGHAUSEN	106
--	-----

*

How to Have a Conversation with Gertrude Stein: An Essay in Four Steps HEATHER CASS WHITE	124
---	-----

*

Robert Frost's Conversational Style MAURICE CHARNEY	147
--	-----

*

"He do the Police in Different Voices": A Bakhtinian Take on Conversational Modes in some Modern British Poets RAJEEV PATKE	160
---	-----

*

Summertime of the Dead Whispered the Truth of His Joy: A Response to Eynel Wardi SHACHAR BRAM	77
---	----

*

"A kind of musical conversation": Britten and Crozier's <i>Let's Make an Opera!</i> REBEKKA FRITZ, INGE LEIMBERG and NINA SANDMEIER	175
---	-----

*

Conversational Echoes in Anne Fine, <i>Goggle-Eyes</i> (1989) THOMAS KULLMANN	207
---	-----

*

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

CECILE SANDTEN

87

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

SUJATA BHATT

99