

Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate



Volume 12 (2002/2003) Number 1
Waxmann Münster / New York



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, Burkhard Niederhoff, and Christiane Lang

Secretary: Cornelia Gerundt

Editorial Assistants: Alexandra Neuschl/ Dagmar Schuck

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

Ursula Brumm, Freie Universität Berlin

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

Frances M. Malpezzi, Arkansas State University

J. Hillis Miller, University of California, Irvine

Martin Procházka, Charles University, Prague

Dale B. J. Randall, Duke University

Alan Rudrum, Simon Fraser University

John M. Steadman, The Huntington Library

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; reduced rate (e.g. for students) € 20. 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 2003

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 12 (2002/2003) Number 1

Sympathetic Parody (I)

Spenser's Parody

DONALD CHENEY

1

Elizabeth Bishop's "The Prodigal"
as a Sympathetic Parody

FRANK J. KEARFUL

14

Other ARTICLES and RESPONSES

"If we offend, it is with our good will":

Staging Dissent in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

DAVID LAIRD

35

Catholic Shakespeare?

A Response to Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel

E. A. J. HONIGMANN

52

Brontë and Burnett:

A Response to Susan E. James

LISA TYLER

61

Tragedy in *The Turn of the Screw*:

An Answer to Ursula Brumm

EDWARD LOBB

67

War, Conversation, and Context

in Patrick Hamilton's *The Slaves of Solitude*

THIERRY LABICA

72

Allusions in Gary Snyder's "The Canyon Wren"

LING CHUNG

83

Angels, Insects, and Analogy:

A. S. Byatt's "Morpho Eugenia"

JUNE STURROCK

93

Spenser's Parody

DONALD CHENEY

A discussion of parody, not to mention one of sympathetic parody, has to start with an attempt at definition, at setting reasonable limits to what threatens to be all-inclusive. If parody at its outermost limits is simply a borrowing or imitation of an earlier work with evident variation which may be more or less mocking, it seems to be another word for that complex of "revisionary ratios" that Harold Bloom sees as characteristic of all art.¹ Bloom's Freudianism affirms that all artists labor under a need to assert their identity by assimilating and overthrowing their predecessors, killing their fathers. As the Beatles almost put it, "There's nothing you can do that isn't done, / Nothing you can sing that isn't sung." If all art is secondary and imitative, and all imitation is parody, then sympathy would seem to be one of the inescapable filial emotions vis-à-vis the parent whom one loves and resents and needs to replace. If you are looking for sympathetic parody, all you need is to find the family romance in the text.

Edmund Spenser, the poet's poet, affords a likely site for such a search, since by temperament and historical moment he consistently and conspicuously flags his relationship to prior texts. I propose, therefore, to look at a few passages in the 1590 *Faerie Queene* and ask how they might usefully be described as parodic.

The opening stanza of the poem illustrates the combination of imitation and variation that we find throughout Spenser's project. The first four lines are an apparently straightforward imitation of the opening of the *Aeneid* as it was known to the Renaissance:

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debcheney01201.htm>>.

Lo I the man, whose Muse whylome did maske,
 As time her taught, in lowly Shephards weeds,
 Am now enforst a farre vnfitter taske,
 For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds [...]²

Spenser had indeed taken care to imitate this *rota virgiliana* by previously publishing a pastoral volume under the pseudonym of "new Poet" or "Immerito." In the fifth line, however—which is the turning point of the nine-line Spenserian stanza as it was not, of course, for Virgil—he announces a subject which is not Virgil's "arms and the man" but a version of Ariosto's parody of that subject: "And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds," "Le donne, i cavalier, l'arme, gli amori / le cortesie, l'audaci imprese io canto."³

Here again, Spenser seems to be giving a straightforward version of the prior text: "gentle deeds" can be taken as the deeds natural to knights and ladies, namely courtesies and bold undertakings. The remaining four lines of the stanza provide an elaboration or gloss that will affirm or modify our reading of this as an Ariostan project:

Whose praises hauing slept in silence long,
 Me, all too meane, the sacred Muse areeds
 To blazon broade emongst her learned throng:
 Fierce warres and faithfull loues shall moralize my song.

The verb "moralize" has leapt out at nineteenth-century readers of the poem, since the *Orlando furioso* seemed to them anything but moralistic. And if Spenser's sixth line, "Whose praises hauing slept in silence long," translates Ariosto's promise of "Cosa non detta in prosa mai né in rima [I.2]," this very claim to novelty is itself traditional, like Milton's similar version of Ariosto, "Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme."⁴ Furthermore, Spenser's mention of a "sacred" Muse at the outset of a book of "Holinesse" has led readers to question her identity, whether she is one of the classical nine, the muse of history or epic say, or a new, Judaeo-Christian one—another question that Milton will brood over when he appeals to his own heavenly muse.

This stanza can stand, then, both as a token of Spenser's complex relationship to his sources and as a first instance of what I am propos-

ing as "sympathetic parody." Thomas H. Cain observed in 1972 that the fifth line turns to Ariosto just at the point where Spenser's rhyme scheme diverges from Ariosto's, and that the ninth line summarizes or revises Ariosto's subject just where Ariosto's octave is superseded by the Alexandrine of a Spenserian stanza—thereby realizing quite literally the ambition to "overgo Ariosto" attributed to him by his friend Gabriel Harvey.⁵ As a piece of bravura performance, this detail certainly demonstrates the new poet's claim to mastery of his medium, and it seems at the same time to embody a claim to a nobler subject. Orlando's madness is a story of "faithful love" gone wrong, and it is only his recovery of sense at the end of Ariosto's poem that enables him to return to the fierce wars that will bring him his heroic status as well as his death. Spenser's moralized song is of a knight whose fierce battles culminate in the killing of the dragon and whose faithful love for Una culminates in his betrothal to her once the dragon is dead and her parents' city liberated. And yet, for most of the Book the knight is holding fast to the shield of Sans Foy and dallying with Duessa; so it can be argued that the promised moral coexists with just as much wandering knight-errantry as Ariosto had provided.

There is a parodic subtext, therefore, to many if not all of Spenser's claims to overgo and correct his predecessors. We can see it in the first description of the Red Cross Knight, whose understanding of his quest seems dangerously naive:

Vpon a great adventure he was bond,
 That greatest *Gloriana* to him gaue,
 That greatest Glorious Queene of *Faery* lond,
 To winne him worshippe, and her grace to haue,
 Which of all earthly things he most did craue [...]

The plethora of superlatives here captures the uncritical enthusiasm of an inexperienced knight who is simultaneously pricking his horse and trying to rein him in, burning rubber as it were; and it may also hint at a similar excess in the poet's own conclusion to his proem three stanzas earlier, when he addresses his queen:

[...] O Goddess heauenly bright,
 Mirrour of grace and Maiestie diuine,
 Great Lady of the greatest Isle, whose light
 Like *Phoebus* lampe throughout the world doth shine [...]

We might say that this extravagant praise of the Virgin Queen is the norm for her poets, and as such itself verges on self-parody. If we sense a certain parallelism of knight and narrator at the outset, we shall be the better prepared to respond to other parodic echoes of previous texts.

The first adventure begins with a sudden shower, when "angry *Ioue* an hideous storme of raine / Did poure into his Lemans lap so fast, / That euerie wight to shrowd it did constrain." As a version of the creation myth, the marriage of Earth and Sky, the sweet showers that enable the *Canterbury Tales*, Spenser takes two lines from Virgil's *Georgics* (ii.325-26) which speak of the almighty father descending in fecund showers into the lap of his happy bride, and translates them into what seems to anticipate Freud's notion of a child's primal scene of apparent violence in the marriage bed.⁶ The catalogue of trees that follows when Redcrosse and Una shroud themselves in the Wood of Error is at once another demonstration of the poet's credentials—as Hamilton observes, it echoes similar catalogues in Chaucer and Virgil, and especially Ovid's "story of Orpheus, the archetype of the poet's power to move trees and gather a forest around him." But this catalogue, while it praises the variety and usefulness of God's creation, moves from trees of good omen to those of dubious or evil associations, from the "sayling Pine, the Cedar proud and tall," to the "Mirrhe sweete bleeding in the bitter wound" that gave birth to Adonis, to the trees that end the two final lines of these stanzas, the "Cypresse funerall" and the "Maple seeldom inward sound." Led with delight in this Dark Wood, the knight and his lady come to Errour's cave: the bravura of Spenser's catalogue thus literalizes what seventeenth-century poets recognized as the risk of one's delighted praise of God's delightful creation: "Stumbling on Melons, as I pass, / Insnar'd with Flow'rs, I fall on Grass."⁷ Furthermore, the monster that Redcrosse

discerns by the light of his own virtue is both serpent and female: "But th'other halfe did womans shape retaine, / Most lothsom, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine."

This projection of a female shape onto a concept of error looks forward to the particular form of this knight's temptation and fall. The "litle glooming light, much like a shade," that enables Redcrosse to see—or imagine—this monster is both the product of his virtue and the source of his undoing, as his dreams the following night make clear. He rejects the direct appeal to his own desire but is quick to believe a vision of his lady in the arms of another squire, and is soon on the path to Sans Foy and Duessa. We seem not to be so far removed, then, from the erotic wanderings of Ariosto's knights: what is different is the moralizing of the song. Spenser has taken the knight-errantry of romance epic and charged it with the language of moral error rather than confused or wilful wandering. In Una's words, from her point of view as symbolizing or embodying the "oneness" of truth, Error is "A monster vile, whom God and man does hate." The confusion of number or case in this sentence suggests that Error hates God and man, and we hate Error. The hatred is evident, on the parts of both knight and lady, but what they hate is still the fallen human condition of wandering in a dark wood.

I think it helps to speak of two kinds of parody here, and also of two objects of such parody. The first is the parody we have been discussing, the echoes of Ariosto's echo of Virgil. Romance takes its start from the aftermath of Troy's fall and the wanderings of its survivors; chivalric romance is a distant or oblique look at a nation's and more immediately a patron's origins in a line which will eventually be started when Bradamante or Britomart finds her destined husband and stops wandering. Ariosto may seem, then, to be differing from Virgil in emphasizing the number of knights and ladies, the number of threads in his tapestry; but his goal is finally the same. It was Virgil who combined and transformed the two strands of Homeric epic, *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, arms and the man, and rewrote the homecoming of Odysseus to the search for a new home and wife—and nation—by

Aeneas. So it was Virgil's rewriting of the Homeric story that constituted the original parody, in the terms I have been positing.

The word "parody" or *παρωδία* is used by Aristotle to denote a poem in which serious words are cited in a new context, as burlesque, and this word comes (I am informed by Messrs. Liddell and Scott) from *παρωδός*, singing indirectly, obscurely hinting. So parody with a long *o* or omega is a parallel ode, singing another version of an existing song. I'd like to invoke another unscientific or folk etymology of my own, however, which seems metaphorically apt when we consider how parodies actually function. This is parody with a short *o* or omicron, as in the Greek word *πάροδος*, a byway or passage, a coming forward, as when a chorus enters and sings before the action of a play gets under way. This word, derived not from *ὥδή*, ode, but from *ὁδός*, path or journey, suggests a parallel path or action, the road not taken by one's prior text. When we speak of sympathetic parody, we are indicating our awareness that at heart the parody is taking an alternative route toward much the same fundamental point that the thing parodied had reached. Ariosto's knights and ladies may be far more boisterous and unpredictable than Virgil's, but at the end of the poem we see Bradamante marrying Ruggiero and founding the Este dynasty, just as Aeneas and Lavinia had founded the Roman line, and as Odysseus had returned to his own family; and we see Orlando no longer furious but now pointed toward his own tragic end, like Turnus or Achilles. One could say the same, I think, about a more obviously satirical parody like *The Rape of the Lock*, where Belinda's airy world is destroyed as surely as Troy had been, but where she is urged to adapt to her loss and look forward to her new life—including marriage—in her own smaller but no less precious world.

Spenser's poem does not only talk the talk of verbal parody, it also walks the walk along the plot lines I am proposing here. In the first Book, Redcrosse's resistance to temptation irrevocably sets him on a route toward temptation and fall, and we are shown the parallel story of Fradubio, a lusty squire who never thinks of resisting his girlfriend Fraelissa but falls prey to Duessa none the less: in Book I, all roads

lead to our re-enactment of the Fall, and to our need for rescue. And Spenser's architecture of the larger poem similarly emphasizes parallel structures, so that in Book II the elfin knight Guyon must run a complementary course, similar to that of Redcrosse but mysteriously opposite as well, the course of temperance rather than holiness: "we, where ye haue left your marke, / Must now anew begin, like race to ronne" (II.i.32). At times Book II seems a virtual parody of the preceding book, since the steadfast Una is now referred to as the "Errant damozell" and Guyon must conclude his mission by liberating a young knight from a Bower of Bliss that echoes Redcrosse's state at the end of Book I, "swimming in that sea of blisfull ioy" (I.xii.41) he had attained by winning Una—although in moral terms it more nearly resembles Duessa's dungeon from which Arthur had to rescue Redcrosse. The parallelisms and contrasts between the first two books of the poem have been the subject of extended debate by mid-twentieth-century Spenserians: is the contrast between Holiness and Temperance a contrast between the orders of Grace and Nature, for example, as Woodhouse famously claimed?⁸ What seems more interesting to readers today is the dreamlike echoing that we find everywhere in the poem, what Nohrnberg calls the "analogies" of the poem⁹ and what I am calling the poem's sympathetic parodies—sympathetic, perhaps, in the sense in which we speak of sympathetic vibrations, echoes that reverberate and deepen meaning.

If Book I opens by suggesting a moral divergence from the material of chivalric romance in the Ariostan mode, it relies for this moralizing on a specifically Protestant mindset in its reader. When we are informed that the aged hermit who has invited Redcrosse and Una to his cell "told of Saintes and Popes, and euermore / He strowd an *Aue-Mary* after and before [I.i.35]," we know he must be up to no good. And Duessa is repeatedly characterized in terms that similarly echo Protestant rhetoric: masquerading as Fidessa, she descends from a Western, post-schismatic faith, and Redcrosse's fornication with her is what preachers in the English church have warned us against lest we be tempted by the gaudiness of Romish trappings. Both in the lan-

guage of religious controversy, with its markers signifying confessional loyalties, and in its enactment of the dominant metaphors of this language, the story of Redcrosse is of a young knight who is seduced into betraying the oneness of Truth and falling into a doubleness that is embodied both by duplicitous figures and by his own division "into double parts" (I.ii.9). There is no doubt that Duessa is bad; but readers may still feel uncomfortable with the passionate loathing that she awakens. Spenser's analogizing or parodistic mode makes us aware that if an irrational horror of female otherness informs Redcrosse's first view of Errour it also informs negative views of Duessa as well—both when Fradubio speaks of her "neather parts" which he could not see but imagined to be "more foule and hideous, / Then womans shape man would beleue to bee" (I.ii.41), and when Una herself strips her rival before Redcrosse's disenchanted eyes (I.viii.45-50).

It seems, then, that Spenser's parody of the stereotypes of religious difference reveals at least a hint of sympathy where we would least expect to find it. Perhaps he is like the John Donne that recent critics have come to see,¹⁰ aware of a complex and conflicted relationship to the Old Religion of his ancestors and reflecting this conflict in the unfinished business of his story. Duessa and Archimago retain the power to interrupt the celebration of Redcrosse's betrothal to Una; though they are refuted, they are only bound temporarily and it is clear that what is repressed will return. Reformation, in the imaginative world of Spenser's poem, is only a stage in a continuing cycle of forming, deforming, and reforming. The victory of the knight of Holiness generates a need for a knight of Temperance.

As Spenser's poem unfolds, his relationship to Ariosto's mode of chivalric romance becomes increasingly sympathetic, as the limitations of his moralized song become more complex. I wish to comment more fully on two instances of Spenser's parody of Ariosto's opening stanzas. The first comes at the beginning of Book III, where Guyon is unseated by a mysterious stranger who, we are told, is Britomart, the possessor of an enchanted spear. He is so humiliated by this defeat

that it is up to his Palmer and Prince Arthur to calm the champion of Temperance by suggesting that it was his horse's fault, or the fault of a "page, / That had his furnitures not firmly tyde." Thus although we are told that the reconciliation between the two knights is "knitt, / Through goodly temperaunce, and affection chaste," we can see that the temperance is achieved by means of a diplomatic duplicity. The narrator continues:

O goodly vsage of those antique times,
In which the sword was seruaunt vnto right;
When not for malice and contentious crymes,
But all for prayse, and prooffe of manly might,
The martiall brood accustomed to fight:
Then honour was the meed of victory,
And yet the vanquished had no despight:
Let later age that noble vse enuy,
Vyle rancor to avoid, and cruel surquedry. (III.i.13)¹¹

The first lines of this stanza echo Ariosto's "Oh gran bontà de' cavalieri antiqui!" (I.22) which opens a stanza translated by Harington (1591) as follows:

O auncient knights of true and noble hart:
They rivals were, one faith they liv'd not under;
Beside they felt their bodies shrewdly smart
Of blowes late given, and yet (behold a wonder)
Through thicke and thin, suspition set apart,
Like friends they ride and parted not a sunder
Untill the horse with double spurring driv'd
Unto a way parted in two arriued.¹²

Writing in 1897 on "Spenser's Imitations from Ariosto,"¹³ Neil Dodge cited this borrowing, where Spenser provides moral generalizations in lieu of Ariosto's comic specifics, as showing that "The conclusion is clear. When Spenser read the *Orlando furioso* he read it in the light of his own serene idealism." But in fact this citation of an Ariostan marker clearly indicates that Spenser is moving into the comically mixed motives of Ariosto's world. This is shown, first, by Guyon's intemperate response to Britomart's brusque victory over

him—and it is all the more emphatic if we remember that at a comparable moment in Book II Guyon is urged by Archimago to fight Redcrosse but veers away lest he attack the Red Cross, “The sacred badge of my Redeemers death” (II.i.27). What is more, this citation of Ariosto is immediately followed by an episode in which Florimell passes across the landscape pursued by a “griesly foster”—whereupon Guyon and Arthur pursue the damsel, Timias pursues the Foster, and Britomart, “whose constant mind, / Would not so lightly follow beauties chace, / Ne reckt of Ladies Loue, did stay behynd.” This both imitates the Ariostan incident and doubles the fun of it. In Ariosto, Rinaldo and Ferraù have been fighting a duel over Angelica when they notice that she has escaped on her palfrey, whereupon they agree to share a single horse and capture her before they continue the contest to enjoy her. If we have been reading Spenser carefully, we will have noticed that Guyon and Arthur are sharing Arthur’s horse (Guyon has lost his own, Brigadore), Spumadore, the “fomy steed” of stanza 5; they share a common passion in their pursuit of Florimell, “in hope to win thereby / Most goodly meede, the fairest Dame al- iue”—something we might not have expected either of Arthur, with his search for Gloriana, or of the Guyon whose presumably less erotic commitment to the Fairy Queen made him proof against Mammon’s offer of Philotime in II.vii.50. Timias’s pursuit of the Foster is marginally more chivalrous, probably, a pursuit of the honor that his name betokens. But Britomart’s indifference to the pursuit seems the product less of her chastity than of the fact that she is looking for a man, not a woman. In short, this is a parody of Ariosto that overgoes him in comic effect, and one that prepares us for a treatment of “chastity” that makes it anything but a matter of just saying no.

Finally, if we return to the opening stanzas of the *Furioso*, we can find a statement of Ariosto’s programme that Spenser moves more explicitly toward with each successive book. Stanzas one and two deal respectively with versions of the Virgilian subject, arms and the man. In the first stanza, the poet promises to tell of all the courtesies and bold undertakings that took place when the Moors had crossed over

from Africa and threatened Charlemagne in their determination to avenge the death of Troiano, father of their leader Agramante. The second stanza promises to tell at the same time the story of Orlando, "Cosa non detta in prosa mai né in rima," who was driven by love to madness, though he had been held so wise a man previously—if, the poet continues, she who has had virtually the same effect on me lets me finish what I have promised. Thus Orlando's madness is paralleled by the poet's.

Spenser had begun his poem with a version of the Virgilian *ille ego, qui quondam ...* formula, lines possibly by the poet but rejected today by editors who feel that they violate the tradition of epic anonymity;¹⁴ lines which personalize the poem and affirm the poet's position in and over it. Ariosto's comic affirmation of his own love-madness is a variation on this authorial presence, and follows perhaps in the grand Italian tradition of poets writing under the influence of their Beatrice, Laura, or Fiammetta. It is only toward the end of the sixth Book, the end of the second installment in 1596 that had brought the poem to the midpoint of its promised twelve-book structure, that Spenser audaciously introduces his own pastoral persona, Colin Clout, into the action of the Book of Courtesy, and apologizes to his Queen for intruding a "minime" or short note of song to his own Elizabeth. Calidore's glimpse of his poet conjuring up the Graces brings the *rota virgiliana* full circle.

That this is an Ariostan moment is shown not only by the verbal parallel that I have cited from the opening of the *Furioso*, but by a structural parallel as well. Ariosto's poem of 46 cantos is divided into two parts, and Harington's 1591 translation made the division explicit with a note at the end of canto 23: "Here end the first xxiii bookes of Ariosto." Canto 24 begins with a brief autobiographical note: to those who will rebuke him for blaming the madness of Orlando when he suffers from the same fault, the poet replies that he is enjoying a brief moment of lucidity in his own love, so that he can see more clearly that love is madness, though he is not yet himself cured. This parallelism of self-reference at crucial points in the two halves of each poet's

work can hardly be a coincidence. And in fact Sonnet 33 of the *Amoretti* makes the connection explicit:

Great wrong I doe, I can it not deny,
to that most sacred Empresse my dear dred,
not finishing her Queene of faëry,
that mote enlarge her living prayes dead:
But lodwick, this of grace to me aread:
doe ye not thinck th'accomplishment of it
sufficient worke for one mans simple head,
all were it as the rest but rudely writ [...]¹⁵

Editors have taken this Lodwick to be Spenser's friend Lodowick Briskett; but it can equally—and simultaneously—be the Ludovico Ariosto who imagines his friend reproaching him in the same way. What we see here, I think, is a kind of sympathetic parody that is at the heart of romance: the author emerges as engaging the matter of a prior epic poem, and he figures finally as the central figure in that revision or re-formation of the old story. Writing of Boiardo, Charles Ross has spoken of the "derangement" of epic in the romance, inventing a term inspired by Fredric Jameson's comments on the relation of the two forms.¹⁶ Ross's term is useful to the extent that it suggests the deranged quality of narration, based on the conventions of dream visions, for its sense of a dreamer who ranges through an imaginary space and time where the same story keeps appearing with variations and inversions. I think that some such movement from an earlier form to its deforming and reforming by a later poet is what we find when we look at sympathetic parody.

University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts

NOTES

¹Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (New York: OUP, 1975).

²Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton, rev. ed. with text ed. Hiroshi Yamashita and Toshiyuki Suzuki (London: Longman, 2001), I, proem.1.

³Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, ed. Emilio Bigi (Milano: Rusconi, 1982), I.1.

⁴See Ernst Robert Curtius, *Latin Literature and the European Middle Ages*, translated by Willard R. Trask (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1953) 85-86.

⁵"Spenser and the Renaissance Orpheus," *UTQ* 41 (1972): 24-47.

⁶The Virgilian passage goes on to celebrate the earth's rebirth in springtime, in a passage that may be one of many possible sources for Chaucer's opening lines. Spenser's choice of three negative terms—"angry," "hideous," and "shrowd"—in as many lines marks a decisive break with Virgil's tone. Hamilton suggests that the "hideous storme" leads to Errour's "hideous taile." Cf. W. E. H. Rudat, "Spenser's 'Angry loue': Virgilian Allusion in the First Canto of *The Faerie Queene*," *JRMMRA* 3 (1983): 89-98.

⁷Marvell, "The Garden," lines 39-40. *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, ed. H. M. Margoliouth, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1952) 49.

⁸A. S. P. Woodhouse, "Nature and Grace in *The Faerie Queene*," *ELH* 16 (1949): 194-228.

⁹James Nohrberg, *The Analogy of The Faerie Queene* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976).

¹⁰Most notably, John Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind, and Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981).

¹¹I discussed this passage briefly in *Spenser's Image of Nature: Wild Man and Shepherd in The Faerie Queene* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1966) 83-87, and return to it in a different context in a forthcoming essay, "Spenser's Undergoing of Ariosto."

¹²Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso: Translated into English heroical verse by Sir John Harrington*, ed. Robert McNulty (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1972).

¹³*PMLA* 12 (1897): 172.

¹⁴In fact, the lines (included in Renaissance editions of the poem) were withdrawn by Virgil's literary executor, Varius, although they were recognized as the poet's by Donatus and Servius. Like the passage on Helen in ll. 567-88, they may represent an early version that was subsequently repudiated by Virgil, who famously urged that the entire poem be burned.

¹⁵*The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. William A. Oram et al. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989).

¹⁶"Boiardo and the Derangement of Epic," *Renaissance Papers* (1988): 77-97.

Elizabeth Bishop's "The Prodigal" as a Sympathetic Parody

FRANK J. KEARFUL

Fortunately, I am not a man of the cloth and don't need to come up with a new sermon on the parable of the prodigal son each time it crops up as the appointed text for the Sunday sermon. It's a very good story in itself, and its theological import is crystal clear: God's love is infinite, and is ours no matter how undeserving of it we are according to purely human reckoning. What more needs to be said? In fact much more has been said, not only by preachers but by poets, novelists, dramatists, painters, engravers, sculptors, composers, and choreographers. Of all biblical parables, it has been the most frequently adapted for artistic purposes; one recent study devotes over four hundred pages to its uses in American literature alone.¹

Modern renderings of the parable—unlike, say, Rembrandt's—tend to be highly ironic if not downright parodic, but whether a given literary adaptation is regarded as a parody may depend as much on the critic's agility in employing the term as on the text itself. Dryden was content to define parody as "Verses patched up from great poets, and turned into another sense than the author intended them." In our post-Bakhtinian, post-Bloomian, post-postmodern latter days, parody may be sighted at a variety of points along an intertextual spectrum, sometimes under other terminological guises. One woman's misprision may be another woman's parody.

If we insist on stylistic mimicry as a *sine qua non* of parody, Elizabeth Bishop's "The Prodigal" will hardly qualify, nor can it readily be said to ridicule, or make simply innocent fun of, the biblical parable. Bishop's rewriting of a religious text for secular purposes may be read, however, as a secular parody on analogy to sacred parody,

which transforms a secular text for quite different religious purposes.²

The Prodigal

The brown enormous odor he lived by
was too close, with its breathing and thick hair,
for him to judge. The floor was rotten; the sty
was plastered halfway up with glass-smooth dung.
Light-lashed, self-righteous, above moving snouts,
the pigs' eyes followed him, a cheerful stare—
even to the sow that always ate her young—
till, sickening, he leaned to scratch her head.
But sometimes mornings after drinking bouts
(he hid the pints behind a two-by-four),
the sunrise glazed the barnyard mud with red;
the burning puddles seemed to reassure.
And then he thought he almost might endure
his exile yet another year or more.

But evenings the first star came to warn.
The farmer whom he worked for came at dark
to shut the cows and horses in the barn
beneath their overhanging clouds of hay,
with pitchforks, faint forked lightnings, catching light,
safe and companionable as in the Ark.
The pigs stuck out their little feet and snored.
The lantern—like the sun, going away—
laid on the mud a pacing aureole.
Carrying a bucket along a slimy board,
he felt the bats' uncertain staggering flight,
his shuddering insights, beyond his control,
touching him. But it took him a long time
finally to make his mind up to go home.³

Bishop suspends the theological agency of the parable and focuses on a limited portion of the biblical story, which she freely elaborates upon. The parable's theological agency is "suspended" not merely through a temporary cessation of its determining presence in the narrative but also in so far as it remains "suspended" above the narrative. No transvaluation of orders or levels of value, sacred and secular, occurs in Bishop's secular parody, which might be classified perhaps

more tellingly as a sympathetic parody in two closely related senses. Bishop's text is not an adversarial countertext and thus might be said to be "sympathetic" toward its source text, the suspension of whose theological aegis in turn engenders an emotional responsiveness to the prodigal in all his abject fecklessness.

The prodigal son's prodigality, his spendthrift waste of his inheritance, we hear nothing of, nor do we hear anything of his elder brother, that villain of the piece in countless modern sermons. Even their loving father is excluded from the poem and the homecoming is not described.⁴ The biblical prodigal son, we may surmise, indulges himself while his wealth lasts in the pleasures provided by wine, women, and song; put more succinctly by Luke, "he wasted his substance in riotous living" (King James Version, 15:13). After his return, the incensed elder brother complains to their father that the prodigal son "hath devoured thy living with harlots" (15:30). Whatever drinking career he may have behind him we read nothing of, explicitly, in Luke. Bishop's wretched swineherd is restricted, as far as any dregs of riotous living go, to the dubious pleasures of a drinker who hides his bottles "behind a two-by-four." What her secular parody offers us in place of a theological parable on God's unqualified love for us is a psychological portrayal of an alcoholic's entrapment in his addiction.

Bishop's parody is sympathetic in yet a third sense, in so far as Bishop herself could readily identify with his plight. Her own alcoholism and repeated attempts to escape from it are discussed extensively by her biographer Brett C. Millier, who notes that "The Prodigal" "speaks painfully and eloquently to her own experience with alcoholism in 1950."⁵ Bishop had been working on an initial draft of the poem as early as 1948—in a letter to Robert Lowell written September 9 she tells him "I want to see what you'll think of my 'Prodigal Son'"—and in a letter written on July 31, 1949 to Loren MacIver she again refers to working on the poem, this time in conjunction with her alcoholism:

One of the men guests got terribly drunk two nights ago and was put in jail. Mrs. Ames went and bailed him out. This is all a very good example for me and let's hope I profit by it. I worked on "The Prodigal Son" all morning and shall give up this other sequence for a while. I've had enough of it & drink-

ing and all forms of trouble and I think it is most due to you that I have pulled myself together again. If I can just stay together—but things do seem MUCH better and I find myself looking forward to Washington. I want to get in such good shape that I can go see Dr. Anny without a tremor. Well, I've just been out blowing bubbles on my balcony, my chief diversion. Now I'll give you a rest, Loren dear [...]

Years later, writing to U. T. and Joseph Summers on October 19, 1967, Bishop, after remarking that many of her poems were based on dream material, lets fall that "'The Prodigal' was suggested to me when one of my aunt's stepsons offered me a drink of rum, in the pigsties, at about nine in the morning, when I was visiting her in Nova Scotia."⁶

My purpose in this essay is to show how Bishop's formal high jinks and her secular parody of the biblical parable join forces to fashion an askew, unsentimental representation of herself as an alcoholic. Her drinker's tale of a drinker—and pigsty denizen—is related in two quatorzains which enact off-kilter versions of Shakespearean sonnet form. In her tipsy double sonnet, all end-words ultimately find a perfect rhyme except, tellingly, "warn" and the very last word of the poem, "home." A drinker trying to find his way home is one way of describing the poem, written by an alcoholic for whom home and homelessness were central preoccupations. Bishop's father died when she was eight months old and her mother, after a series of mental breakdowns, was permanently institutionalised when Bishop was five. "The Village," a memoir in the form of a short story, recalls the traumatic event of her mother being taken away, nevermore to be seen. Her childhood, during which she was shunted about among relatives in Nova Scotia and Massachusetts, was marked by several illnesses probably of a psychosomatic origin, including the severe asthma which afflicted her during her entire adult life.⁷ Bishop hated self-pity, and exhibitionism of any sort she found distasteful. Her poems which draw upon her own personal distresses do so, always, indirectly and ironically, telling the truth but telling it slant.

The initial quatrain sets in motion Bishop's wayward rhyming progress "home."

The brown enormous odor he lived by	a
was too close, with its breathing and thick hair,	b
for him to judge. The floor was rotten; the sty	a
was plastered halfway up with glass-smooth dung.	C

The first three lines, rhyming *a b a*, induce us to expect a Shakespearean *b* rhyme to conclude the quatrain. *Hair* is not a hard word to rhyme on, and Shakespeare's sonnets might suggest his favorite all-purpose *fair*. In Bishop's text, *air* would seem to be a natural candidate, pervaded as it is by the enormous odor. Instead Bishop's line ends, resoundingly, in *dung*. Glass-smooth dung, but *dung* nevertheless.

Echoes of Bishop's favorite poet, George Herbert, recur in her poetry and one might detect in the first quatrain of "The Prodigal" a distant befouled whiff of Herbert's "The Odour."⁸ The discombobulating lines of "The Prodigal," in which a hairy odor breathes, might also be read as a profanation of Genesis 2:7 "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." The "brown enormous odor" whose breathing the prodigal, a creature at home in mud and dung, breathes in is no breath of life. In the odoriferous ecosystem of which he, an alcoholic, is a part, his own foul breath contributes to the stench which he inhales. In simple rhetorical terms, odor is transformed from a kind of metonymy (substituting the odor for the pigs and their dung) into a synecdoche (a hirsute pig's skin used for the pig as a whole); but as a breathing personification it takes on a life of its own as a kind of genie out of the bottle. A surreal compound of smells emanating from the pigs and their dung but also from the prodigal himself constitutes the brown enormous odor which envelops and assimilates the prodigal and his brethren.

"Breathing" is itself both a process of inhaling and of exhaling, extending to the poetic sense, to emit an odor of, as in Pope's "All Arabia breathes from yonder box" (*Rape of the Lock*, Canto I, l. 134) or Gray's "To breathe a second spring" ("Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," l. 20), or "the breezy call of incense-breathing morn" in

Gray's "Elegy written in a Country Church-Yard" (l. 17). But the particular use of "breathing" in the sense 'to emit an odor' which Bishop might be said virtually to parody in "The Prodigal" is Herbert's in "The Odour," lines 25 and 26-28, "That call is but the breathing of the sweet" and "This breathing would with gains by sweetning me / [...] Return to thee." In Herbert's poem, whose full title "The Odour. 2 Cor. 2" provides the necessary biblical and theological context, breathing, sweetness, and savoring all serve to amplify the essential theme. Man ought to be a sweet odor for God, who Himself, however, breathes this sweet odor into him. There is, in Herbert's poem, as in the parable of the prodigal, a returning and a meeting, a "commerce" of man and God, expressed in "The Odour" in the Pauline conceit of sweet odors breathed—exhaled, inhaled, and breathed out again. Interestingly enough, the same basic "breathing" conceit is employed by Hopkins, in "To R. B.," with the further play on expiration and inspiration.

Also working both ways, "lived by" functions as a locative but also as an expression of means, as in Matthew 4:4 "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It is the breath of God which, biblically speaking, animates the living soul and it is the word of God, also proceeding from his mouth, by which the soul lives. For the prodigal, both forms of divine "inspiration" have been usurped by the brown enormous odor. That the odor he lived by was "too close [...] for him to judge" suggests additional wordplay on "close," both as proximity and as confinement, as when air in a tightly sealed room becomes "close." The prodigal can no longer judge how "close," in both senses, the odor is. As for the pigsty, its being plastered half-way up with "glass-smooth dung" injects a tactile element both delicate and repulsive into the synesthesia permeating the quatrain.⁹ The dung's being to the touch "glass-smooth" also infiltrates an association with another kind of glass which the prodigal, in the process of becoming plastered, is wont to touch.

As a reader becomes attuned to the poem's alcoholic references and allusions, some covert, the entire text becomes laden with the breath of the alcoholic, allowing "plastered," for example, to emit its colloquial meaning, "drunken." Hidden more deeply in the text until one begins to read it as an account of an alcoholic's drinking habits is another colloquial expression, "to wake up with the hair of the dog," i.e., to down a drink in order to cope with the shakes one wakes up with. But in so far as it is the odor which does the breathing, the prodigal son has been transformed into the odor he lives by, the alcohol on his breath, in a redolent metamorphosis worse than that undergone by Gregor Samsa. The locative sense of 'lives by,' activated once we begin reading the poem's second sentence, suggests rather a Circean transformation, the prodigal becoming reduced to a porcine existence, his proximity to the pigsty too close for him any longer to judge. The doubleness of "lived by" is, ultimately, a distinction without a difference, its two senses fusing, the drinker transformed into a smelly pig as he also lives by the odor he breathes.

The first quatrain came close to fulfilling Shakespearean rhyming expectations only to leave us with *dung* in our ears, but the second fails to deliver on any rhyme whatsoever.

Light-lashed, self-righteous, above moving snouts,	<i>d</i>
the pigs' eyes followed him, a cheerful stare—	<i>b</i>
even to the sow that always ate her young—	<i>c</i>
till, sickening, he leaned to scratch her head.	<i>E</i>

The quatrain—a self-contained syntactic unit—fails entirely to rhyme but there is method in its *d b c e* madness, in so far as *cheerful stare* supplies, in plonking fashion, a *b*-rhyme for the preceding quatrain's *and thick hair*. As the sonnet progresses, it will continue to sound its out-of-sync rhymes in similar tum-te-tum cadences, as if Bishop were parodying a hapless but determined versifier who succeeds, better late than never, in nailing down his rhymes.¹⁰

Bishop's second quatrain, following upon the surreal rendition of a drinker's disorientation in the first quatrain, relates a humorously

ghastly vignette, whose initial line, "Light-lashed, self-righteous, above moving snouts," begins like a sprung-rhythm line in Hopkins, one hyphenated epithet following another. "Light-lashed" might initiate a line in Hopkins's "Pied Beauty," or become along with "shining like shook foil" part of "God's Grandeur."¹¹ But what, then, of "self-righteous"? What is light-lashed *and* self-righteous? A novice self-flagellant tentatively going about his business? A third clue containing the answer reduces the line, at its close, to bathos, "above moving snouts." An errant reader who had been assuming the line refers to the prodigal may still be tempted to take "above" as referring to him: as the prodigal walks by the moving snouts (synecdoche = pigs) he not only literally looks down on them as he returns their gaze, he feels himself above, superior to them—and thus, given his own degradation, is indeed self-righteous. The answer to the teasing riddle, perhaps obvious enough by the end of the line, is revealed unambiguously at the outset of the next: the eyes, with their light eyelashes, of a drift of pigs.

As the prodigal walks by them, they all train their self-righteous eyes upon him in a cheerful stare. Man's best friend may be his dog but the prodigal, in response to such swinish loyal affection, scratches the head of his apparent favorite. Sows, it would seem, all sows, are in the habit of eating their young from time to time; but this one "always" did so. Although the causality linking the pigs' cheerful stare and his sickening and scratching her head is not made explicit, this heartfelt episode conveys something of the nausea, isolation, and attenuated emotional life of the prodigal, and as he pets his favorite sow, who always ate her young, perhaps a disguised death wish.¹² That the pigs remain insouciantly self-righteous while bestowing on him a cheerful stare suggests that eating one's young may not be, in their eyes, such a heinous activity.

Thus the pigs and the prodigal perform their roles, one sow starring, in a barnyard parody of classical tragedy or myth (Saturn, Atreus and Thyestes, et al.). The "But" initiating line 9 would seem, however, to signal a volta after Shakespeare's own manner of structurally embed-

ding traces of a Petrarchan/Italian sonnet within a Shakespearean/English sonnet.¹³

But sometimes mornings after drinking bouts	<i>d</i>
(he hid the pints behind a two-by-four),	<i>f</i>
the sunrise glazed the barnyard mud with red;	<i>e</i>
the burning puddles seemed to reassure.	<i>G</i>

The ensuing rhymeless quatrain—the syntactically self-contained sentence induces us to read the lines as a quatrain—divulges only more fully the emotional and psychological condition of a drinker who has become habituated to breathing the “brown enormous odor” he lives by. “Hiding” one’s bottles is a frequent enough dodge among self-deluding alcoholics: no one will ever know. Tenth (“pints” in American over-the-counter parlance) are the standard purchase of down-and-outers and are thus suggestive of the level to which the prodigal has fallen; no “respectable” person would be likely to buy one. In addition to being cheaper and handier for direct-from-the-bottle drinking purposes, they are, of course, easier to “hide” than a fifth would be. How the prodigal hides *his* pints behind, of all things, a two-by-four remains his secret. Unless, of course, in a stupor he merely *thinks* he is hiding his bottles. The poem at this point has become an insider’s amused excursus on an alcoholic’s determined efforts to hide his bottles and thus “hide” his drinking from unsuspecting others.¹⁴

The volta fails to usher in a turn for the better “after drinking bouts.” A queasy aestheticism continues to coat surfaces: whereas the sty was decorated with “glass-smooth dung,” the barnyard mud at sunrise is “glazed [...] with red.” Another barnyard scene, in which a red wheelbarrow is “glazed with rain / water,” is momentarily summoned up; Williams’s “rain water” has now become, whether rain-water or simply urine, “burning puddles.” As the morning sun turns the barnyard into a hellish quagmire, the puddles in which it is burning seem to proffer the prodigal’s downcast eyes a sun-also-rises assurance. Bishop is in effect parodying the topos Shakespeare makes

use of in Sonnet 33, in which the morning sun—"Kissing with golden face the meadows green, / Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy," (ll. 3-4)—offers an assurance soon to be threatened. Bishop's *d f e g* quatrain may also "seem" to propose a *two-by-four* / *reassure* rhyme, leaving the reader momentarily unsure whether to credit it as a near-miss rhyme or not. In any event, the pigs' *moving snouts* can now, thanks to a delayed-action rhyme, join in on the prodigal's *drinking bouts*. A more childlike cadence is sounded when *scratch her head* is given a pat rhyme, *mud with red*.

A terminal couplet seems to strive to confer on the entire sonnet a would-be jauntiness:

And then he thought he almost might endure	<i>g</i>
his exile yet another year or more.	<i>F</i>

But one qualifier followed by another—"sometimes [...] seemed" and now "almost might"—undermines any things-aren't-really-all-that-bad self-conning. The amplifying *or more* brings to a climax a phonic sequence: *enormous* / *mornings* (*m* and *n* reversing places) / *or more*; the following sonnet will proffer its seriocomic coda *snored* / *board*, implanting a "bored" pun to accompany *snored*. Listened to closely, "thought he almost might endure" is a muted cry of despair, to which the couplet replies *endure* / *more*.

If the sonnet had only ended with line 13 we would at least have been left with a faultlessly rhyming Shakespearean *gg* couplet, and closure would have been attained by means of a stalwart *reassure* / *endure* rhyme:

the burning puddles seemed to reassure.	<i>g</i>
And then he thought he almost might endure	<i>g</i>

Bishop's quatorzain still needs, however, to complete its staggered rhyming progress "home," in the fourteenth line. The only way this can be done is by concocting a *g f* "failed" couplet, which will provide true rhymes for the slurred off-rhymes left behind in the notional third quatrain. In this terminal rescue operation, *a year or more* sub-

sumes a *two-by-four* while *endure* calls out staunchly to *reassure*. The specious off-rhymes now join in the formation of a chiastic aural sequence, *four / reassure / endure / more*.

As the morning of the first sonnet turns to the evening of the second, another "But" signals a sonnet-spanning volta, as in Shakespeare's linked sonnets 15-16, 73-74, 91-92. An abrupt full stop at the end of the first line sounds a warning.

But evenings the first star came to warn.	<i>a</i>
The farmer whom he worked for came at dark	<i>b</i>
to shut the cows and horses in the barn	<i>a</i>
beneath their overhanging clouds of hay,	<i>c</i>
[...].	

The second quatorzain begins in the same *a b a c* defective rhyming fashion as the first did, *a b a* signalling the formation of a Shakespearean initial quatrain, which again goes on the blink when *came to warn* is abandoned in *clouds of hay*. The putative *a* rhymes in this case, *came to warn/ in the barn*, sound a familiar put-one-syllable-in-front-of-another tread and are perfect eye rhymes. In their vowel match-up they are, however, slightly amiss, as if the warning were not quite registered. This time, no perfect rhymes will be supplied after-the-fact in a succeeding quatrain or couplet.

The first line, a complete sentence in itself, is followed by three lines which could also be a complete sentence; but a comma allows the potential sentence to amble into succeeding lines. Any quatrain contours we might look for become blurred and syntactical relations unexpectedly complicated. Verse form and syntax in Bishop's second notional quatrain now go their separate ways, are always way out-of-sync, as sentences of 1, 5, 1, 2, 3½, and 1½ lines make their stop-and-go way through the quatorzain. Rhymes meanwhile strive as best they can to conjure up a simulacrum of a three quatrain plus couplet *abab cdcd efef gg* Shakespearean sonnet.

Bishop assumes at the outset of the quatorzain the voice and prosodic manner of a Robert Frost, her prodigal taking on the role of the

hired hand as the biblical "far country" (Luke 15:13) is transformed into a veritable New England. Whether Frost would have indulged in a metaphor like "their overhanging clouds of hay" is, admittedly, debatable. Bishop's barn, at any rate, threatens to become the venue of a two-tier nativity scene, the hayloft of the barn above and—to use Bishop's turn of phrase for her nativity scene in "Over Two Thousand Illustrations and a Complete Concordance"—"a family with pets" below. Such two-level nativity scenes as Tintoretto's, in the Scuola San Rocco in Venice, are common in the visual arts. Bishop's fourth line might have terminated her second sentence, giving some sense of closure to a quatrain. Bishop is not finished, though, either with her georgic *ekphrasis* or with her sentence, which wanders over into the purely notional domain of a second quatrain:

with pitchforks, faint forked lightnings, catching light,	<i>d</i>
safe and companionable as in the Ark.	<i>b</i>
The pigs stuck out their little feet and snored.	<i>e</i>
The lantern—like the sun, going away—	<i>c</i>

The disorienting syntax of Bishop's suspended sentence suggests a kind of barely controlled tipsiness, with *companionable* stretching out its feet safe and sound to form, at its close, a hypermetrical pentameter. As in the first quatorzain, belated rhymes do begin to fall into place. At the end of line 6, *in the Ark* supplies a belated *b* rhyme home for *came at dark* at the end of line 2; for its part, *the son going away*, ringing a punning change on "the sun, going away," leaves behind the *clouds of hay*.

Until we infer the naturalistic source of the light, the lantern about to be taken away, it is almost as if the first star itself were shining down on the barn and on its inhabitants, its light reflecting off the pitchforks stuck in "clouds of hay" in the hayloft above the "family with pets." Such loose imagistic associations to the visual arts, and to Bishop's set-piece nativity scene in "Over Two Thousand Illustrations," with its sudden shaft of light, might become problematic if one recalls that the first star is also Lucifer—the "light bearer"—and that

the pitchfork is the devil's plaything. That the pigs are not only the proud bearers of light-colored eyelashes but are also perhaps "light-lashed" by the light of the lantern reflected off the pitchforks further complicates Bishop's enigmatic phantasmagoria. She mixes overt religious allusions more explicitly, as well as her metaphors, when the farmer, another "light bearer," suddenly assumes the role of a Noah who shuts his animals in the barn at night for safekeeping. Noah, one recalls, having left the Ark indulges in his own drinking bout.

When pigs stick out their little feet and snore they awaken another incongruous literary, and religious, association, noted by Bishop scholars, to the doomed spider which stretches out its feet in stanza 4 of Robert Lowell's dramatic monologue "Mr. Edwards and the Spider":

On Windsor Marsh, I saw the spider die
 When thrown into the bowels of fierce fire:
 There's no long struggle, no desire
 To get up on its feet and fly—
 It stretches out its feet
 And dies. This is the sinner's last retreat;
 Yes, and no strength exerted on the heat
 Then sinews the abolished will, when sick
 And full of burning, it will whistle on a brick.¹⁵

The poem's congeries of religious, literary, and visual allusions and associations, sounded to the tune of a wonky sonnet, help establish an askew psychological dwelling place for Bishop's drinker. With the assistance of alcoholic binges, he has found a certain coziness and homey comfort in his servitude. Servitude is, after all, itself addictive. In the prodigal's case, it affords him, as David Kalstone puts it, a "parodied family intimacy" (129), one of whose habitual delights is infanticide.

Held in the farmer's hand as, swinging his arm, he walks away from the barn, the lantern going away carries with it glimmerings of Hopkins's "The Lantern out of doors." Casting on the mud, no longer glazed red by the morning sun, an aureole, it confers upon Bishop's narrative a receding religious light. Her notional quatrain—it is in

want of a proper *e f e f* "two-by-four"—espies in a captured moment the mid-swing of the lantern as it

laid on the mud a pacing aureole.	<i>f</i>
Carrying a bucket along a slimy board,	<i>e</i>
he felt the bats' uncertain staggering flight,	<i>d</i>
his shuddering insights, beyond his control,	<i>f</i>

The disjointed syntax of a new sentence, following *pacing*, meanders participially forward *Carrying*, *staggering*, *shuddering*. Left behind by the farmer, the prodigal carries no lantern, only a bucket as he makes his way along a slimy board—a two-by-four?—perhaps made "slimy" by "glass-smooth dung." In the darkness, space and spatial relations become murky as he performs his nightly rounds. The pigsty and the barn proper to which it may be directly connected are no longer readily distinguishable, and whether the prodigal himself has been shut up in the barn to discharge night duties is left unclear. He cannot see the bats but can feel their "uncertain staggering flight," with word-play struck on "flight," presumably his greatest wish but one he fails to act upon.¹⁶ As a drinker he would not be unused to staggering, and to shuddering brought on by the kind of involuntary tremors Bishop reports on in her letter to Loren MacIver. The prodigal's "shuddering insights," if understood as a physiological and mental symptom of delirium tremens, are in a real sense "beyond his control." Nevertheless they may also cause him to see the frightening consequences of his addiction, and are thus in a double sense "shuddering." His shuddering insights indeed seem to imply that his cozy adjustment to addictive servitude is momentarily shattered, when he actually "feels" the bats' "uncertain staggering flight." The three words taken singly or as a single collocation—uncertain, staggering, flight—are distinctly loaded. "Flight," too, can be taken two ways particularly in the context of alcoholic pathology: alcohol may itself be a would-be escape, a "flight" from a reality which the alcoholic cannot face, much less master or control. Overlaying this sense is, in the poem, the prodigal's would-be flight as an escape from servitude—which in Bishop's ver-

sion of the parable is his alcoholic addiction. Neither applied sense of "flight" as escape into addiction or would-be escape from addiction, both deriving from the bats' flight, fully subdues the other.

Formally, Bishop's third notional quatrain with its meager *f e d f* rhyme scheme provides, as if providentially, perfect preconditions for an orthodox *gg* Shakespearean couplet to follow. All's well that ends well. All other requisite rhymes, *a* through *f*, have now been battened down, however belatedly. The *aureole* / *his control* rhyme ensures that, unlike what happened in the first quatorzain, an *f* rhyme is not left wanting until the couplet. But a radically enjambed final active participial phrase, "touching him," first is called upon to complete the sequence *pacing, staggering, shuddering, touching*, with *touching* in both a physical and an emotional sense bringing home to the prodigal the true wretchedness of his condition.¹⁷

touching him. But it took him a long time	<i>g</i>
finally to make his mind up to go home.	(<i>x</i>)

The prodigal's insights "touch" him no doubt and thus at least temporarily jolt him out of his paralyzing apathy; but his "shuddering insights," and the bats' flight he feels "touching" him, are also, in my reading of the poem, by-products of an alcoholic's *noche oscura*. In delirium tremens the "shuddering" drinker may be faced with "shuddering insights" into his condition as he hallucinates all manners of unlovely creatures—bugs, spiders, lizards, bats, you name it—touching or crawling over him, as he undergoes worse tortures than those of St. Anthony, patron of swineherds.¹⁸

A mid-line "But"—the poem's third adversative "but"—might seem to herald a Shakespearean reversal couplet and a rhetorically clinching rhyme. But "home" paired off with "time" succeeds only in sounding *m* consonantal reverberation, which is intensified by the *h-m* consonantal rhyming sequence *him, him, home*, as if the *h* and *m* consonant sounds were striving to attain a true rhyme but failing. The assonantal *i* sequence sounded by *time, finally, mind* tells its own insistent aural and semantic story, while supplementary *t* and *m* allitera-

tive sequences—*touching, took, time* and *make, mind*—add to the aural chorus. "Home" even against such pressure resists rhyming.

The biblical prodigal wasted no time, once "he came to himself" (Luke 15:13), in setting out homewards and he is met even before he gets there by his father, who comes running towards him. Bishop's prodigal resists any sudden impulse to desert his home away from home. Why should he? The farmer, whom he obeys, takes on the role of a father toward whom he is a dutiful son, and the sow, to whom he shows affection, is a sufficiently voracious mother. In view of this family idyll, is it really surprising that the get-away couplet falls metrically flat? Shuddering insights are one thing, but finally making up one's mind is, under the circumstances, quite another. And after all, an alcoholic can make his mind up quite often, "never again."

Bishop's drinker has the good fortune to be cast in the role of the biblical prodigal, and thus at some indeterminate future point has a happy ending in store for him, that of the "reformed drinker," or in more up-to-date ex-boozing nomenclature, the "recovering alcoholic." That consummation devoutly to be wished, from time to time, is recorded in the past tense as if in anticipation of its achievement. The force of the couplet's adversative "But" is rather on "a long time" still stretching out before the prodigal in his taking even the first step—of twelve or more—homewards. As an anti-type of the biblical prodigal he "must" go home; but there is little sign that he is eager to play out his appointed typological role, despite occasional shuddering insights, themselves perhaps a product of his drinking. The impersonal "it took him" phrasing, rather than "he took," may suggest how such finally making of his mind up goes against the grain, grain alcohol if you will. The minimally stressed lines of Bishop's couplet, which read as if air were going out of a tire, mimic the prodigal's post-insight torpor. Scanning them as would-be pentameters would be a painful undertaking.

Bishop was eager to have Lowell, no mean drinker himself, read her new poem and to Loren MacIver she wrote of having made her mind up she had "had enough [...] of drinking and all forms of trouble." As

a binge drinker forever falling off the wagon, forever making new resolutions, again and again she indeed sought to act upon her shuddering insights. "I want to get myself in such good shape," she tells McIver after working hard one morning on "The Prodigal." As an alcoholic who has made her mind up "never again," in her new poem Bishop projected herself ingeniously, humorously, self-critically in the biblical parable's prodigal. The ache of homelessness she could also displace into her sympathetic parody of the quintessential biblical homecoming story.

A homecoming in which all shame and misery are instantly dispelled is the biblical prodigal's for the asking, indeed even before the asking, as his father comes to meet him. In theological terms, he is a recipient of prevenient grace, a grace which "comes before" and which is not dependent on our "finally" making up our mind. A long time is not required. For Bishop, addictive servitude was not so easy to escape, and for her a long time became a lifetime. When she completed "The Prodigal" during her stay at Yaddo from October 1950 to January 1951, it was nevertheless for her, as Ilse Barker recalls, "a breakthrough. It was the first poem she had written for a long time. One of the lovely things about Elizabeth was that she was unself-consciously pleased with her poetry when it worked well. She showed us the poem with obvious pleasure."¹⁹

In her first poem for "a long time" Bishop could not directly draw upon the sort of faith which animated Luke's telling of the parable of the prodigal son. Yet she was a devoted reader of Herbert and of Hopkins and her poems abound with religious allusions. Richard Wilbur, himself a professing Christian, observes that "[t]hough she had no orthodox convictions, and wondered at such in others, Elizabeth Bishop had religious concerns and habits of feeling."²⁰ "The Prodigal" displaces—"hides" but also reveals—her feelings of mortified self-degradation in a biblical figure for whom release from the cycle of drinking bouts and shuddering insights followed by yet another drinking bout was divinely assured. She felt herself unable to claim that divine assurance for herself, but her sympathetic parody

enabled her to fashion a healing fiction which afforded her, one is glad to hear, obvious pleasure.

Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität
Bonn

NOTES

¹Manfred Siebald, *Der verlorene Sohn in der amerikanischen Literatur* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2003) devotes a chapter to uses of the parable in American poetry (259-83), including, from the second half of the twentieth century in addition to Bishop's "The Prodigal" (268-73), four poems all titled "The Prodigal Son" by W. S. Merwin, David Ignatow, Robert Bly, and David Jaffins.

²On sacred parody, particularly as employed by Herbert, see Inge Leimberg's commentary on Herbert's "A Parodie" in *The Temple*, with a German verse translation by Inge Leimberg (Münster: Waxmann, 2002) 455-56, and Matthias Bauer's discussion of "A Parodie" in his *Mystical Linguistics: George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, and Henry Vaughan* (Habilitationsschrift, Universität Münster, 1999) 70-75. *The Temple* is quoted from the 1633 ed. reproduced in Leimberg.

³I cite the text as reprinted in Elizabeth Bishop, *The Complete Poems 1927-1979* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983) 71.

⁴Bonnie Costello, "Narrative Secrets, Lyric Openings: Stevens and Bishop," *Wallace Stevens Journal* 19.2 (1995): 180-200 observes that description delays the plot and argues that "[r]ather than emphasizing the traditional in the prodigal story from exile to home, Bishop reconceives her idea of home through her description of exile" (188).

⁵Brett C. Millier, *Elizabeth Bishop: Life and the Memory of It* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993) 230.

⁶I quote from the letters as published in Elizabeth Bishop, *One Art: Letters*, ed. Robert Giroux (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994): Lowell, 171; MacIver, 192-93; U. T. and Joseph Summers, 478-79. Several of Bishop's correspondents (including U. T. and Joseph Summers) relate their first-hand knowledge of Bishop's drinking bouts, if that is not a too light-hearted euphemism for her recurrent binges, in Gary Fountain and Peter Brazeau, eds., *Remembering Elizabeth Bishop: An Oral Biography* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1994).

⁷In addition to Millier, the most detailed source on Bishop's childhood, see Thomas Travisano, *Midcentury Quartet: Bishop, Lowell, Jarrell, Berryman and the Making of a Postmodern Aesthetic* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1999) 83-97, who

observes that "Bishop's self-loathing, quite unmerited, of course, but characteristic of a child's tendency to assume responsibility for what goes wrong, followed her throughout her life, as did a characteristic self-deprecation and an understandable yearning for sympathy and acceptance" (94). One might read into "odor" in "The Prodigal" a kind of pun on Latin *odi*, "I hate" (the self-hatred of the addict). Read as a sympathetic parody, "The Prodigal" confers on Bishop's *alter ego* sympathy she herself yearned for.

⁸In several interviews and conversations over the years now collected in George Montiero, ed., *Conversations with Elizabeth Bishop* (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1996) Bishop voiced her admiration of Herbert's poetry and its primary influence on her own; in the 1978 interview with Sheila Hale, a year before her death, she declares that "George Herbert [...] has been the most important and most lasting influence on me" (112). Thomas Travisano, *Elizabeth Bishop: Her Artistic Development* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1988) points out that "The Prodigal" "alludes to Herbert, of course, in its (somewhat freer) use of one of his favorite forms, the double sonnet" (112).

⁹Thomas Travisano, "'The Flicker of Impudence': Delicacy and Indelicacy in the Art of Elizabeth Bishop," *The Geography of Gender*, ed. Marilyn May Lombardi (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1993), who regards "The Prodigal" as a poem "central to Bishop's achievement," observes that "sordid details are indispensable and point toward profound psychological and teleological disturbance" (121). Travisano notes how often in Bishop's poetry delicacy and indelicacy coexist and are sometimes "hard to separate" (122).

¹⁰The sonnet in which the poet parodies a poetaster desperately trying to nail down his rhymes is an amusing sub-branch of the sonnet with a long tradition; for examples from several national literatures, see L. E. Kastner, "Concerning the Sonnet of the Sonnet," *Modern Language Review* 9 (1916): 205-11. Irregularly rhymed sonnets which "fail" to deliver on the formal expectations they apparently posit may have, I grant, other rhetorical purposes in mind—on Shelley's "Ozymandias," probably the most familiar "defective" sonnet in English poetry; see Christoph Bode's discerning commentary in his *Einführung in die Lyrikanalyse* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2001) 139-40. Bishop may possibly have found in Robert Lowell's early irregular sonnets—themselves influenced perhaps by Allen Tate's—a catalyst for her double sonnet; but neither Lowell's sort of rhetorical forcefulness, nor Tate's, is what Bishop's use of imitative form is after. As for nailing down rhymes better late than never, Herbert's "The Collar" also readily comes to mind, but again for different rhetorical purposes.

¹¹After Herbert, Hopkins was the poet Bishop most frequently spoke of as a central influence on her development as a poet. In the 1966 interview with Ashley Brown, she spoke of having begun to read poetry at age eight and early on of "coming across Harriet Monroe's quotations from Hopkins, 'God's Grandeur' for one. I quickly memorized these, and I thought, 'I must get this man's work.' In 1927 I saw the first edition of Hopkins" (Monteiro 20-21). Bishop's "Gerard

Manley Hopkins: Notes on Timing in His Poetry," which she wrote for the *Vassar Review* (February 1934): 5-7, later reprinted in Lloyd Schwartz and Sybil P. Estess, eds., *Elizabeth Bishop and Her Art* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1983) 273-75, is wonderfully acute and suggestive.

¹²David Kalstone, *Becoming a Poet: Elizabeth Bishop with Marianne Moore and Robert Lowell* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989) observes, "The frightening part of Bishop's poem is its air of sanity [...] its ease and attractiveness only just keeping down panic and fear" (128).

¹³See Shakespeare's sonnets 7, 14, 44, 54, 62, 93, 138, 141, 151, and 153, in which a "But" initiates a turn. In several other sonnets Shakespeare employs "Yes," "O," or "And" to signal a Petrarchan volta at line 9. Siebald notes that in Bishop's quatorzains "zwei Teile stellen in zwei Kontrasten eine Wellenbewegung der Gefühlslage dar, wobei die Emotionen zunächst jeweils durch *objective correlatives* angedeutet und erst am Ende der Strophen in einer Art gedanklicher Schlussfolgerung thematisiert werden" (269).

¹⁴A two-by-four, for European readers who may be unfamiliar with the term, is "a piece of lumber approximately 2 by 4 inches as sawed and 1 5/8 inches by 3 5/8 inches if dressed" (*Merriam-Webster OnLine Dictionary*), which is used all the time in carpentering and for construction purposes, such as in building a barn according to the so-called two-by-four construction method developed in the United States and Canada. Two-by-fours are used as a central frame to which plywood panels or the like are attached to form floors and walls (see Jetro entry on two-by-four construction method at <http://www.dec.ctu.edu.vn/ebooks/jetro/footnote.html>). Two-by-fours might also be lying about for various odd jobs which the prodigal might be expected to do in addition to discharging his swineherd's obligations. British "pints" (based on imperial measure), drunk from glasses, have pub-centered associations unlike those of the handy bottles of hard liquor which the prodigal hides and presumably drinks straight drinks from. The German *Flachmann*, smaller than a pint, would be roughly equivalent to an American "twentieth." But the hip flask of choice in America is the "tenth," commonly referred to as a pint.

¹⁵Robert Lowell, *Collected Poems*, ed. Frank Bidart and David Gewanter (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

¹⁶Travisano, *Elizabeth Bishop*, notes that "voluntary incarceration" was "a central theme in [Bishop's] early fables" (112) and proposes a different interpretation from mine of the prodigal's apparent resistance to going home (112-14).

¹⁷"Touching" might also be said to bring to an end a proliferation of participles and ing-nouns initiated by the gerund *breathing* followed by *moving*, *sickening*, *burning* of "mornings" after, and resumed "evenings" with its own "lightnings" by *overhanging*, *going*, *pacing* before all comes to an end *Carrying*, *staggering*, *shuddering* and, finally, *touching*.

¹⁸In Billy Wilder's multiple Oscars-winning film of 1945, *The Lost Weekend*, which I have not been able to determine whether Bishop saw, the protagonist, a would-be writer and like Bishop a binge drinker, in a delirium tremens hallucination sees vultures flying overhead and a rat on the wall. Earlier in the film, Don, memorably played by Ray Milland, climbs on a table in order to hide a bottle (a fifth, not a pint) in a kind of chandelier, so no one can see it who might enter the room. For a distinctly non-alcoholic vision of a bat's flight employed as a conceit for "Mind in its purest play," turn to Richard Wilbur's "Mind," in his *Things of this World* (1956), reprinted in *New and Collected Poems* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988) 240.

¹⁹Barker's recollection is included in *Remembering Elizabeth Bishop* 123-24.

²⁰Richard Wilbur, "Elizabeth Bishop," *Ploughshares* 6 (1980): 10-14, repr. in *Elizabeth Bishop and Her Art* 263-66, here 265. Wilbur briefly cites several poems, although not "The Prodigal," as moving instances of Bishop's "religious concerns and habits of feeling." He also notes that "when she was asked to make a selection of someone's poems for a newsletter, she came up with an anthology of hymns. (Her favorite hymn, by the way, was the Easter one which begins, 'Come ye faithful, raise the strain / Of triumphant gladness.')" (266). In a 1966 interview with Ashley Brown, the subject having turned to Lowell, Eliot, Auden and twentieth-century religious poetry, Bishop remarked, "I don't like modern religiosity; it always seems to lead to a tone of moral superiority. [...] As for religious poetry and this general subject, well, times have changed since Herbert's day. I'm not religious, but I read Herbert and Hopkins with the greatest pleasure" (in Monteiro 23).

"If we offend, it is with our good will":
Staging Dissent in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

DAVID LAIRD

In the climate of controversy that descends on late Tudor and Stuart England, Shakespeare is not particularly anxious to pick a fight with the authorities. There is good reason for him to be cautious, to mind his step, as it were, and to use whatever license theatrical artifice and the realm of fiction will afford. It is, perhaps, a measure of success that he evades official scrutiny more successfully than do many of his contemporaries.¹ Yet he dares to offend, repeatedly subjecting prevailing ideologies, allegiances, and practices to multiple perspectives and valuations. He invites controversy even when he seems to go out of his way to avoid it. When prudence is called for, Shakespeare's prudence is something less than determining. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, prudential concerns, while certainly manifest, are overtaken by initiatives that open the play to a variety of contemporary issues and anxieties and bring into question, even dispute, familiar Elizabethan social and ideological arrangements. The enactment of this emancipatory, subversive strategy brings Shakespeare close to the edge of artistic and political indiscretion.

Such a claim must seem beside the point for a work so celebrated for its extraordinary theatricality and so often cited as a prime example of festive comedy.² It does, after all, conform to the rules of the genre; it begins in separation, moves through confusion and bewilderment, and ends in multiple marriages and to the seeming joy and appeasement of all parties. But, as some critics, Louis Montrose and Thelma Greenfield among them, have been quick to point out, the promise of a happy ending does not altogether silence alien voices or persuade us that the issues the play raises have been settled once and for all.³

Among those issues are the restrictions of class and gender and the absolutist claims of the Athenian state. They come into focus at various points through the play but most tellingly in the play-within-the-play and in the figure of Bottom the weaver. They thread their way through the targeted use of puns and malapropisms and a counter discourse that challenges the language of power and privilege. They are implicated in the cross-dressing, dressing up and dressing down, by which the artisans of Athens manage to escape, if only momentarily, the restrictions of their class and the shape-shifting in which Bottom is quite literally transfigured in an Ovidian commingling of the earthly and divine. They figure as well in the celebration of witchcraft and magic in violation of prevailing legal and religious prohibitions and, even more incautiously, in the promotion of Bottom from anxious, linguistically disruptive clown and subject of the Fairy Queen to arch rival and worthy adversary of the Athenian duke in a contest of mighty opposites the outcome of which remains in doubt even at the close.

These features have a common trait or characteristic. They share a fluidity or mutability that pushes against the enforced divisions and discriminations that define much of Elizabethan political and domestic life.⁴ The energies they release are, in effect, destabilizing and, in some instances, transgressive as well. They reach beyond the realm of fiction in ways that must have caught the attention of some members of Shakespeare's audience even while escaping the notice of the censor. Shakespeare obviously uses the resources of the genre to cover his tracks, to dodge the bullet, so to speak. He manages to avoid being taken to task, being held accountable, by insisting on the play's fictionality, its apparent containment within a world of make-believe. But the exercise of prudence in this regard should not blind us to those latent concerns in pursuit of which the play gains a wider currency.

Oberon's response to Puck's warning that ghosts scatter with the approach of day is an example of the enlistment of multiple registers to capture meanings both prudent and provocative. The Fairy King

takes pains to point out that "we are spirits of another sort. / I with the morning's love have oft made sport."⁵ His refusal to be identified with the spirits of the night seems to suggest that Shakespeare, mindful of risks incurred with the introduction of the supernaturals, offers the distinction in an effort to forestall controversy. But it would seem no less the case that Oberon's apology, by confronting the audience with a world of difference, invites the very controversy it seeks to dispel.

It is a commonplace of criticism to acknowledge Shakespeare's borrowing from Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, which not only tells the story of a witch who changes a young sailor into an ass, but also introduces Robin Goodfellow who "once provoked such fear and apprehension among a superstitious and credulous people that they were afraid of their own shadow."⁶ Scot reports that he no longer claims the respect once accorded to him and that witches some day "will be as much derided and contemned, and as plainly perceived, as the illusion and knavery of Robin Goodfellow."⁷ It is less often acknowledged that Shakespeare differs from his source by showing no such inclination to condemn or expose the mischievous sprite. Instead, he allows him to act as master of the revels, as much an agent of order and domestic harmony as of deviltry and discord. By doing so and by licensing the eye-dazzling exercise of magical, uncanny powers, he puts himself and the play in some danger.

A different sort of risk springs from the Ovidian materials with which the play is so richly stocked. Ovidian metamorphosis evokes a world of becoming and a freedom both terrifying and transformative.⁸ David Young in his splendid study of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* tries to fathom the complex role that Ovid plays in Renaissance thought.⁹ To that end, he turns to art historian Edgar Wind's account of the redemptive promise and soaring versatility that one Italian humanist was able to derive from notions of metamorphosis and mutability:

In Pico's oration *On the Dignity of Man*, man's glory is derived from his mutability. The fact that his orbit of action is not fixed like that of angels or of

animals gives him the power to transform himself into whatever he chooses and become a mirror of the universe. He can vegetate like a plant, rage like a brute, dance like a star, reason like an angel, and surpass them all by withdrawing into the hidden centre of his own spirit where he may encounter the solitary darkness of God [...]. Mutability, in Pico's view, is the secret gate through which the universal invades the particular.¹⁰

Bottom's career describes "an orbit of action" that moves from failed attempts to play many parts to a magical transformation that sweeps him into intimate contact with a goddess. Transcending the rigidities of rank and station is itself transgressive and subversive. It suggests that such divisions are social constructs, in some sense, arbitrary, often unjust and capricious. In a society that still enforced the sumptuary laws, this blurring of class and cosmic boundaries must have been cause for concern.¹¹ It is not only the decorum of dress that is at issue, but that of language and conduct as well.

At the first rehearsal of the play-within-the-play, Peter Quince warns the company of what may happen if Bottom were to present too convincing a lion: "you would fright the Duchess and the ladies that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all" (1.2.60-62). Bottom responds with a joke that enforces Quince's caution and mocks it as well: "If you should fright the ladies out of their wits they would have no more discretion but to hang us" (1.2.64-65). The remark at one level means that the ladies are without discretion in a legal sense, that is, without legal authority or jurisdiction in the matter, and would, therefore, have to accede to the hanging. At another level it suggests that, having lost their wits, the ladies would have no better judgment but to hang them. It's a marvelous bit of wordplay, implying that members of the court are themselves subject to Athenian law and suffer as well from a lack of discretion or reasoned judgment. Repeatedly Bottom's language slips from one level of meaning to another. At times the freewheeling ambiguities seem planned, contrived for a purpose. At other times, they are clearly accidental, unintended consequences quite beyond the speaker's control.¹² Bottom is identified here and elsewhere with a kind of linguistic transgression in which one meaning mutates into another and

the capacity of language to represent non-verbal phenomena is brought up for review. The relation between words and things is made to seem arbitrary; words, liberated from their referents, take on a life of their own. The versatility with which Bottom uses language or is used by it challenges those, Theseus most particularly, who would dominate the discourse.¹³

Bottom's dazzling display of ambiguity shows up not only in what he says but also in what he aspires to become. He demands to be allowed to play all the parts, to become the part he plays and simultaneously another as well. He insists that his lion, were he to get the part, would be played "as gently as any sucking dove" and would roar like a nightingale. A mild, mannerly lion reduces the risk of offending those in power, an eventuality that might, as Quince warns, "hang us all" (1.2.62). But Quince tells him he is best suited to the part of Pyramus and will play no other:

You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man, a proper man as one shall see in a summer's day, a most lovely, gentlemanlike man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus. (1.2.68-70)

Clearly the artisans are aware of the downside of taking to the stage, of playing roles above or below their station. Snug, assigned the part of the lion, is instructed to say that he is Snug the joiner and only partly or sometimes the lion. His denial of his performance, of what he seeks to represent, acts as a safety device or means of damage control. The players lay the groundwork for their defense by inviting the willing engagement of disbelief, insisting that what is on offer merely hints at something else and is not, therefore, to be mistaken for it. They and presumably the playwright as well are careful to locate their production within the realm of fiction. The Ovidian materials including the tragic story of Pyramus and Thisbe help to define and populate that realm, a world of artifice and make-believe.

Bottom alerts the company to what may displease the audience: "First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that?" (3.1.9-10). Robin Starveling

suggests that they omit the killing. Bottom counters by saying that he must be provided with a prologue to make clear that the actors do no harm and that Pyramus is not killed; "and for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear" (3.1.15-17). The lion remains a problem and another prologue is proposed to make clear that Snug the joiner is not a lion:

Nay you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck, and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect: [...] 'If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life. No, I am no such thing; I am a man, as other men are'—and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner. (3.1.28-35)

Thus the actors will protect themselves by denying the reality of what they represent. Paradoxically they are also at pains to capture that reality, either by imitation or symbolic representation. The lovers meet by moonlight. The almanac is consulted and it is determined that the moon will shine into the great hall the night of the performance. There is a backup as well. If the moon fails to represent itself, then it will be "disfigured" in the person of Moonshine, bearing a bush of thorns and a lantern. A wall is no less critical and, since it is impossible to build one in the hall, an actor fitted out with plaster, loam, and roughcast must represent it. Whether by imitation or symbolic representation, the actors aspire to engage belief and simultaneously to dispel it. Their efforts with respect to the latter prove spectacularly more successful than do those meant to achieve the former. Their version of Pyramus and Thisbe seems destined to remain at best a parody or burlesque, the auditors in no danger of losing themselves in a performance that offers neither mirror image nor compelling metaphor.

There is a sharp contrast between this critical or theoretical discussion, which occurs while the players prepare for their first rehearsal and the rehearsal itself. The discussion bears a haunting resemblance to an academic department meeting in which various proposals are

exhaustively explored. It is made to seem all the more academic in the light of what happens once the rehearsal is under way.

Quince urges the players to begin. Pyramus is to speak first, then to leave the stage and await his cue before returning. His opening line—"Thisbe, the flowers of odious savours sweet" (3.1.65)—brings an immediate correction from Quince. Bottom, accepting it, completes the speech and exits as directed. Thisbe speaks more than she is meant to. Quince tells her to repeat Pyramus's cue and he reappears, a changed creature with the head of an ass. The rehearsal is suddenly disrupted by the entrance of a translated Bottom and the players, abandoning their joint endeavor, scatter, as Puck later tells Oberon, like "wild geese" or jackdaws that "sever themselves and madly sweep the sky" (3.2.20, 23). The mood abruptly shifts from that of almost leisurely speculation to wild, panic-stricken flight. Earlier the players had been performing, acting, impersonating someone or something other than themselves, animating a relationship that remained metaphorical. Suddenly the performative metaphor is routed by the immediacy and literalness of metamorphosis. The effect is stunningly dramatic. Bottom, for the first time, plays a role in which, at least to his colleagues, he is what he represents and is entirely convincing, indeed, as convincing as he had earlier feared his lion might be to the ladies of the Athenian court.

Abandoned by his companions, Bottom reasons that they have run off in a bit of knavery intended, as he says, "to make an ass of me." He speaks truer than he knows, true both literally and, in view of his past performance, metaphorically as well.¹⁴ He decides to sing and thus to show the others that he has caught on to the joke. The song awakens Titania and the misadventure turns from awkward parody to luminous romance.¹⁵

The extraordinary mix of genders, genres, classes, and categories has been dealt with in exemplary fashion and I would only recall that the episode is made the more sensational for being performed in a transvestite theater where a boy actor impersonates a goddess and another actor playing Bottom playing Pyramus becomes the man-

beast consort of the Fairy Queen. There is a series of cross-dressings and undressings that transcends boundaries, even cosmological ones, in total disregard of patriarchal and political hierarchies. Perhaps it is only for the most obvious reasons that Bottom's "dream" remains a riddle.

When Bottom wakes, he is thrown back in time to that moment when, following his translation, the other actors abandon him. Recovering himself, he speaks a language that marks the distance he has traveled, as extraordinarily disruptive in its syntax and vocabulary as are the events he begins to remember as if in a dream. What he says unsettles linguistic norms, redresses the match between words and things, erases meanings imposed by habit and usage. It is defensive and private, yet somehow accessible as well, communicative of what remains visionary, unrepresentable, unreachable:

Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was—and methought I had—but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was! (4.1.202-07)

As has often been noted, Bottom recites a garbled version of 1 Corinthians, 2:9-10. In an illuminating discussion of the speech in *The Theater and the Dream*, Jackson Cope argues that it is a "crucial rebuttal" to the Duke's speech on imagination.¹⁶ R. A. Foakes, in his edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the New Cambridge Shakespeare, finds that the confusion of the senses, the mismatching of word and referent, shows Bottom to be impervious to anything approaching the "deepe things of God," and that the verbal misfirings define his limitations.¹⁷ One might recall that in an altogether different context Hamlet introduces a similar confusion of the senses to signify delusion, trickery, and the devil's work.

What devil was't
That thus hath cozened you at hoodman-blind?
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight.
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all

Or but a sickly part of one true sense
 Could not so mope. (3.4.70.1-70.11[Q2] in the *Norton Shakespeare*)

Hamlet portrays bad judgment in terms of the stumbling enactment of a kind of blind man's buff. That is not Bottom's game. His linguistic misfirings convey more than a whisper of what lies beyond the traffic of the world, a sense beyond sense, hallucinatory, ecstatic, a transport to the edge of revelation. There is a moment in *The Great Gatsby* when Nick Carraway almost remembers "a rhythm, a fragment of lost words."¹⁸ He, too, is possessed by a dream and manages to exorcise it by completing the only story he is able to tell. Bottom embarks on a similar project, seeking his release through the medium of poetry. He will arrange for the translation of what is intensely private and unworldly into the materiality of a written text, a ballad he proposes to sing at some future occasion:

I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream; it shall be called 'Bottom's Dream,' because it has no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the Duke. Peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death. (4.1.207-11)

Bottom will seek the aid of poet-director Peter Quince to give voice to the unspeakable vision and thus to convey to others what reaches beyond the capacity of ordinary language. The ballad has no bottom presumably because it has no foundation, no basis in actuality. It also has no bottom because it is too deep, too profound, beyond any scale or measure, unfathomable, an enigma of bottomless depth. It is to be sung at the end of a play, not this play and not that of Pyramus and Thisbe. And it will be sung at her death though whose death is not specified—Thisbe's death or even the death of Queen Elizabeth who elsewhere in the play is enshrined in compliment as "the imperial votress" and "fair vestal thronèd in the west" (2.1.163, 158). However one reads Bottom's riddling declaration, whether simply awkward and inept as Foakes believes or expressive of an insight the world deems foolish, it is, nonetheless, an assault on ordinary language and usage. It serves as an alternative to the language of secular authority, not, in this case, the king's English but that of the Athenian duke.

Theseus leaves no doubt about where he stands in relation to the world of lions and shadows, declaring it the creation of lunatics, lovers, and poets. In another decade, James I will vow to banish ambiguity from his discourse.¹⁹ Theseus sets about a similar task, determined to isolate and expel the fantastic and the visionary.²⁰ He regards what the lovers report of their sojourn in the forest as delusional, out-of-bounds, a threat to the various categories and classifications, linguistic and otherwise, by which he rules and by which he would bring the world to order.

Not unexpectedly the play moves to a confrontation between Bottom and Theseus. The two are more easily recognized as rivals in those productions in which the same actor plays Titania and Hippolyta. When that occurs, it could be said, to adapt Hamlet's remark about his rival, that Bottom has popped in between the Duke's erection and his hopes. Jan Kott stresses the relation between Titania and Hippolyta, describing Titania as "the night double of Hippolyta, her dramatic and theatrical paradigm."²¹ The relationship is hinted at when Oberon accuses Titania of having been Theseus's lover, a charge Titania dismisses as "forgeries of jealousy" (2.1.81). The competition between the Duke and Bottom works on a linguistic level as well. Theseus is enamored of his own sense of propriety and decorum. Exercising his linguistic prerogative he seeks to restrain the voices of others. He speaks with the voice of cool reason and in the belief that it lies well within the power of that voice to instill in others a sense of duty and obedience.²² Bottom is beyond that instruction. First, as Pyramus, he rebels against patriarchal authority when Thisbe and he agree to meet outside the city gates and then, as Bottom, he transcends his mortal state in defiance of laws no less confining. Leonard Barkan nicely describes Bottom as "one Minotaur whom this Theseus cannot slay."²³

The last of Bottom's vatic utterances is embedded in his final speech. Thisbe has made her peace with the sword: "Come, blade, my breast imbrue! / And farewell, friends / Thus Thisbe ends— / Adieu, adieu, adieu!" (5.1.326-27). Theseus observes that now only Moonshine and

Lion are left to bury the dead. Demetrius is so bold as to add Wall to the list of survivors. Bottom is suddenly resurrected. He rises from the dead to declare that Demetrius is wrong: "No, I assure you, the wall is down that parted their fathers" (5.1.332-33).²⁴ It is a curiously veiled, riddling, certainly audacious utterance. He assumes the role of director or stage manager to correct Demetrius, to tell him that the actor playing Wall has left the stage. But Bottom seems determined to correct the record in other ways as well. His words point to and illuminate the end to which the players have labored to bring their dismal performance. Ovid describes at length the wall that separated the two families and the chink in the wall through which the lovers were able to communicate or at least to breathe together.²⁵ The wall proves more a barrier to the opposing families than to the lovers who defy their enforced separation.²⁶ It is the separation between the families that the wall represents and it is the tragic loss of the young people that brings down the wall. The domestic and social divisions by which the fathers define themselves prove illusory in light of the tragedy that overtakes them. There is a further suggestion that the wall separating levels of dramatic representation, one set of actors from the other, even the actors from the audience, is about to disappear.

If Bottom's concluding speech, in effect his epilogue, is ignored by Theseus and the courtiers, it is not likely to be by the audience. It gains additional force by recalling what Theseus has said earlier in the scene: "Now is the mural down between the two neighbours" (5.1.201). The line follows Wall's announcement that he, having discharged his part, "being done, thus [...] away doth go" (5.1.199-200). "Mural down" was first proposed by Alexander Pope who dismissed the first quarto's "Moon used" as a printer's error and changed the folio's "morall downe" to "mural down." Pope's emendation is widely accepted by modern editors. R. A. Foakes, for example, in the *New Cambridge Shakespeare* reviews several variants, among them "morall downe" and "mure all down," but reprints Pope's "mural down." "Mure" and "mural" both fit the context and offer the added virtue of recalling their French and Latin cognates, an association

unfortunately lost in the recently published *Norton Shakespeare* and in the Oxford Press edition of 1986 on which the Norton text is based. In both editions, the line reads "Now is the wall down between the two neighbours" (5.1.205).²⁷ The conjectural emendation furthers the match between Theseus's line and Bottom's but eliminates any suggestion of class difference or elitism in Theseus's Latinate diction. In one version or another, Theseus's remark, witty and self-serving though it is, previews what Bottom will say and, at the same time, is strikingly different in tone and content, Bottom's utterance fetching meanings that amplify and spread well beyond the reach of his rival. Even as the scene marks them as competitors, it backs up that sense of kinship born of the desire to take charge, to exert power and control, to claim both authorship and authority. The energy with which they variously pursue that desire signals a more generalized competition between modes of reference and response, ways of knowing and of telling.

Bottom is an actor and acknowledges as much. Theseus is no less so but blind to the fact, diminished by what he fails to understand. It is ironic that the character who has taken such pains to confine his performance to the world of artifice and illusion whether as a lion, an ass, Pyramus, or as lover of the Fairy Queen should be permitted to cross the line and speak in his own voice.

The concluding scene develops an irony about the order it celebrates. Theseus assembles the bewildered lovers and urges them to abandon "this palpable-gross play" with which they have "beguiled / The heavy gait of night" and to incorporate themselves into the society from which they, like Pyramus and Thisbe, had earlier departed (5.1.345-46). Puck, broom in hand, comes to prepare the ground for Oberon's entry and for the benediction he will confer upon the several couples and their progeny. In the course of that preparation, Puck throws into confusion the festive mood that Theseus has tried so hard to establish.²⁸ He does so in a remarkable gesture of theatrical transgression, a violation of both literary and aesthetic decorum. He conjures up a succession of vivid images to represent those threats and

denials that lurk beyond the compass of his control. Here the lion's roar is not the voice of Snug the joiner, not deployed for comic effect or parody. It is not even the Ovidian lion that bloodies Thisbe's scarf. It and the images that follow remind the audience that this play, too, is over, that its more congenial lions and shadows are about to fade. And they put the audience on notice of a world beyond the fictional one where poverty and death hold sway.

Now the hungry lion roars,
 And the wolf behowls the moon,
 Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
 All with weary task foredone.
 Now the wasted brands do glow,
 Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
 Puts the wretch that lies in woe
 In remembrance of a shroud. (5.1.349-56)

Marshfield
 Wisconsin

NOTES

¹Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001) comments on Shakespeare's capacity to stay out of trouble: "compared with Marlowe and Jonson, he is a marvel of prudence" (163). Greenblatt goes on to suggest that in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "all controversies are made moot by the pervasive suggestion [...] that the whole spectacle is unreal" (163). This is, of course, a claim this paper seeks to qualify. I would like to thank Thelma Greenfield, Helen Laird, Timothy Raylor, and the editors of *Connotations* for their help and support at various stages of this project.

²Harold Brooks, for example, believes the play's central theme is love and marriage ("Introduction," *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Arden Edition [London: Methuen, 1979] cxxx). C. L. Barber's *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1959) argues that the "whole night's action is presented as a release of shaping fantasy which brings clarification about the tricks of strong imagination" (124). Judith M. Kennedy, "A *Midsummer Night's Dream* in the 1990s," *The Shakespearean International Yearbook 1: Where are we now in Shakespearean Studies?*, ed. W. R. Elton and

John M. Muccio (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1999) 287-301, provides an excellent survey of the criticism of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* published during the decade of the 90s.

³Louis Montrose, "A *Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Shaping Fantasies of Elizabethan Culture: Gender, Power, Form," *Rewriting the Renaissance*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986) 65-87, contends that "Shakespeare's romantic comedy is in fact contaminated throughout by a kind of intertextual irony" (77). Bottom's dream is "a parodic fantasy of infantile narcissism and dependency" (68). Thelma Greenfield, "Our Nightly Madness: Shakespeare's *Dream* Without *The Interpretation of Dreams*," *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Critical Essays*, ed. Dorothea Kehler (New York: Garland, 1998) 331-44, finds that an ambiguous mix of tones and voices haunts the play's ending: "that the play can approach any kind of harmonious conclusion (if it does) is more miracle or accident than a logically ordered movement into firm social adjustment. Accordingly, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* comes to an uncertain end" (340).

⁴See Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), and, in particular, his discussion of instruments of social control (141-52). Stone identifies norms of behavior to which individuals and social groups were required to conform. In the dramatic literature of the period, the restrictions and regulations by which social order was maintained are exemplified in a wide variety of negotiations having to do with family structures and relationships, inheritance and wealth-holding, legal and political representation, education, even religious practice and belief. Coppelia Kahn, "Coming of Age in Verona," *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. C. R. S. Lenz, G. Greene, and C. T. Neely (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1980) 171-93, discussing the conditions of life in Verona as portrayed in *Romeo and Juliet*, makes the point that the Prologue's phrase "fatal loins" connects fate with the conventions that determine social behavior: "the loins of the Montagues and the Capulets are fatal because the two families have established a state of affairs whereby their children are bound, for the sake of family honor, to kill each other" (186). This formulation, of course, brings to mind the parental pressures and discriminations imposed on the young people in the "lamentable comedy" of *Pyramus and Thisbe* and, with less costly results, on the Athenian lovers. Lena Cowen Orlen, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994) offers an impressive and far-reaching review of the exercise of patriarchal authority to regulate, if not always to control, social behavior (85-91). About the claim that order was hierarchical and that women and children had to keep their place, see Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womanhood, 1540-1620* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1984) 76-81.

⁵*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. R. A. Foakes, New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: CUP, 1984). Quotations from the play are to this edition. See Katharine Mary Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul,

1959) 127. In an illuminating discussion of wise women, fairies, and witches, Richard Helgerson refers to laws enacted in Elizabeth's reign and strengthened in James's that brought witchcraft within the jurisdiction of the royal courts and "established the framework within which witches could be treated as criminals" (*Adulterous Alliances: Home, State, and History in Early Modern European Drama and Painting* [Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000] 69). Helgerson is careful to distinguish between fairies and particularly the Queen of the Fairies on the one hand and wise women and witches on the other but insists that they share a relation to the occult (73).

⁶Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) 86.

⁷Scot 74.

⁸The most comprehensive discussion of Renaissance Ovidianism is Leonard Barkan's *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1986). Barkan finds that the imaginative appeal of mutability and its challenge to "the limits of normativity" are chief among the causes of renewed interest in Ovid (4). He suggests that the poet acts as a powerful and liberating force for Renaissance writers by providing models with which "to represent new subjects being shaped by the complexities of Renaissance culture" (6). Goran V. Stanivukovic in his introduction to *Ovid and the Renaissance Body* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2001) attributes the popularity of Ovid in the early modern period to "renewed attention to paganism and metamorphoses" (4).

⁹David Young, *Something of Great Constancy: The Art of A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1966).

¹⁰Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries of the Renaissance*, originally 1958 (London: Faber and Faber, 1968) 161. Quoted by Young 163-64.

¹¹See Frances Elizabeth Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1926). Baldwin includes a passage from William Harrison, "A Description of England," in Holinshed's *Chronicles* (107-13) in which he complains that ladies of the Elizabethan period dressed with little attention to rank or fitness: "it [...] now came to pass that women are become men; and the men transformed into monsters" (Baldwin 204). What bears directly on the argument of this paper is Baldwin's conclusion that "besides suppressing extravagance, many of the statutes were evidently intended to maintain and perpetuate distinctions in rank by preserving the ancient differences in dress" (246).

¹²See Catherine Belsey, "Love in Venice," *Shakespeare and Sexuality*, ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: CUP, 2001) 78-79, and William C. Carroll, "Language and Sexuality in Shakespeare," *Shakespeare and Sexuality*, 15-16.

¹³Lynn Enterline, in "'You speak a language that I understand not': The Rhetoric of Animation in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997): 40, refers to "a dream of a language that, when it acts, 'fills up' the grave, makes good our

debt to time." This is not the language by which Leontes projects his power, aspiring, as Enterline puts it, "to order all the linguistic exchanges in Sicily" (27). Theseus aspires to do no less within his domain. Patricia Parker in *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996) offers a brilliant discussion of the range of discourses on which Shakespeare draws in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (57-83). She is especially helpful in what she finds possible to say about discourses that assert or undermine claims to dominion and rule and about "the exposure, by 'rude mechanicals,' of the joints and seams of the joinery" that crafts the language of power (4).

¹⁴Thelma Greenfield distinguishes between Bottom's initial natural, inborn "asshood" which she terms "a metaphoric verbal denomination, a metaphor for his over-enthusiastic self importance" and the literal asshead that is thrust upon him, unnatural, and, as Greenfield puts it, "fairy-generated" (332).

¹⁵In *The Gods Made Flesh*, Barkan writes that "when Bottom is singled out from his companions in the woods, transformed, and confronted with the Fairy Queen, he is vouchsafed a visionary experience, indeed, that special sort of sacred vision that is granted only to the (apparently) undeserving [...]." Barkan adds that Bottom is "pulled upward by his love of the divine" (262-63).

¹⁶Jackson Cope, *The Theater and the Dream: From Metaphor to Form in Renaissance Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973) 224.

¹⁷Foakes 35.

¹⁸F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925) 74.

¹⁹*The Political Works of James I*, ed. Charles Howard McIlwain (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965) 280. For James's position on deceptive or ambiguous language set forth in his inaugural speech to Parliament in 1604, see, e.g., David Laird, "Competing Discourses in *The Winter's Tale*," *Connotations* 4 (1994/95): 40-43 and the literature cited there. In a suggestive and insightful discussion of the relationship between language and power, see William Morse, "Metacriticism and Materiality: The Case of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*," *ELH* 58 (1991): 283-98. Morse argues that Shakespeare sets out to subvert "a dominant absolutist ideology" and in the process "dramatizes the poverty and shrunkenness of the emergent discourse of modernism" with which agents of power are shown to be allied and by means of which they seek to rule (298).

²⁰See Cope's discussion of the role of Theseus. The point is made that Theseus speaks from "the smug security of his rationalism" (225).

²¹*The Bottom Translation* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1987) 44.

²²See Lynn Enterline's illuminating comments on language as a mode of action and the "search for a kind of voice that can effect the changes of which it speaks" (31).

²³Barkan 264.

²⁴The quarto assigns this line to Lion. Most editions follow the folio and give the line to Bottom. R. A. Foakes notes that "the speech is very much in Bottom's style [...] and Lion (Snug) 'vanished' offstage at 255" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, New Cambridge Shakespeare, note to l. 332, p. 131).

²⁵See Niall Rudd, "Pyramus and Thisbe in Shakespeare and Ovid," *Shakespeare's Ovid: The Metamorphoses in the Plays and Poems*, ed. A. B. Taylor (Cambridge: CUP, 2000) 113-25.

²⁶For a searching discussion of the strategic importance of the role of Wall in relation to the play's handling of social and domestic relations, see Mark Taylor's *Shakespeare's Imitations* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 2002). Taylor writes that the reiteration of "wall" and the presence of Wall "make concrete and visible the circumstances, parental wills, that separate the lovers" (56).

²⁷The crux has an interesting textual history. Gary Taylor chooses "wall" for literary-critical reasons, not textual ones. He attributes the conjectural emendation to J. Payne Collier and accepts it because, in his view, it makes sense (*William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987] 285-86). The attribution to Collier is curious if only because Collier does not introduce "wall" in either of his two editions. The edition of 1844 prints "Now is the mural down between the two neighbours" (5.1, vol. 2, 460), and the 1858 edition "Now is the mure all down between the two neighbors" (5.1, vol. 2, 248). In a footnote in the 1858 edition, Collier comments: "For 'mure all,' (which is Theobald's emendation,) the folio misreads moral; while the 4tos. are still farther from the meaning when they have it 'Now is the moon used,' etc." In a final sentence, Collier hazards the happy speculation that "it should seem that in the time of the old corrector of the folio, 1632, neither 'moral,' nor *mure all* were the words on the stage: he inserts wall" (252). While Collier acknowledges that the "correction" may be based on theatrical practice, he declines to reprint it.

²⁸See Greenfield 339-40.

Catholic Shakespeare? A Response to Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel*

E. A. J. HONIGMANN

The secret or coded meanings of Shakespeare's plays have been discussed since at least the eighteenth century. Horace Walpole's *Historic Doubts* (1768) explained *The Winter's Tale* as an apology for Anne Boleyn, James Plumptre's two pamphlets on *Hamlet* (1796, 1797) were "an attempt to prove that [Shakespeare] designed it as an indirect censure on Mary Queen of Scots," a thesis later repeated by Lilian Winstanley (1921).¹ Coded Catholic interpretations of the plays (and of *The Phoenix and the Turtle*) have recently become more fashionable, and no one has pressed these claims more energetically than Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel in *Die verborgene Existenz des William Shakespeare*.² In her new life of Shakespeare the dramatist's Catholicism is taken for granted and becomes a major preoccupation.

What is the evidence for this "Catholic Shakespeare"? The hard evidence is surprisingly thin on the ground. Richard Davies (if it was he) stated in the later seventeenth century that "he died a papist," referring on the same page to Shakespeare's "unluckiness in stealing venison" and confusing Justice Clodpate and Justice Shallow;³ much earlier, in 1611, John Speed alleged that the Jesuit, Robert Parsons, was indebted for his account of Sir John Oldcastle to "the stage-players," dismissing Parsons and Shakespeare as "this papist and his poet."⁴ This is not evidence that one would wish to rely on in a court of law. So the "Catholic Shakespeare" depends on two kinds of circumstantial evidence: the known or suspected Catholic sympathies of the drama-

*Reference: Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel, *William Shakespeare—Seine Zeit—Sein Leben—Sein Werk* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2003).

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debhonigmann01201.htm>>.

tist's family, friends and patrons and the Catholic attitudes embedded in his plays (e.g. the role of purgatory in *Hamlet*).

Having grappled with this problem long ago,⁵ I think it fair to say the great difficulty for modern readers, especially readers not brought up in England, will be to understand the position of English Catholics from 1577, when the first priest from Douai was executed and anti-Catholic laws became more menacing. Hammerschmidt-Hummel surveys the historical background helpfully, and the general picture that emerges (fines for Catholics, imprisonment, torture, execution) is convincing. German readers will compare it with their own more recent history, and know only too well how such tragic situations can arise.

A special factor of the Elizabethan settlement, however, complicated the persecutions in England, as compared with Germany, Iraq, Bosnia, Ruanda etc.: the hunted minority was indistinguishable, both racially and in its language, from the majority. The authorities relied on spies and informers to identify their Catholic quarry, and naturally most of those arrested denied all charges. "Church papists," who attended services in their parish church and also went to mass when they could, were not easy to identify. "Lord Burghley's Map" of suspected strongholds of Catholicism was based on rumour, and rumour and proof were two different things. Even today we cannot be certain that some of the highest in the land (e.g. Ferdinando Lord Strange and the Earl of Southampton, two of Shakespeare's patrons) were or were not Catholics, while the loyalties of lesser men were even more murky. Hammerschmidt-Hummel, I repeat, is good on the general picture but perhaps less so when there is conflicting evidence about individuals. Sometimes she repeats gossip and does not inform readers of evidence to the contrary. Lord Strange and the Earl of Southampton, she thinks, were pillars of Catholicism,⁶ whereas Park Honan, in his recent *Shakespeare: A Life*, tells a different story.⁷ Hence she paints black or white pictures of the principal players that are more one-sided than those in English or American biographies. This would not matter so much if readers could compare hers with more traditional accounts: but Ger-

man studies of Shakespeare have neglected biography (perhaps wisely) and therefore Hammerschmidt-Hummel may impress them as authoritative rather than as questioning and often iconoclastic.

One of the most striking features of this book is that the author is no respecter of reputations. She goes her own way and waves away the views of E. K. Chambers, Samuel Schoenbaum, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and many more. Healthy scepticism? Up to a point, yes, except that I think she attaches too much importance to Shakespeare's Catholicism, which she erects into an article of faith. Like Hammerschmidt-Hummel I favour a Catholic Shakespeare, though with a difference: her Shakespeare studied at the English College at Rheims ("Alles deutet darauf hin," 43), visited the English College in Rome in 1585, 1587, 1589, 1591, under various assumed names ("Arthurus Stratfordus Wigorniensis," "Gulielmus Clerkue Stratfordiensis" etc. 72), which, with much else, follows from her certainty that his parents were Catholics. My Shakespeare was probably (but by no means certainly) brought up as a Catholic, probably continued as a Catholic in his "lost years," and possibly returned to his Catholic faith on his death-bed, after (probably) converting to the Church of England when or soon after he started his career in the theatre. Even though it seems incredible that a writer so curious about other nations should never visit any, I know of no hard evidence that he did—which is not to say that he could not have done so.

To put it crudely, the difference between Hammerschmidt-Hummel's Catholic Shakespeare and mine is this: she offers a tidy interpretation of the evidence, where every detail fits in with her main thesis; I prefer to leave gaps and uncertainties when clear-cut evidence is lacking. Thus, to answer the questions "why did Shakespeare not buy a house in London?" and "why did he move so often from one lodging to another?" she suggests that a recusant, crypto-Catholic Shakespeare wanted to escape the attention of the authorities whereas Schoenbaum thought that, as some Shakespeare taxes were left unpaid, his moves were tax-evasive. I do not say that these explanations are impossible, only that others are also possible: perhaps he did not

get on with his landladies or fellow-lodgers, or he disliked the noise or the food or the smells—in short, there are too many possibilities for us to choose any one with confidence. When every problem points to the same solution—Shakespeare's Catholicism—even those who, like the present writer, see the young Shakespeare as a Catholic may still wonder whether this answer remains the only possible one throughout his life. Must Sonnet 29 ("When in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes / I all alone beweepe *my outcast state*") allude to the poet's disadvantaged state as a Catholic (28)? Does Hamlet's "Denmark's a prison" (2.2.242) allude to the hardships of Catholics in England (213) and "To be or not to be" continue with the same grievance (215)? Was the purchase of the Blackfriars Gatehouse in 1613 fixed by the Catholic underground, a near-perfect arrangement for the benefit of priests and other hangers-on of the Old Faith (260)?

If we place ourselves in the position of a crypto-Catholic Shakespeare, or of a biographer convinced of his underground activities, we must nevertheless concede that anyone engaged in such activities will be bound to view the world in a very special way. Think of *Crime and Punishment* or *The Diary of Anne Frank*: if Shakespeare lived all his adult life knowing that he might be arrested at any time as an enemy of the state, this would have affected his thinking as Hammerschmidt-Hummel suggests—he might have moved lodgings, he might have written his sonnets and "To be or not to be" thinking of his secret religion (among many other things) but, since we cannot prove it, does it matter?

To be fair, let us mention that Shakespeare's evasiveness is puzzling and calls for an explanation. Everyone in the literary world soon knew of him, and few knew him. Near the beginning of his career, already hailed by Greene as "in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country"⁸ and clearly the darling of the London theatre-goers (why else was Greene so angry?), Shakespeare was not known to Henry Chettle. Chettle, a printer since 1584, had literary ambitions and yet, professionally active in London's then much smaller literary world, had not met the "only Shake-scene"⁹ After Shakespeare's death John

Aubrey recorded that he was "the more to be admired [because] he was not a company keeper [...] wouldnt be debauched, & if invited to writ; he was in paine,"¹⁰ and throughout his life he seems to have been a far less visible presence than other, less admired writers. He neither offered nor requested complimentary verses, he seems to have suppressed his sonnets and other occasional poetry, he did not proof-read or write dedications for his plays—why? I have always regarded this "evasiveness" as purely temperamental, yet it could be that he had a reason for lying low. And let us not forget that his world was much more dangerous than ours today. His two greatest rivals, Marlowe and Jonson, both had underground contacts, both experienced interrogation and imprisonment (and in Marlowe's case probably murder) in circumstances very like those depicted in this biography. The general picture is convincing, some of the detail may well be correct, but the author's insistence on Shakespeare's omnipresent Catholicism, though understandable, is I think counterproductive.

It all depends on Hammerschmidt-Hummel's view of John and Mary Shakespeare. She describes both of the poet's parents as strict Catholics, though mentioning that John voted with the Protestant majority in Stratford at the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign (8). So far so good. Now her narrative becomes more selective. She assumes that when John prepared his "exemplary" accounts for Stratford's joint chamberlains W. Tyler and W. Smith (1566), he personally held the pen. Other biographers believed that, since John always signed his name with a mark, he must have been illiterate. Whoever is right, her reproduction of the 1566 accounts seems to be drastically reduced (9), which makes John seem a neater penman than in the more sprawling full-page facsimile in Schoenbaum's *A Documentary Life* (32).¹¹ (Incidentally, something has gone badly wrong with her version of the Blackfriars Gatehouse conveyance [260-61], compared with Schoenbaum's [221-22].) Again, she assumes that John sent his son to the free grammar school, where he would be taught by Simon Hunt, a Catholic who fled to Douai in 1575 and later became a Jesuit priest: this is very likely, though it is relevant that the school records

for these years have disappeared and we do not know for certain that William was taught there. These assumptions, implying that John Shakespeare was literate and valued learning, help the author to make her biggest jump when she contends that, as a Catholic, William could not take a degree at Oxford or Cambridge (he would have had to swear the Oath of Supremacy), therefore he must have studied at Rheims. "The Shakespeares were strict Catholics and continued as such for the rest of their lives. It is unlikely that they did not make use of the only available Catholic [higher] education at Allen's college at Douai, i.e. Rheims" (32, my translation). She believes that John Shakespeare mortgaged part of his wife's inheritance and conveyed more acres, in November 1578, to finance his son's studies abroad. "It is unlikely that" quickly becomes a fixed point in the narrative and therefore one must ask whether Shakespeare's parents would attach the same importance to "higher" education as a professor in a modern university. John Shakespeare, a glover and shop-keeper, would surely want his eldest son to help him in his business. John, said Rowe in the first *Life of Shakespeare*, "could give him no better education than his own employment"¹²—as was usual at this time.

The theory that Shakespeare studied at a Catholic college strikes this reader as wishful thinking, and of course much of Hammerschmidt-Hummel's later narrative points back to this supposedly crucial experience (e.g. the notion that he bought the Gatehouse as a bolt-hole for priests). Does the general theory of Shakespeare's Catholicism collapse as a consequence? Not necessarily. In Shakespeare's life-time the Reformation and Counter-Reformation were not old, unhappy, far-off things and battles long ago. As Hammerschmidt-Hummel shows, religion and politics were inextricably linked and threatened the lives of the highest and lowest—of Queen Elizabeth, Mary Queen of Scots, Essex and Southampton and their followers, including the Lord Chamberlain's Men. "Men may sleep, and they may have their throats about them at that time; and some say knives have edges."¹³ In such a dangerous world it would not be too surprising if Shakespeare, probably brought up as a Catholic (the first child of John and Mary

Shakespeare was baptised in the reign of Queen Mary), remained a Church papist or underground Catholic in later years or at least retained many Catholic friends and sympathised with their difficulties, just as he understood the difficulties of Jews, Moors, North American Indians and other minorities. We must not think of Shakespeare's Catholicism as an established fact, but equally it would be a mistake to rule it out as an impossibility.

While Hammerschmidt-Hummel proposes many new ideas (too many, if I may say so), these do not invalidate the theory that Shakespeare was probably brought up as a Catholic. Let us glance at two more of her new ideas. (1) The fresco of Tobias and the Angel (11-12), usually dated in the 1560s, depicts a man in a coat edged with fur: as Stratford's bailiff, John Shakespeare was entitled to wear such a coat. During John's year as bailiff he welcomed Worcester's Men, therefore he was a friend of the theatre, therefore he probably played in a 'mystery' or civic performance. Since Tobias wears gloves and John was a glover, Tobias and his wife in the fresco may represent John and Mary Shakespeare! (2) The most sensational new idea makes a number of even more daring jumps and lands ... on a royal personage. It reinterprets two portraits (150, 156)—the first, hitherto known as *The Persian Lady* by M. Gheeraerts, presents a beautifully dressed and very pregnant lady, with her right hand resting on a weeping stag and an elaborately framed sonnet at her feet. The second, *Elizabeth Wriothesley, Countess of Southampton, at Her Toilet* (viz. the wife of Shakespeare's patron, dedicatee of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*), has, we are assured, the same features as the *Persian Lady*, therefore identifies her too as the Countess. The sonnet is said to be by Shakespeare, and to allude to the fact that the *Persian Lady* is carrying the poet's child. This child later married Lord William Spencer, one of whose descendants was Diana, Princess of Wales—so William Shakespeare emerges (how apt!) as one of the ancestors of Prince William of the House of Windsor.

A summary, of course, cannot do justice to an intricate argument, and it is not always clear to me how seriously Hammerschmidt-

Hummel takes her own ideas. But it would be a pity if wild guessing—that is how I react to some of her ideas—were to bring the theory of Shakespeare's Catholic background into disrepute. We may, surely, accept that coded flattery was widely practised—what, though, of coded criticism? For whose benefit were such criticisms intended? In the 1580s and 1590s, when the Privy Council expected Catholic invaders and spies lurked everywhere, it could not be healthy to express criticism of the government, coded or otherwise, or even to hint that the Southamptons were breeding a bastard (if you depended on their goodwill). Looking through the other end of the same telescope, when it is asserted that in Greene's attack on Shakespeare and the actors ("those puppets [...] that spake from our mouths"), puppets means "priests," a point repeated again and again,¹⁴ we may ask why, if this is correct, Greene—who wished to injure those he thought responsible for his own misfortunes—did not call them priests. After all, he did not scruple to call Marlowe a notorious atheist. Decoding Shakespeare and his contemporaries is sometimes less straightforward than Hammerschmidt-Hummel assumes.

The publishers have produced a beautifully printed and lavishly illustrated book. The author has read widely, her enthusiasm is unmistakable, and we should all applaud when a colleague has the courage to challenge received ideas. I have to confess, however, that Hammerschmidt-Hummel's decoding of hidden meanings too often fails to persuade, and I fear may do more harm than good.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne

NOTES

¹See E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1930) 1: 411.

²Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel, *Die verborgene Existenz des William Shakespeare: Dichter und Rebell im katholischen Untergrund* (Freiburg: Herder, 2001).

³Chambers 2: 257.

⁴Chambers 2: 217.

⁵Ernest Honigmann, *Shakespeare: The "Lost Years"* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1985; 2nd ed. 1998).

⁶Hammerschmidt-Hummel, *William Shakespeare* 97, 106.

⁷Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford: OUP, 1998) 66, 192.

⁸Chambers 2: 188.

⁹Chambers 2: 189.

¹⁰Chambers 2: 252.

¹¹S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1975).

¹²Chambers 2: 264.

¹³*Henry V*, II.1.21.

¹⁴Hammerschmidt-Hummel, *William Shakespeare* 70, 75, 80, 165.

Brontë and Burnett: A Response to Susan E. James*

LISA TYLER

The Romantic influences on Frances Hodgson Burnett's 1911 children's novel *The Secret Garden* are evident and have been well documented. These influences include the attention and prominence given to child characters,¹ Burnett's use of the Western tradition of the literary pastoral,² and what Burnett critics identify as the Wordsworthian notion that children are closer to nature,³—a notion perhaps more accurately attributed to Rousseau and Goethe. In her 1974 biography of Frances Hodgson Burnett, Ann Thwaite devotes a paragraph to the parallels between *The Secret Garden* and *Jane Eyre* (220-21), which she describes as too close to be coincidental, and in a 1975 bibliographical survey of Burnett's work, Francis J. Molson called for critics to establish the "extent of Burnett's debt to Mrs. Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë" (41). Phyllis Bixler, the best authority on Burnett's writings, has devoted several paragraphs to spelling out that debt and its significance (*Frances* 99), as well as briefly alluding to the possible influence of *Jane Eyre* on Burnett's other writings (*Frances* 125).

"More than one scholar has identified and described 'the echoes of *Jane Eyre* in *The Secret Garden*' but the contribution of *Wuthering Heights* has been less recognized," Susan E. James accurately observes in explaining her own project. Typical is Humphrey Carpenter's mention, in passing, that "there is a good deal of allusion to the wind 'wuthering' round the manor; the country lad Dickon, who becomes Mary's friend and helper, is a kind of Heathcliff-gone-right" (188-89). Elizabeth Lennox Keyser went a bit farther, albeit in a footnote, men-

*Reference: Susan E. James, "Wuthering Heights for Children: Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*," *Connotations* 10.1 (2000/2001): 59-76.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the Connotations website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debjames01001.htm>>.

tioning first similarities of setting, and then adding, "Mary has elements of Jane Eyre and both Catherines, Dickon resembles a more benign little Heathcliff, and Colin seems a blend of Rochester, Linton Heathcliff, and Hareton Earnshaw" (13n10). The comparison between Dickon and Heathcliff may admittedly seem a bit farfetched, but Mary certainly is an orphan, like Jane Eyre, and shares that character's courage and inquisitiveness. Like the first Catherine, she loves the freedom of being outdoors, and like the second, she willingly socializes the young man who needs her help because of parental neglect. Colin has Rochester's temper, Linton Heathcliff's sickness, and Hareton Earnshaw's willingness to be tutored. While the characters and plot developments differ dramatically, certain themes from the Brontës' novels do seem to recur in Burnett's. Anna Krugovoy Silver has done the most extensive work comparing *Wuthering Heights* and *The Secret Garden*, suggesting that Burnett replaces the purely nominal mother-and-child relationship of Catherine and her daughter with "the primacy of the maternal bond" (193). Noting the parallels to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* developed by earlier critics (e.g. Verduin and Plotz), Bixler comments on the sexual undercurrents of Burnett's novel in *The Secret Garden: Nature's Magic*:

A heroine who divides her attention between an eroticized lower-class male and an attenuated upper-class male has occurred elsewhere in British fiction. An earlier example of this character triad had been provided by Catherine, Heathcliff, and Edgar, who, along with their Yorkshire moors in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), doubtless influenced Burnett consciously or unconsciously in writing *The Secret Garden*. (56)

In her delightful essay, James develops our understanding of this influence. The most surprising and convincing element of her argument lies in her persuasive comparisons of characters in both novels: the hot-tempered orphans Mary Lennox and Heathcliff, the brooding adult Heathcliff and the grief-tormented Archibald Craven, and the sickly and effete aristocratic children, Linton Heathcliff and Colin Craven.

Perhaps the least compelling elements of James's essay are her textual comparisons, in which passages from both works are placed side by side. While the language is at times similar, the parallels she develops between the characters and situations in the two novels are ultimately more effective. Also troubling is her dismissal of the moors as a setting in the later writer's work. "For Burnett in *The Secret Garden*, the moors are a place described but never experienced first-hand," writes James (61). But elsewhere Burnett *did* show a heroine with personal experience of the moors, albeit Scottish ones—in *The White People*, her 1917 novella of the supernatural at least partly inspired by her sense that her beloved son Lionel, dead of tuberculosis at 15, was still with her in spirit. In that work as well, however, "Burnett sentimentalizes the otherworldly," as James observes of *The Secret Garden* (69).

As is typical of the best literary criticism, James's article stimulates thought and suggests further parallels to develop. It would be interesting to compare both novels as what Barbara and Richard Almond term "therapeutic narratives." Claudia Marquis, who offers a psychoanalytic reading of Burnett's novel, has suggested that Mary acts "as analyst to Colin's analysand" (178). The Almonds have demonstrated that *The Secret Garden* is an insightful portrayal of psychological healing, Gillian Adams has looked at the healing power of secrets, and Madelon S. Gohlke has written movingly of the novel's contribution to her own recovery from grief after her father's sudden accidental death. Similarly, William A. Madden has offered an analysis of *Wuthering Heights* in terms of Freudian trauma theory, contending "the double drama of *Wuthering Heights* has provided the powerful experience of living through the same potentially traumatic circumstances, once ending in tragedy, but the second time with the energy bound and channeled into human wholeness and love through the transforming power of a love that both understands and forgives" (154).

Trysh Travis has noted (with some dismay) her students' uncritical adoption of the pop-psychology terminology of what Travis calls the

"recovery movement" to understand *Wuthering Heights*; the title of her article is "Heathcliff and Cathy, the Dysfunctional Couple." More persuasively than Travis's students, Eric P. Levy suggests that the characters of Brontë's novel were all either neglected or spoiled, and that their adult behaviors reflect their childhood experiences of being either starved for love or lavished with excessive attention: "In one family, the implied message transmitted to the child might be rendered as 'You don't belong here'; in the other, 'You're too weak ever to leave'" (159). In *The Secret Garden*, Mary has received the first message, Colin the second.

The disturbing eclipse of Mary in favor of Colin in *The Secret Garden*, a switch that bothers many of the novel's women readers,⁴ bears certain parallels to Catherine's death and Heathcliff's domination of the remaining family members in *Wuthering Heights*. Consider Danielle E. Price's observation: "Mary is forgotten in what becomes a story of father and son, and we remember, if we had ever forgotten, who owns and who will own all the gardens on the estate" (11). The class dynamics of both works might also merit comparison. Both works contrast the emotional honesty, passionate warmth, and powerful personalities of characters associated with Yorkshire and the chilly, unhealthy characters who circulate in the society beyond—although in Brontë's novel, only the Yorkshire *gentry* are attractive; the servants, unlike the idealized Sowerbys of *The Secret Garden*, can be frightening in their malevolence. It would be interesting to analyze *Wuthering Heights* in light of Jerry Phillips's essay on the class politics of *The Secret Garden*.

It has been suggested that in her novel Brontë draws on the "primitive energies of childhood" (Oates 65), and thus that our own perhaps subconscious memories of childhood rage and the other primal emotions of the nursery account for at least part of the intensity and impact of *Wuthering Heights*. Yet, although appropriately drawing on those same intense emotions in a work of children's literature, Burnett mutes their impact, showing the children in rages and tantrums that are comic rather than frightening. Unlike Brontë, Burnett was ulti-

mately less interested in ugly emotions than in socially acceptable and aesthetically pleasing ones. One senses that she wished to evade the feelings invoked by the more painful experiences in her own life—her two unhappy marriages, and the loss of her son Lionel to tuberculosis, diagnosed just nine months before his death. Perhaps because of such deeply painful experiences, she seems primarily interested in people who were successfully able to achieve self-control. As she once told her son, “with the best that was in me, I have tried to write more happiness into the world” (Bixler, *Frances* 71).

Sinclair Community College
Dayton, Ohio

NOTES

¹Bixler, *Frances* 1, *Secret* 3; Phillips 176-77.

²Bixler, *Secret* 17; Evans 20-24.

³Bixler, *Secret* 6; Phillips 175-80.

⁴Bixler, “Misread” 110; Keyser 2-3, 12; Knoepfelmacher 24-25.

WORKS CITED

- Adams, Gillian. “Secrets and Healing Magic in *The Secret Garden*.” *Triumphs of the Spirit in Children’s Literature*. Eds. Francelia Butler and Richard Rotert. Hamden, Connecticut: Shoe String Press, 1986. 42-54.
- Almond, Barbara and Richard Almond. *The Therapeutic Narrative: Fictional Relationships and the Process of Psychological Change*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1996.
- Bixler, Phyllis. *Frances Hodgson Burnett*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1984.
- . “The Secret Garden ‘Misread’: The Broadway Musical as Creative Adaptation.” *Children’s Literature* 22 (1994): 101-21.
- . *The Secret Garden: Nature’s Magic*. New York: Twayne, 1996.
- Carpenter, Humphrey. *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children’s Literature*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985.

- Evans, Gwyneth. "The Girl in the Garden: Variations on a Feminine Pastoral." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 19 (1994): 20-24.
- Gohlke, Madelon S. "Re-reading *The Secret Garden*." *College English* 41 (1980): 894-902.
- Keyser, Elizabeth Lennox. "'Quite Contrary': Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*." *Children's Literature* 11 (1983): 1-13.
- Knoepfmacher, U. C. "Little Girls without their Curls: Female Aggression in Victorian Children's Literature." *Children's Literature* 11 (1983): 14-31.
- Levy, Eric P. "The Psychology of Loneliness in *Wuthering Heights*." *Studies in the Novel* 28.2 (1996): 158-77.
- Madden, William A. "*Wuthering Heights*: The Binding of Passion." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 27 (1972): 127-54.
- Marquis, Claudia. "The Power of Speech: Life in *The Secret Garden*." *AUMLA* 67 (May 1987): 163-87.
- Molson, Francis J. "Frances Hodgson Burnett (1848-1924)." *American Literary Realism* 8 (1974): 35-42.
- Oates, Joyce Carol. "The Magnanimity of *Wuthering Heights*." *The Profane Art: Essays and Reviews*. New York: Persea Books, 1983. 63-81.
- Phillips, Jerry. "The Mem Sahib, the Worthy, the Rajah and His Minions: Some Reflections on the Class Politics of *The Secret Garden*." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 17 (1993): 168-94.
- Plotz, Judith. "Secret Garden II: *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as Palimpsest." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 19 (1994): 15-19.
- Price, Danielle E. "Cultivating Mary: The Victorian *Secret Garden*." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 26 (2001): 4-14.
- Silver, Anna Krugovoy. "Domesticating Brontë's Moors: Motherhood in *The Secret Garden*." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 21 (1997): 193-203.
- Thwaite, Ann. *Waiting for the Party: The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett*. Boston: David R. Godine, 1991.
- Travis, Trysh. "Heathcliff and Cathy, the Dysfunctional Couple." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 11 May 2001: B13-14.
- Verduin, Kathleen. "Lady Chatterley and the Secret Garden: Lawrence's Homage to Mrs. Hodgson Burnett." *D. H. Lawrence Review* 17 (1984): 61-66.

Tragedy in *The Turn of the Screw*: An Answer to Ursula Brumm*

EDWARD LOBB

In her thoughtful response to my article on *The Turn of the Screw*, Professor Ursula Brumm challenges my reading of Henry James's novella in two ways. She first questions whether the term tragedy is applicable, then provides, as her title suggests, an alternate interpretation of the story. Professor Brumm's account is based on the idea of "the governess's government" of Miles and Flora, which develops into "a contest between her and her wards" (95). The adversarial relationship between the governess and the children derives, in this reading, from "the then unmentionable facts and problems of sexuality" (96), notably the possibility that Miles learned the facts of life from Quint and passed the information on to other boys at his school. This is an inferential but certainly plausible explanation of the reason for Miles's expulsion from school, and it forms one thread of the perennial Freudian readings of *The Turn of the Screw*, which began in the 1930s with Edmund Wilson's famous essay, "The Ambiguity of Henry James." The governess, unable to deal with sexual matters and no doubt unaware, at least consciously, of what she is trying to repress, becomes the unwitting censor and oppressor of the children, and Miles dies from "the mental turmoil of his ordeal" (97).

Since Professor Brumm's account of the novella provides an alternative reading rather than criticizing the details of mine, we must simply agree to disagree. In some ways, however, her interpretation is not at

*Reference: Edward Lobb, "The Turn of the Screw, King Lear, and Tragedy," *Connotations* 10.1 (2000/2001): 31-46; Ursula Brumm, "Another View on *The Turn of the Screw*," *Connotations* 11.1 (2001/2002): 91-97. Subsequent references to the article and the response will be made parenthetically.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the Connotations website at <<http://www.connotations.de/deblobb01001.htm>>.

all incompatible with my own. I, too, feel that the governess is oppressing the children, and I acknowledged the possibility of the Freudian view in my article: "Quint and Miss Jessel [...] may, as Freudian critics have argued, 'menace' Miles and Flora with information about sexuality—information which threatens the pre-adolescent world of the nursery and the governess's hold over the children" (43). James is of course always interested in psychology, including the psychology of sex, but he is equally interested in its practical consequences in the relationships among people. If I agree, then, that Professor Brumm's Freudian reading is tenable, she seems to agree with me that the *dramatic* issue is the governess's failure to recognize that her conscious desire to protect the children masks a subconscious desire to control them. Whether this subconscious desire stems from a hysterical fear of adult sexuality or—as I argued—from the governess's need to be loved seems to me a *relatively* minor—though not, of course, unimportant—issue. James was a profound psychologist, and sex and love are fundamental aspects of human development; there is no reason that both cannot be factors in a work as many-layered as *The Turn of the Screw*. My only quarrel with Freudian critics is that, like their master, they too often insist on the primacy of the sexual and ignore other, equally deep, human needs and motivations.

One issue on which Professor Brumm and I differ irreconcilably, it seems, is the question of the governess's final self-awareness. I believe that the governess attains, after the events she recounts, a genuine self-knowledge which accounts for her exemplary character when Douglas encounters her years later, and explains the self-accusing allusions in her narrative; Professor Brumm asserts that she "remains a victim to Victorian prudery" and "has not gained any insight" regarding the real issues in her conflict with the children or, presumably, her own subconscious motives. And this brings us to the question of tragedy as James conceives it.

Professor Brumm argues that if the term tragedy is to remain meaningful, it must be strictly defined, and her own definition is a traditional one: "a fall from a high position in a fateful contest with powers

and values" (92). If this definition applied to all the tragedies commonly considered great, it might well disqualify *The Turn of the Screw* from consideration, since neither the governess nor her charges can be seen as occupying a high position in society. Since the revival of tragedy in the Renaissance, however, there has been no general agreement about its salient features; the debate has involved many of the most eminent English and Continental critics and dramatists, and the focus has changed according to the needs and prejudices of the age and the writers involved. The details of these disagreements need not concern us: the point is that there was and is no agreement on what constitutes tragedy apart from its involving misfortune. Tragedy involves a fall, certainly, but that fall need not be from a high social position and can sometimes be construed, especially in modern works, as primarily psychological.

If we look at the work of Shakespeare, which is obviously seminal in modern English and Continental thought on the subject, we see immediately that he wrote several different kinds of tragedy. There are tragedies of revenge (*Titus Andronicus*), tragedies of love, circumstance, and fate (*Antony and Cleopatra*, *Romeo and Juliet*), and problematic tragedies which test any definition of the genre (*Troilus and Cressida*, *Timon of Athens*). Working with whatever came to hand, and concerned with filling the theatre, Shakespeare often combined tragic modes to create as broad a dramatic appeal as possible. In what are generally acknowledged as his greatest tragedies, however, there is a central pattern which can be summarized as tragic choice, disaster, recognition, and recovery. The protagonist makes a wrong decision (through some error or frailty, Aristotle would say), the effects of which bring misfortune down on many heads and ultimately threaten the entire society. At some point late in the play, he recognizes his error, accepts responsibility for it, and in doing so is reintegrated with the moral world he has violated. This point can be precisely identified in *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, while *Hamlet* is an exception to virtually all rules and patterns. The protagonist in each of these plays accepts his own impending death as the consequence of his own

actions; Othello even serves as his own executioner.

It is this kind of tragedy—to which high position is irrelevant—that seems to me to retain its validity in our time and in non-dramatic genres. Few people today believe in fate or the whim of the gods, but most believe in choice and recognize that we can make disastrously wrong choices because of ignorance, evil impulses, or personal demons. The consequences of these choices are often irrevocable, and our only consolation is to have learned something in an experiential way which we could not have learned from handbooks, and to amend our lives accordingly; as in the first tragedy of our culture, we eat from the Tree of Knowledge and live with the consequences. It is this unhappy (if not fatal) fall from innocence to experience, not the fall from high position, that characterizes great tragedy in the post-classical world. It is this fall which Henry James dramatized again and again, and it animates many of his most compelling works. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, *Washington Square*, and *The Golden Bowl*—to take just three examples which involve female protagonists—he traces the arc of characters' developing consciousness in time: the women in these narratives can truly say, as Kate Croy does on the last page of *The Wings of the Dove*, "'We shall never be again as we were!'" In *The Turn of the Screw*, James gives us the immensely moving spectacle of the governess narrating, from a later perspective of full knowledge, the errors of her youth.

Although the governess's story is strictly neither Greek nor Shakespearean in its development and resolution, it shares with its forebears an awareness of the tragic nature of knowledge itself; it is tragedy *mutatis mutandis* for a secular age, as I suggested in my original conclusion (42-43). Contemporary critics have written on the role of tragedy in the Victorian and modern novel, and have addressed, among other issues, the question which concerns Professor Brumm—that of the protagonist's social position. Jeannette King, for example, notes that "the novelist [...] who chooses to make his hero a common man is faced with the problem of finding compensating factors for the loss of the (symbolic) values that derive from the hero's identification

with the fate of his people."¹ The more perceptive Victorian critics gradually came to understand, however, that "the absence of [tragedy's] traditional majestic qualities was due to the underlying philosophy of the realists" (7) and that "honour can belong to the hero not only by birthright, but by achievement" (6). The absence of finality in many novels could also be seen as a deliberate choice on the part of modern fiction writers: "The cathartic resolution was rejected because it alleviated the horror of the tragic experience," and "the suggestion that it was life, not death, that is tragic" became an acceptable one (13). Serious novelists were "trying to bring together traditional formal concepts of tragedy and contemporary tragic experience, the stylised and the real, the form and the feeling," (13) and this was especially true of James.

I tried to show in my article that the verbal, situational, and thematic allusions to *King Lear*, while not conclusive in themselves, form part of a series of references and structures which define *The Turn of the Screw* as a tragic drama of choice, recognition, and ultimate redemption. Professor Brumm sees the novella as "a hybrid form of narration combining the ghost story and the detective story with what may be called the 'governess story'" (93); she cites James's declaration in his "Preface" that he wished "to improvise with extreme freedom" and takes this as evidence that the novella is incompatible with "the stringent literary form of tragedy" (92). Like Professor Brumm, I see *The Turn of the Screw* as a hybrid (43-44), but find a different significance in the fact. I see it as proof that James, like Shakespeare, was not confined by rules and could combine various genres within the pattern of tragedy to create a work unique in literature.

Queen's University
Kingston, Ontario

NOTE

¹Jeannette King, *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel: Theory and Practice in the Novels of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and Henry James* (Cambridge: CUP, 1978) 4.

War, Conversation, and Context in Patrick Hamilton's *The Slaves of Solitude*

THIERRY LABICA

There are three conversational levels I wish to explore here: (i) there are the conversations among the main protagonists of *The Slaves of Solitude*¹ and, as conversations in fiction, I also want to look at their problematic relation to context; (ii) I want to reread these fictional conversations as dramatisations of a philosophical dispute in which the main characters are the mouthpieces of antagonistic assumptions and positions about language; (iii) I also want to read this novel of implicit philosophical dialogue in the shape of fictional conversations as a metaphor of my own desired and yet impossible conversation with my author. This third objective is relevant for two main reasons. Firstly, because the development of literary pragmatics during the 1990s saw the renewal of questionable analytical categories now requiring a new round of critical confrontations. Secondly, because this meta-communicational approach is the occasion of bringing together both textual *and* paratextual issues involving the whole book rather than the dematerialised "text."

Historicizing the conditions of literary communication

Let me start then with the problem of the historical situatedness of my own conversation with Patrick Hamilton (1904-1962), British playwright and novelist, a Marxist and alcoholic, who is still largely neglected today. I will restrict the discussion to a few suggestions. There are several distinct historical phenomena going by the name of Patrick Hamilton. Indications of this can be detected in the fact that Hamilton

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <<http://www.connotations.de/deblabica01201.htm>>.

went through a whole process of revival ten years ago: two biographies came out shortly after each other² and several of long out-of-print novels became available again. What is particularly interesting here is the way in which the publishers redesigned Hamilton's work and general profile. To give a couple of examples: a group of stories involving the same character were turned into a trilogy for which a title had to be invented;³ Hamilton's second novel⁴ was now declared the author's "first novel" while the actual first published novel—if chronology is of any significance at all—remained out of print.⁵ In that case the publishers did not hesitate to represent an author's work according to their own editorial choices.

On a distinct level, the revival mainly consisted in elaborating a new literary profile: in the eighties, before the revival, Hamilton had lost all literary credit and cultural authority and clearly was not a "name" in modern British literature. At the same time, he still enjoyed a residual participation in the cultural process: one of his novels (*Mr. Stimpson and Mr. Gorse*) was the basis of a very successful TV series (*The Charmer*);⁶ his plays (*Rope* and *Gaslight*, in particular) were still occasionally performed and abridged versions of other novels were read on the radio. Still, in most cases, Hamilton as a name remained totally obscure: the example of the TV series is particularly telling as the main actor's name (Nigel Havers) always rang a bell while the author's was still completely unfamiliar. Now the revival clearly was an attempt at shifting those mediations of contemporary popular and oral culture (TV, Radio) and to turn Hamilton into a visible and relevant literary fiction writer. What the French historian Roger Chartier calls "mise en livre" (as distinct from "mise en texte") played a central role in this displacement as the book still represents the only empirical mode of affiliation to a *proper* literary culture and tradition. As for the biographies, regardless of their virtues or flaws, their function was to re-establish the obviousness of "the man behind the texts," the intentional source which one is now expected to explore "before" and "beyond" the literary production itself to be able to grasp the "true meaning" of this production. Along with this construction of a new

credibility for the nineties, the new biographies as well as the prefaces of the re-editions of the novels were out to remove the Marxist branches from the liberal tree and a post-Communist Hamilton was now to remain a non-political novelist of the thirties and forties tailored for the cultural consumption of the then "New World Order" (now, "globalisation"). Hamilton then found his place in the national literary tradition and became a twentieth-century classic (at least according to Penguin).

The reason I wish to insist on these paratextual aspects is that they clearly suggest how the shifting status of an author, a new configuration of his work, the new emphasis (in the present case) on reading and inferring at the expense of leisurely watching or listening, involve a massive, if silent, displacement in the whole set of relations and assumptions between authors, texts, and consumers-readers. In other words, one is compelled to consider the historical and material conditions of literary communication and therefore of the terms of our alleged "conversations" with authors.

If I now move on from this general suggestion regarding the historical situation of the reading of my author—and of the renewed conditions under which he is allowed to make sense—and turn to *The Slaves of Solitude*, I find myself confronted with another historio-graphical pre-construction; implicitly or explicitly, *The Slaves of Solitude* is generally seen (when seen at all) as a good documentary novel about war and evacuation. Having been written in the immediate post-war period, the categorisation of the novel is governed by the assumption that the immediate tragic context necessarily encroaches upon the space of fiction which is then implicitly expected to refrain from the frivolities of imagination. In other words, novels written in times of war are bound to be "war novels" saturated by the tragic reality of the context. Properly discussing such questionable assumptions would probably mean that one—first and foremost—remains alert to the sheer exuberance of political fictions as part of the very reality and actuality of war contexts themselves. The representation of the enemy or the construction of the legitimacy of warfare as means to justify

mass destruction, environmental havoc and so forth, certainly involves an exacerbation of founding narratives, and, in most cases the most fictitious fictions. And from this point of view, the status of the opposition fiction/reality certainly calls for greater problematizing and historicizing. I will argue here that (i) *The Slaves of Solitude* rehearses a non-strictly contextual tradition of literary experience of the city (and more particularly of London); and (ii) that indeed *The Slaves* is a war novel, but a war novel in which war-as-context is the metaphor of a non-contextual issue, that of conversation. In this respect, *The Slaves* also rehearses another literary tradition, that of conversation novels involving single women desperate for marriage. (Which is probably why, incidentally, Prof. Jean-Jacques Lecercle sees in Hamilton a Marxist and alcoholic Jane Austen.)

It is in this perspective that I wish to read *The Slaves of Solitude* as a war novel and that I will observe the displacement of contextual elements.

Displacing the context

What is this novel about? Like Hamilton's other novels, *The Slaves* isn't about much at all: Miss Roach, a single woman in her thirties, returns every night from her work (for a publishing company) to her boarding house in Thames Lockdon, the last stop of a London tube line. The Rosamund Tea Rooms (which is the name of the boarding house) is sheltering at a price a group of evacuees like herself for the duration of the war. All are single. None of them seems to have a past and "the conditions [being] those of intense war, intense winter, and intensest black-out,"⁷ no foreseeable future can be discerned. Apart from Miss Roach, none of them has a job. The lodgers are consequently walled inside a permanent present where eating at regular hours, sleeping and making conversation are virtually the sole activities that are left to enjoy. But as the name of this suburban town suggests (Thames Lockdon), life away from London in the Rosamund Tea Rooms might turn out to be a repetition of life in London with a ven-

geance as the sense of imprisonment adds to the terrors of the blitz. But what blitz, since the lodgers are supposed to be at least protected from that threat?

A first element clearly indicates that the stress and strain endured by blitzed Londoners does not spare all lodgers. At least, that certainly is the case with Miss Roach before her arrival in Thames Lockdon which meant sleeping in a proper upstairs bedroom and not in an Anderson shelter and who finds herself increasingly the subject of anguished insomnia. Several long sections of the novel actually describe moments of lonely sleeplessness, during which Miss Roach obsessively tries to work out the other lodgers' intentions when they said what they said (at least nineteen references to the problem of sleep and insomnia of more than eleven pages). Now, interestingly, all the documents and accounts collected by Mass Observation about life in London at war insist on this problem of sleep, as what Londoners themselves described as their first and foremost concern and conversational topic.⁸ Meanwhile actual propaganda posters as well as advertising campaigns for Bournvita or Horlicks hot drinks extolled the virtues of good sleep. So for sleepless Miss Roach, it would seem the blitz has not really stopped in spite of her evacuation as the cause of her troubles persists in a different form.

Another distinct feature of the effects of the blitz on bombed out Londoners has been imported to this space of fiction called Thames Lockdon and that is verbal behaviour, particularly as dramatised by the great comic and lugubrious creation called Mr. Thwaites. Mr. Thwaites, one of the lodgers whom Miss Roach describes as "the President in Hell," is first remarkable for his ubiquitous partiality to dialects and styles which he freely and unpredictably imitates with no sense of coherence or propriety whatsoever. With Mr. Thwaites, anything goes, from US accents to strings of second-hand Scottish phrases and pseudo-Elizabethan flourishes. Thwaites is also notorious for his paternalistic authoritarianism. This, wedded to his communicational disorder and infantilism, might once again remind one of the effects of the blitz on speech. The following quotes partly drawn from Mass-

Observation reports probably provide us with the most accurate description of *The Slaves'* dialogues:

Without being dogmatic, it seems reasonable to distinguish for London, five phases of major adjustment after direct bomb experience, each varyingly applicable under different conditions.

1) (*First minutes*) [...] Repetitive talking, giving of inappropriate orders, etc. (especially for male family heads, becoming stereotype masculine leaders).

[...]

3) (*succeeding hours*) uncontrollable flood of communication, by word, gesture, laughter, anecdotes, personal experiences [...] Repetitiveness in both vocabulary and subject matter is characteristic—a person will repeat his story over and over again, in almost the same words, often to the same listeners. Excitement at this stage is intense, almost at times manic.

4) (*Throughout about 48 hours after first-stage recovery*) From the babel of communication, individuals tend to emerge with a sense of intense pride, of enhanced personal worth [...].⁹

Richard Titmus [...] has a remark much to the point: "threatened with death, moral aloneness becomes to a man even more intolerable than in peacetime and perhaps more hurtful than physical isolation." The tube and similar shelter systems substituted human voices for the guns and planes.¹⁰

This seems to confirm that contextual characteristics (sleep problems, blitz-related verbal behaviour) are not only reproduced but also shifted by *The Slaves*, which reinserts war within linguistic activity away from the blitz (i.e. away from a no longer saturating context). And this is the path I now want to follow by reading *The Slaves* as the novel of this very displacement and *The Slaves* as a novel in which Patrick Hamilton dramatises what can be seen as a theoretical position on language and linguistic interaction as conflict.

A philosophical confrontation

I think it is perfectly clear to any reader of Hamilton's novel that verbal exchanges are at best tactical moves and at worst straightforward aggressions. One finds a particularly telling example of this in *The Plains of Cement*, another conversational war novel which Hamilton wrote not in war time but in 1934 and in which verbal exchanges

are systematically evoked in terms of military tactics. It might be more useful to risk a descriptive anachronism and frame these salient aspects of *The Slaves* as part of an implicit philosophical struggle between two well-known positions. For the sake of cheap suspense, the first will bear the code name of Miss Roach and the second that of Mr. Thwaites.

Let us begin with Miss Roach then. (i) As I already suggested, Miss Roach spends a considerable amount of time wondering what other lodgers actually meant when they said what they said. And she does so to a point of ever greater insomnia. (ii) She assumes, at least initially, that other lodgers are personally committed to what they say and (iii) that they have no desire to confuse or mislead or lie to or bully other lodgers and (iv) that they desire as much as she does that things go smoothly for everyone.

Now allow me to rephrase this; Miss Roach firmly believes there are such things as intentions of meaning and makes a clear distinction between utterance-meaning and speaker's meaning. Miss Roach consequently devotes her time to pragmatic inference and does so all the more devoutly in that she presupposes other conversationalists fundamentally wish to co-operate when they communicate. In other words, Miss Roach performs the part of the Anglo-Saxon philosopher of language (one particularly thinks of H. P. Grice¹¹) who believes that interaction rests on the Cooperative principle and its later pragmatic sequel, the politeness principle. (Considering the English cultural environment of the novel, one is convinced both could be neatly subsumed under one single Decency principle.)

I now turn to Mr. Thwaites. Thwaites constitutes the negation of every single feature listed above. (i) He backs whatever he says with no intentional commitments whatsoever. He totally ignores the Cooperative principle as the matrix of interaction. (ii) Further, the immateriality of subjective, individual, intentional states is now replaced by bodily, material signifiers; Thwaites proceeds to the annexation of common spaces by means of sheer vocal power; his "booming voice" reminds one of bombs going boom on central London; his utterances

even seem to mingle with food (note the repetition of "heavy"):

And because Mr. Thwaites said no more, the atmosphere in which pins could be heard dropping returned to the room, and no one else dared to say any more. Ruminatively, dully, around the heavy thoughts set in motion by Mr. Thwaites, the heavy steamed pudding was eaten.¹²

In this last case, the reversal is complete as swallowing, *ingesting* matter, replaces *expressing* immaterial intentional states. In a similar fashion, exchanging kisses can equally be read as materialising verbal activity entering the body as the obvious pun on "tongue" suggests. And being eaten is even on the agenda when Miss *Roach* finds out one evening that the main dish is fish.¹³ (iii) Thwaites, as has been pointed out, displays an inordinate taste for the mimicking of historical or regional styles, be it Scottish, North American, or Elizabethan. (iv) His conversational activities are part of a collective strategy in which allies are mobilised:

It was the revelation, made at the last moment, which made her physically sick.

"Dame Roach-the English Miss. Miss Prim. The Prude. The jealous Miss Roach."

The planes were roaring over again. [...] How they roared and filled the sky for miles around. [...]

The identical words. [...] There was no question of Mr. Thwaites having thought them up himself. These words were given to him by Vicky—those ideas were put into his head by her.¹⁴

Thwaites, Vicky (a German refugee), and Lieutenant Pike, a US officer, generally share the same absence from themselves. The case of Mr. Thwaites does not require further illustration at this stage. Vicky gives herself away as unreal, as pure semblance; her over-idiomatic English and general mannerism mark her out as "out of date," "second-hand," "a fish out of water."¹⁵ She too has no history and she too defeats both contextual determination and meaning inference; something which an obscuring sense of hesitation and uncertainty about her clearly suggests (note that each element of her description is introduced by "it might have been"). Vicky only exists as the resulting

subject-effect of a collage of set phrases and clichéd attitudes borrowed from already old films and magazines which are to her what the "architectural farrago" and the "demented fake and ye-olde" of the new London suburbs¹⁶ are to Mr. Thwaites. And similarly, her set phrases are to Miss Roach as many substitutes for "guns and planes." Meanwhile, Lieutenant Pike is systematically described as "inconsequent," which can be taken here in a perfectly serious pragmatic sense as "inconsequent" and suggests that he has no concern for the perlocutionary effects of his utterances. In other words, Pike does not back his utterances with any personal intentional commitments whatsoever. These three (character-like) crystallizations of random linguistic fluctuations can be reread as rehearsing a wider world of impersonal and material mediations of language, whether they be anonymous voices resounding through loudspeakers, posters, notes, or even private noises travelling up and down the water pipes of the Rosamund Tea Rooms.

Hamilton's emphasis, however, on the wider commodification of regional as well as past national architectural styles and their incoherent jumbling together constitutes a remarkable indication of the actual historical forces driving this Thwaitesian dementia; rather than co-operative individuals entering into interpersonal and local rapports, it is the global historical rapport which both constitutes and enters into individuals, takes possession of them, turning them into so many of its demented mouthpieces. I will sum up the longer development required here by saying that it is a whole age of capitalist urban modernity that speaks whenever Thwaites opens his mouth. And in this respect, *The Slaves of Solitude* as a piece of fiction is itself tapping into the fictions which reality itself already produces under capitalism (a reading that would involve a direct reference to Marx's theory of commodity fetishism as well as an account of the political history of suburban development in the interwar period). Actual speech being fundamentally made of breath, the inversion speaking/being spoken comes somewhat naturally: I breathe or speak/I am breathed or spoken. The urban process "breathes" Miss Roach, the commuter:

London, the crouching monster, like every other monster has to breathe, and breathe it does in its own obscure, malignant way. Its vital oxygen is composed of suburban working men or women of all kinds, who every morning are sucked up through an infinitely complicated respiratory apparatus of trains and termini into the mighty congested lungs, held there for a number of hours, and then, in the evening, exhaled violently through the same channels.

Men and women imagine they are going into London and coming out again more or less of their own free will, but the crouching monster sees all and knows better¹⁷

while it ventriloquates, or speaks, Mr. Thwaites.

So, facing Miss Roach, the representative of an Anglo-Saxon tradition of intentionality and philosophy of language, we have another, clearly continental and largely Marxian position, emphasising materiality, mediacy, conflict, collective arrangements, and pre-individual processes. But this evocation of the instance that breathes and speaks subjects clearly indicates that both positions are rehearsed within a common historical and materialist paradigm. Which means that to be able to survive, Miss Roach eventually has to learn the lesson from her opponents. Her winning that conversational war is symbolised by her ultimate return to blitzed central London where she eventually finds her paradoxical sleep (with the reassurance that no peace is to be found in cooperative reconciliation and that there is no escape from conflict).

I began with a brief suggestion concerning the historical forces both restricting and enabling our interaction with an author whose cultural legitimacy involves serious renegotiations. I then proceeded to look at the picture of conversation, and, therefore, interaction, as drawn by my author. And I discovered that in the lessons Patrick Hamilton dispenses on these issues, my worst fears are confirmed: very much like Miss Roach wishes and expects to enjoy peaceful, reasonable, and direct exchanges with the other lodgers, I wish to communicate with the author. But Miss Roach's conversational misfortunes and philosophical illusions soon turn into an allegory of my own desired conversation with Patrick Hamilton, and ultimately the book-commodity I hold between me and him proves just as loaded a mediation as Mr.

Thwaites' utterances. So, being faithful to the author probably means that I must renounce his simulated presence, and be critically and politically content with reading him against the silent ideology of the cultural process governing his reproductions and recontextualisations.

Université de Paris X
Nanterre

NOTES

¹All quotes from Patrick Hamilton, *The Slaves of Solitude* (London: Cardinal, 1991).

²Nigel Jones, *Through a Glass Darkly: The Life of Patrick Hamilton* (London: Scribners, 1991), and Sean French, *Patrick Hamilton: A Life* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993). Patrick Hamilton's brother, Bruce Hamilton, had published his own biography, *The Light Went Out; The Life of Patrick Hamilton* (London: Constable, 1972).

³Patrick Hamilton, *West Pier, Mr. Stimpson and Mr. Gorse*, and, *Unknown Assailant*, became *The Gorse Trilogy: West Pier, Mr. Stimpson and Mr. Gorse and Unknown Assailant* (London: Penguin, 1990).

⁴Patrick Hamilton, *Craven House* (1926; London: Cardinal, 1991).

⁵Patrick Hamilton, *Monday Morning* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925).

⁶This was followed by a radio play version in 2001.

⁷Hamilton, *The Slaves of Solitude* 1.

⁸See Tom Harrisson, *Living Through the Blitz* (Oxford: OUP, 1979) 100-07, see also Angus Calder and Dorothy Sheridan (eds.), *Speak For Yourself: A Mass Observation Anthology, 1937-1949* (Oxford: OUP, 1985) 76-84, or, Dorothy Sheridan (ed.), *Wartime Women: A Mass-Observation Anthology, The Experiences of Women at War* (London: Mandarin, 1991) 93-95.

⁹Harrison 86.

¹⁰Harrison 109.

¹¹See in particular H. P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation," *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989) 22-40.

¹²Hamilton, *Slaves* 21-22.

¹³Hamilton, *Slaves* 32.

¹⁴Hamilton, *Slaves* 178.

¹⁵Hamilton, *Slaves* 51-52.

¹⁶Hamilton, *Slaves* 3.

¹⁷Hamilton, *Slaves* 1. One can only note here how this Marxian metaphor of reification both prolongs and refines an older tradition of literary urban monsters without, however, rehearsing its characteristic anti-urban feelings.

Allusions in Gary Snyder's "The Canyon Wren"

LING CHUNG

Gary Snyder's poem "The Canyon Wren"¹ has attracted considerable critical attention. The most notable one is the debate between John Whalen-Bridge and Rajeev S. Patke published in *Connotations*. Instead of offering an interpretation of "The Canyon Wren" as a whole as these two did, my essay will delve into the meaning of several allusions in the poem and into the structural significance of the poem in the context of *Mountains and Rivers Without End*. It will also respond to some points raised by Whalen-Bridge and Patke.

"The Canyon Wren" was written in 1981 after Snyder and James and Carol Katz rode a raft down the torrents of the twisting Stanislaus River in the Sierra Nevada, California. They made this trip because that stretch of the river would soon go under the waters of the New Mellones Dam.² The poem first describes the landscape from the viewpoint of the rafters who watched the wall-like cliffs,³ experienced the churning waters and encountered three different birds: a hawk, a mallard, and a wren. It was the wren's song that stayed with them during the day and throughout the journey. However, in the poem, they had listened to two tunes of nature: one being the wren's song, and the other the stream's song. When they camped by the stream, it was the song of the stream they heard consciously or unconsciously all night.

*Reference: John Whalen-Bridge, "Gary Snyder, Dōgen, and 'The Canyon Wren,'" *Connotations* 8.1 (1998/99): 112-26; Rajeev Patke, "Response to Gary Snyder, Dōgen, and 'The Canyon Wren,'" *Connotations* 8.2 (1998/99): 261-67; John Whalen-Bridge, "My Poet Is Better than Your Poet: A Response to Rajeev Patke," *Connotations* 9.2 (1999/2000): 167-73.

When Snyder dealt with the essence and the metaphysical transformation of the water element, he employed neither allusion to English nor to American literature. Instead, he cited quotations from Chinese and Japanese writers: a great Chinese poet, Su Shih (alias Su Tung P'o 1036-1101), and a Japanese Zen master, Dōgen Eihei (1200-1253). I think the reason why these two writers were chosen is that not only had both written beautiful lines permeated with a Zen flavour, but also that Snyder was fully aware of the relationship between these two writers, in that Dōgen had looked for spiritual guidance in Su Shih's work. Snyder quoted Su Shih's lines in his essay "The Old Masters and the Old Women: Foreword to Sōiku Shigematsu's *A Zen Forest*," "Valley sounds: / the eloquent / tongue— / Mountain form: / isn't it / Pure Body?" and pointed out that "This is part of a poem by Su Shih. The Japanese master Dōgen was so taken with this poem that he used it as the basis for an essay, *Keisei Sanshoku*, 'Valley sounds, mountain form'" (*A Place* 104). No wonder in "The Canyon Wren" Su's lines were placed before Dōgen's. Snyder adequately rendered the title of Su Shih's poem "*bai-bu hong*" as the "Hundred Pace Rapids" and translated one of its lines (Su 891-92) as: "I stare at the water / it moves with unspeakable slowness" (*Axe* 111). A literal rendering of the Chinese line by Su Shih should read: "I turn back to watch this water. It flows extremely slow and easy." Snyder's rendering of the line as "I stare at the water" has omitted the act of "turning back."

This omission may be due to the fact that the mind of the persona in "The Canyon Wren" did not travel across extensive time and vast space, so there is nowhere to "turn back" from. On the other hand, the imagination of the persona in Su Shih's poem soared as the persona and his friends sped down the torrents of the river. In fact, his imagination traveled from Xu Zhou⁴ in southern China to a northern foreign country, Korea, and then returned seven hundred years to the fourth century to visit the bronze camels that had guarded the Lo Yang palace in central China. Here Su Shih referred to an allusion of So Jing in the "Biography of So Jing," an official in the fourth century

who had predicted an oncoming rebellion, and prophesied that thorns would bury the bronze camels and the palace (*Jin Shu*, *juan* 60, p. 22). It is only after Su Shih's imagination had traveled across a vast terrestrial space and through seven hundred years that the swift rapids would look "slow and easy."

Space and time in Snyder's poem do not expand as much as those in Su Shih's, nor is there a quasi-shamanistic journey of flight like that in Su's, for the space covers only a short stretch of Stanislaus River in the Sierra Nevada and the time returns a little over one hundred years to the period of the Gold Rush. Thus, the space and time continuum in Snyder's poem is far more limited in scope than Su Shih's. However, Snyder's poem carries its own touching power by presenting a strong contrast between the experience of the objective reality and different visions of that reality. In other words, the torrent image of the Stanislaus River is set against Su Shih's and Dōgen's visions of slow-moving water: Su Shih's vision being "I stare at the water. / It moves with unspeakable slowness" while Dōgen's being "mountain flow / water is the palace of the dragon / it does not flow away" (*Axe* 111). Here Snyder presents the different perspectives of two Far Eastern men of wisdom to form a multilateral dialogue on the perception of the water element.

This poem, similar to the "*bai-bu hong*" by Su Shih, demonstrates an attempt to widen one's perspective. Su Shih's vision can indeed be used to mirror the torrential water of the Stanislaus River. In the future, after the filling of the Mellones Dam, it goes without saying that the water in the reservoir will move "with unspeakable slowness." Dōgen's seemingly illogical statement—"mountain flow"—makes sense if one shifts one's perspective. If one views the change in the mountain form from the angle of the cosmic continuum, the corrosion takes effect so swiftly that the mountains would flow away in a blink. Rajeev Patke points out correctly that beneath Dōgen's lines lies the concept of mutability: "mountains might appear emblems of fixity, but in a world where nothing stays unchanged, their slow progressive alternation is like a flowing away" (263). And from the

viewpoint of the creatures living in the river such as the fish and dragons, the water that surrounds them certainly "does not flow away," just as human beings would feel that the air around them does not flow away though in actuality the particles of air always do. In other words, one can enlarge one's perspective by striving to empathize with the minds of other men or of other species. By adopting the visions of two men of wisdom, Snyder presents the perspectives of the future, of the cosmic, and of other species, which enables one to contemplate a northern American landscape. These two quotations are interpreted by some critics as revealing moments of enlightenment. Leonard Scigaj thinks they offer the reader the experience of the "self and lived environment as a single totality flowing through the succession of temporal moments" (133) while Rajeev Patke views them as the revelation of "transcience" and mutability, two crucial Buddhist concepts, and that of "the resolution" of the "paradoxes" (263). Furthermore, when the quotation from a great Chinese poet is juxtaposed with that of a sagacious Japanese Zen master, the water undergoes metamorphosis: the speed of the water is changed from swiftness to slowness, or even to almost a standstill. These two quotations can serve to break human obsession with the logicity of our cognition, especially the cognition of speed and fluidity. Aesthetically, the multifaceted imagery of water, from the turbulent white sprays and spumes to the crystal still water, is presented lucidly and beautifully throughout the poem.

This poem also touches upon a historical, archaeological issue in the early 1980s: quite a few historical sites of the Gold Rush were about to be sunk to the bottom of the Dam. The China Camp⁵ is one among many historical sites of the Gold Rush along the Stanislaus River. The image of the stone piles at the camp not only denotes an embodiment of the Chinese laborers' contribution to the development of California's history but also an integral part of the Sierra Nevada landscape. The place where the persona and his friends, who are white Americans, "sleep all night long by the stream" is exactly where the Chinese miners slept more than a century ago. The palimpsest of today's

American campers over the Chinese miners coincides with the essence of water that looks flowing and yet still, is changed and yet unchanged.

There is another Chinese literary allusion hidden in the last lines of "The Canyon Wren": "These songs that are here and gone, / Here and gone, / To purify our ears" (*Axe* 111). On the surface, "these songs" that can "purify" the ears could refer to the wren's song and the verses by Su Shih and Dōgen, but they could also refer to the sound of the stream. When Snyder and his friends camped by the stream, it was the song of the stream that picked up the wren's as it roosted at night. These two songs of nature on the American continent give the poem a sense of unity and continuity. The unobtrusive allusion of "to purify our ears" can be traced to a poem by Han Shan (seventh century) that Snyder translated around 1955, twenty-six years before "The Canyon Wren" was written. The last two lines of no. 12 of the "Cold Mountain" poems rendered by Snyder are as follows "Today I'm back at Cold Mountain / I'll sleep by the creek and purify my ears" (*A Range* 38). Han Shan, in turn, alludes to the words of Sun Chu (218-293), who, when he decides to become a recluse, says in the "Biography of Sun Chu" that "I would pillow myself on the stream, for I'd like to cleanse my ears" (*Jin Shu*, *juan* 56, p. 19). Thus, the last line of Snyder's "The Canyon Wren" makes a covert allusion which once uncovered, will furnish much meaning relating to the noble minds of ancient Chinese hermits. What the Chinese hermit refused to hear by cleaning his ears with the song of the stream were the shouts and quarrels stemming from the human greed for power, fame and wealth. Similarly, Snyder believed that songs of nature could purge one's ears and fend off polluted language such as that of commercial and industrial expansionism, which is spurred also by human greed.

Interestingly, John Whalen-Bridge thinks there is more Chinese cultural content in "The Canyon Wren": the word "wren" is a homophony of a Chinese character "*ren*" which means "a human being." According to him, what human beings believe to be solely their superior endowment could also be owned by other species like birds.

Thus, Whalen-Bridge concludes, "The wren's song purifies our ears of the notion that our lively awareness, which we mistakenly call our humanity, is the singular, unique possession of human beings. Chinese workers, poets from various centuries, and birds all have this awareness, and it can be shared" (124). However, "wren" is not exactly a homophony for the Chinese character which means a human being. The pronunciation of the character sounds closer to "rein" or "reign" (*rein*) than to "wren" (*ren*). Furthermore, in order to illustrate Dōgen's idea that "To advance your own experience onto the world of phenomena is delusion," Snyder again employs the example of someone seeing a wren:

To see a wren in a bush, call it "wren," and go on walking is to have (self-importantly) seen nothing. To see a bird and stop, watch, feel, forget yourself for a moment, be in the bushy shadows, maybe then feel "wren"—that is to have joined in a larger moment with the world. (*Place* 179)

If in this passage the word "wren" is selected because it is the homophony for the Chinese character which means a human being, it would confuse the reader and would defeat the purpose. How could the "wren" mean a human being while it is precisely the "self important" obsession of a human being that one should liberate oneself from? In a similar vein, the wren in "The Canyon Wren" should not be an analogy of a human being as it is hinted at by Whalen-Bridge, for it is precisely the self that one should "forget" so that the human consciousness can merge into the song of the wren. Also, seeing the wren as an analogy of a human being is an exercise "to advance" one's "own experience onto the world of phenomena," an exercise denounced by Dōgen as a "delusion." Though Whalen-Bridge's concept of shared awareness appears to be pertinent to the theme of the poem, I think the seeming homophony of "wren" and the Chinese character is merely a coincidence and was not deliberately contrived by Snyder. It must have been a wren and not any other kind of bird that Snyder actually heard on the Stanislaus River.

The fact that "The Canyon Wren" is included in Section III of *Mountain and River Without End* shows that the poem was considered by Snyder as an integral part of the epic scheme of the book. It seems for the purpose of integrating the poem into the whole, the postscript is removed to the endnotes and is shortened (*Mountains* 161). Both the imagery and theme of the poem echo the major ones in *Mountains and Rivers Without End*. The setting of the poem displays mountains and waters, the lofty mountain walls and the white waters in the canyon: "but we're swept on by downriver / [...] / rock walls straight up on both sides" (*Mountains* 90). Most poems in the book also portray mountains and waters, both those on the Turtle Island and those on Chinese landscape scrolls of the classical periods.⁶ Behind the imagery of mountains and waters looms Snyder's complicated concept of Nature which incorporates Taoist, Zen Buddhist, American-Indian, ecological and other ideas. In his "Singing the Dyads: The Chinese Landscape Scroll and Gary Snyder's *Mountains and Rivers Without End*," Antony Hunt studies this important concept of nature and terms it "the mountains-and-waters dyad" (33). Hunt points out that the imagery in many poems reminds one "of the interpenetration of the mountains-and-waters dyad. We feel the intense energy, the dance, and sheer rhythm of spirit moving in these lines" (33). Therefore, the landscape depicted in "The Canyon Wren" coincides with the key imagery and theme of the book.

Furthermore, the main human activity described in "The Canyon Wren" is a boat ride which echoes the opening imagery of the book. The boat is an important vessel in the grand scheme. A boat ride is also a frequently used metaphor for being delivered to an enlightened stage in Mahayana Buddhism. "Endless Streams and Mountains: *Ch'i Shan Wu Chin*," the first poem of the book, starts with a scene of a river, a lake and hills in an ancient Chinese painting, and the mind of the persona participates in the boat ride among the mountains and waters painted on the scroll:

Clearing the mind and sliding in
to that created space,

a web of waters streaming over rocks,
 air misty but not raining,
 seeing this land from a boat on a lake
 or a broad slow river,
 coasting by. (*Mountains* 5)

The persona in the boat is doing something similar to that in "The Canyon Wren": both are viewing and contemplating the landscape. Also, Leonard Scigaj associates this boat in "Endless Streams and Mountains: *Ch'i Shun Wu Chin*" with Dōgen's boat which symbolizes a non-dualistic perspective on the self and on the universe:

In the very first stanza of the opening poem of *Mountains and Rivers Without End*, Snyder invites us to take a ride on his boat. Throughout all of the following poems of the volume, the artifice suggests that we experience Snyder's journeys from the perspective of Dōgen's boat-ride, a ride where subjective and objective, absolute and temporal, language and social action, interconnect in perpetual nondualistic birth. (129-30)

In fact, the boat ride imagery is foregrounded in several poems in the book such as "Boat of a Million Years" (39) and "Afloat" (130-32). Just like the boat ride in "The Canyon Wren," both boat ride experiences not only enable the persona to feel profoundly the non-dualistic unity with nature, but teach him to widen his perspective in order to achieve enlightenment. In a word, "The Canyon Wren" embodies both the major theme of the mountains-and-waters dyad, and key images such as the boat ride, which are exactly the focuses of the grand scheme. Furthermore, the meaning of the poem is enriched by the illuminating Far Eastern visions on the essence of the water. In the poem, Snyder fuses twentieth-century ecological concerns for a river⁷ in northeastern America with metaphysical visions from the Far East so that diverse ways of perceiving the water are presented whether it is turbulent, tranquil, slow moving or still. As a result, the complexity and multiplicity pertaining to the essence of things could be unraveled. Here is an apt example to illustrate how Far Eastern concepts and poetic images of the northern American landscape are to be joined so that a richness of multiculturalism and depth of meaning

can be achieved. Also, an apt example to show that Snyder is so well-read in Asian literatures that he can employ and integrate the allusions and make them part of English literary traditions.

Hong Kong
Baptist University

NOTES

¹"The Canyon Wren" appears in three of Snyder's poetry collections: *Axe Handles* (1983), *Mountains and Rivers Without End* (1996) and *Gary Snyder Reader: Prose, Poetry, and Translations 1952-1998* (1999). The version in *Mountains and Rivers Without End* differs slightly from the other two.

²The New Mellones (Melones) Dam's embankment was completed in Nov. 1978, and the initial filling of the reservoir occurred in 1983. The passage that Snyder and the Katzes rafted through must be under the water of the reservoir after 1983. The Dam is located about 110 miles east of San Francisco, covering an area of 12,500 acres, and built mainly for the purpose of flood control and electricity generation.

³The southeast canyon wall forms the northern end of the 1865 foot high Peoria Mountain and the left abutment of the New Mellones Dam. The northwest canyon wall is the southern end of Bostick Mountain, elevation 1814 feet, and the right abutment of the dam. Both sides of the canyon slope toward the river at an average of 38 degrees from horizontal.

⁴The rapids Bai-bu Hong are located near Xu Zhou in today's Jiang-su Province in southeastern China; the rapids are part of Si Shui River.

⁵The China Camp is located "camp 9 to Parrott's Ferry" (*Axe* 112). At present, the camp should be under the water of the north corner of the New Mellones Dam, where the bridge of the Parrotts Ferry Road is.

⁶The imagery of mountains and waters appears in almost all poems in the book with the exceptions of "The Blue Sky" (40-44) which consists of Buddhist chants, and "The Market" (47-51), "Mā" (57-60) and "Instructions" (61), poems about human life.

⁷Before the completion of the Dam, there were concerns over the damage it would do to culture and the environment. The controversy focused on the loss of a popular stretch of recreational white water, inundation of archeological sites, and flooding of the West's deepest limestone canyon.

WORKS CITED

- Hunt, Anthony. "Singing the Dyads: The Chinese Landscape Scroll and Gary Snyder's *Mountains and Rivers Without End*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 23.1 (1999): 7-34.
- Jin Shu. *Si-ku Quan-shu Hui-yao*. Taipei: Shi Jie Bookstore, 1988.
- Patke, Rajeev S. "Response to 'Gary Snyder, Dōgen, and 'The Canyon Wren.''" *Connotations* 8.2 (1998/99): 261-67.
- Scigaj, Leonard M. "Dōgen's Boat, Fan, and Rice Cake: Realization and Artifice in Snyder's *Mountains and Rivers without End*." *Studies in the Humanities* 26.1-2 (1999): 124-36.
- Snyder, Gary. *Axe Handles*. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983.
- . *Mountains and Rivers without End*. Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1996.
- . *No Nature: New and Selected Poems*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1992.
- . *A Place in Space: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Watersheds*. Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1995.
- . *A Range of Poems*. London: Fulcrum Press, 1966.
- Su Shih. *Su Shih Shih-chi*. Peking: Chung Hua Bookstore, 1987.
- Whalen-Bridge, John. "Gary Snyder, Dōgen, and 'The Canyon Wren.'" *Connotations* 8.1 (1998/99): 112-26.

Angels, Insects, and Analogy: A. S. Byatt's "Morpho Eugenia"

JUNE STURROCK

In *A Whistling Woman* (2002), the concluding novel of A. S. Byatt's tetralogy,¹ the central character, Frederica, rejects a career as a literary scholar because of her growing sense of the narrowness of a single discipline and her realisation that "the world [is] bigger" (411). The nearest thing to a heroic figure in this unheroic novel, Gerard Wijnno-bel, is devoted to the idea of "crossing the artificial invisible barriers between disciplines" (326).² *A Whistling Woman* is brimming with information, material, and analogies from a variety of disciplines, among them mathematics, psychology, biochemistry, genetics, and art history. Its narrative valorizes the breaking down of disciplinary walls, the refusal to see things in compartments. Frederica, who began the tetralogy—in *The Virgin in the Garden* (1978)—comforted by the possibility of what she calls "laminations," of keeping experiences separate, ends it with a disquieting but invigorating sense that "the laminations were slipping. She was full of life, and afraid" (*Whistling Woman* 411).³ Increasingly, Byatt's novels have become full of this sense of the variety, complexity, fascination, and inter-relatedness of human knowledge. Michael Worton has written of "the intense excitement that [Byatt] herself finds in learning" (17). She generates in the readers of her fiction a similar intense excitement in learning of many kinds.

"I read. Ants, bees, Amazon travels, Darwin, books about Victorian servant life, butterflies and moths" (*History* 117). That is A. S. Byatt's account of her preparation for writing "Morpho Eugenia," one of the two extraordinary novellas that form her 1992 volume, *Angels and Insects*, and the focus of this essay. As these words suggest, her narra-

tive draws on a remarkable variety of kinds of knowledge. As a late twentieth century re-imagining of the early 1860s, inevitably it combines history with literature. More than that, it directs the attention of its readers towards issues that were and are central to the understanding of Western culture, and especially to the relation between science and religion. Beyond that, the novella is concerned with human knowledge and understanding, past and present, of the natural world. Through the interaction of these different kinds of knowledge Byatt frees herself to explore both the intellectual potential and the limitations of reasoning by analogy. The crossing of borders between disciplines, that is, enables her to question the intellectual processes on which human beings base their thoughts and actions.

The interdisciplinary aspects of this novel are suggested even in a brief summary of the plot. Byatt's protagonist, William Adamson, an Amazonian explorer and entomologist, shipwrecked and penniless, comes to Bredely Hall, the home of the aristocratic clergyman and amateur scientist and collector, Sir Harald Alabaster (clearly, all names in this story are carefully chosen).⁴ He marries Eugenia, the beautiful eldest daughter of the house and, as baby follows baby, seems trapped in the Alabaster household. He is eventually freed by Matty, a governess-companion, who pushes him back to entomological observation and to his writings.⁵ Finally he escapes back to the Amazon—together with Matty.

To begin with the obvious discipline—the primary discipline of the writer and the readers of this essay and of Byatt herself—this is a literary text, written by one of the most interesting living writers of English prose. It is indeed self-consciously literary, depicting and foregrounding literary expression by representing its characters as storytellers and writers. The governess, Miss Mead, recounts the Psyche myth, Matty tells an entomological fairy story, Sir Harald works on Christian apologetics, and William Adamson writes a book of popular science. "Narration is as much part of human nature as breath and the circulation of the blood," writes Byatt (*History* 166). As with much of Byatt's fiction—consider the fairy stories in *Possession*,

the Sadean fable "Babbletower" within *Babel Tower*, the Tolkien-like children's story "Flight North" within *A Whistling Woman*—both the larger narrative and the embedded narratives of this story compel us to consider the various functions of story-telling.⁶ William must become a storyteller, must publish his narratives of the ant colonies, in order to escape from the Alabasters. And certainly one of the more curious aspects of the narration is the role of Matty's scientific story-within-a-story, "Things Are Not What They Seem." This story indeed is not merely what it seems but also a coded warning—and invitation—to William Adamson: Seth, its hero, after all, bears the name of Adam's son.

Actual literary texts also play a significant part in this narrative. Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* are especially significant, while poems by Clare, Keats, Shakespeare, Browning and Ben Jonson also figure in the characters' own frames of reference.⁷ Byatt acknowledges that her "books are thick with the presence of other books [...] out there in the world there must be people who read as passionately as I do and actually know that books constantly interweave themselves with other books and with the world" (Wachtel 77-78). Literature is part of the connective tissue of her world. As a German reviewer of her fiction points out, commenting on *The Virgin in the Garden*, Byatt is remarkable among recent novelists in her concern to make the connection between the present time and the literary classics "one of the central and recurring themes [...] of her fictions."⁸

"Morpho Eugenia," like all of Byatt's fiction, insists on the significance not just of entire texts—but also of individual words. As Michael Worton has observed, she is "a very 'wordy' writer" (17).⁹ Her various digressions on language and metaphor in *Still Life*, for instance, demonstrate her passionate interest in words per se: "I had the idea when I began this novel that it would be a novel of naming and accuracy [...]. There would be a heavy emphasis on nouns, on naming, in such a hypothetical book" (301). For its part, *Babel Tower*, as its name suggests, is centred on language—acquiring language, legal language, and literary language.¹⁰ "Morpho Eugenia" is a narrative

that insists especially on names, on the significance of the act of naming—an act over which, as I have said, Byatt is especially careful in regard to her own characters and places.¹¹ Matty's story, "Things Are Not What They Seem," begins when she looks up the etymologies of the names of the moths and butterflies and finds as she says, "it was all running away from me. It was as though I was dragged along willy-nilly—by the *language*, you know—through Sphinx and Morpheus and Thomas Mouffet" (*Angels and Insects* 141, Byatt's italics).

Names, Byatt writes, speaking specifically of natural history, are "a way of weaving the world together, by relating the creatures to other creatures" (*Angels and Insects* 132). Writing more specifically about the naming of grasses—foxtail grass, nit-grass and so on—she speaks of these names as "obviously part of the overwhelming need to make connections and comparisons" (*Still Life* 302). Elsewhere, in writing about her work on "Morpho Eugenia," she comments with pleasure on the naming of the various Amazonian moths and butterflies by the nineteenth century European scientific explorers—"the full beauty of the Linnaean system of naming the lepidoptera" (*History* 117). She describes this kind of naming, which connects the creatures of the New World with the myths of the Old World, as "a strange and innocent form of colonialism" (*History* 118)—(well, comparatively innocent perhaps).¹²

Beyond the literary, there is an unusual insistence in this text on fact—scientific fact, historical fact. Byatt's essay on the significance of *Angels and Insects* bears the title "True Stories and the Facts of Fiction," and she describes this essay as being "about the relations of precise scholarship and fiction" (92).¹³ A recent and excellent collection of essays about Byatt acknowledges her concern with fact in its own subtitle, "Imagining the Real."¹⁴ Part of the fascination of "Morpho Eugenia" is the way we, like Matty, come to share William's obsession with insects—butterflies, moths, beetles, and especially, ants—wood ants and red ants, their reproductive lives, their social behaviour, their battles, their slave-trading expeditions. And Byatt continues to write about the not-human, in *The Biographer's Tale* with its bees and the

small insects after which the central characters are named, and in *Babel Tower* and *A Whistling Woman*, where snails and snail memory play significant roles in relation to the plot. Byatt writes that "I see insects as the not-human, in some sense as the Other, and I believe that we ought to think about the not-human in order to be fully human" (*History* 115).

The history of science, as well as science in itself, comes under scrutiny in the narrative of "Morpho Eugenia," as does the relation between science and the wider culture.¹⁵ William's researches and Sir Harald's clerical perplexities involve readers immediately with the various understandings of questions about the nature of creation in the crucial years immediately following the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*.¹⁶ We become involved with the dramatic interplay between science and religion at that period—and since—through the conversations between William and Sir Harald about post-Darwinian readings of the Bible. "It is our own free intelligence," argues Sir Harald, "that leads us to find it impossible to conceive this infinitely wonderful universe, and our own intelligence within it, looking before and after, reflecting, contriving, contemplating, reasoning—*without a Divine Intelligence as source of all our lesser ones*" (*Angels and Insects* 34, Byatt's italics). Sir Harald, in fact, in his attempt to convince himself of the existence of a Creator, uses the arguments of Asa Gray, the Harvard biologist (*History* 118). William, the scientist, the new man, first responds with anger: "We have made our God by a specious analogy, Sir." He goes on to express a related idea to Sir Harald's, but in far more skeptical terms: "We need loving kindness in reality and often we do not find it—so we invent a divine Parent for the infant crying in the night and convince ourselves that all is well" (*Angels and Insects* 89, Byatt's italics).¹⁷ The debate between William and Sir Harald over questions of "Design and the Designer" (*Angels and Insects* 109) again displays Byatt's preoccupation with the complex interactions involved in the ways knowledge, ideas, and culture change.¹⁸ The preoccupation with such interactions is certainly apparent elsewhere in her fiction, and especially in her tetralogy, which

examines closely the intellectual and cultural changes in the 1950s and 60s, though here the catalysts are television, contraceptive pills, and various drugs.

*

As may be apparent at this point, in all the fields of knowledge that Byatt touches on in "Morpho Eugenia," she is concerned with the human impulse towards perceiving analogy and creating new concepts on the basis of analogy. All the narratives created by her characters depend in one way or another upon analogy. The references to *Paradise Lost* draw on its epic similes, the references to *In Memoriam* on Tennyson's parallels between family relations and the relations between God and his creation. The acts of naming with which Matty becomes preoccupied are based on analogies between lepidoptera and human narratives. The clash between science and religion arises from the apparent post-Darwinian collapse of an old system of analogies—especially the "specious analogy" of creator as father of which William complains (*Angels and Insects* 89). Certainly analogy, as Michael Levenson points out, is "an activity that disturbs and fascinates Byatt" (163). Her essay on the writing of *Angels and Insects* is prefaced by three epigraphs (from Melville, from Emerson, and from an anonymous poet-friend), all concerned with analogy. The narrative of "Morpho Eugenia" repeatedly directs our attention both to the multiple analogies between human and insect behaviour and to the inevitability and the dangers of all reasoning through analogy. As the infatuated William proposes to Eugenia, the male Emperor moths, driven by the same sexual imperative, inexorably advance towards the caged female:

Large insects were advancing along the black floor [...]. More could be seen forcing themselves through a small hole in the pane of the conservatory door. More still sailed down from the roof [...]. They advanced, a disorderly, driven army [...] thirty, forty, fifty, a cloud, the male Emperors propelling themselves out of the night towards the torpid female. More came. And more. (*Angels and Insects* 54)

The analogy between human and moth is apparent from the very title, "Morpho Eugenia." Yet the primary analogy naturally is between the ant communities and "the enclosed and complicated society of the country house" (*Angels and Insects* 74). Bredely Hall, like the anthills, is centred on the reproductive females, Lady Alabaster and Eugenia. Swollen through idleness or pregnancy, cosseted and waited on by their servants as the ant-queens are by the workers, they become much like the ant-queens,

egg-laying machines, gross and glistening, endlessly licked, caressed, soothed and smoothed—veritable Prisoners of Love. *This is the true nature of the Venus under the mountain, in this miniature world a creature immobilised by her function of breeding, by the blind violence of her passions.* (*Angels and Insects* 102, Byatt's emphasis)

This is William's description. And William increasingly comes to see his own role at Bredely Hall in much the same terms in which he describes the male ants: "their whole existence is directed *only* to the nuptial dance and the fertilisation of the Queens" (*Angels and Insects* 103, Byatt's emphasis). His apparent purpose at Bredely is merely to beget the five children with whom Eugenia rapidly presents him. Gender roles, class roles, and class structure, as well as sexual and parental passions, all turn Bredely into a fair simulacrum of the society of an ant colony. And other analogies follow. The description of the slave-making raids of the red ants leads automatically, in a narrative set in the early 1860s, in the years of the American Civil War, to the topic of human slavery. "Nature does indeed teach us," says Miss Mead, the governess, "A terrible war is being waged at present across the Atlantic, to secure not only the liberation of the unfortunate slaves, but the moral salvation of those whose leisure and enrichment are sustained by their cruel labours." At which point Matty, ever astute, draws attention to the "machine-slaves" in British factories (*Angels and Insects* 100), on whom the Alabasters' wealth depends (*Angels and Insects* 80).

William's response to such comments is dismissive, both justly and unjustly so. He says truly that "analogy is a slippery tool [...] men are

not ants" (*Angels and Insects* 100). His author would agree with him. Commenting that "we name [insect] societies after our own, Queen, Soldier, Slave, Worker," she adds "I think we should be careful before we turn other creatures into images of our own" (*History* 115). Indeed she writes that part of her intention in writing "Morpho Eugenia" was to "undo anthropomorphic imaginings and closures" (*History* 118). All the same, as Hodder Pinsky, the cognitive psychologist, points out in *A Whistling Woman*, "human beings could not think without [...] metaphors and analogies"—though he then goes on to make these metaphors "opaque and visible and problematic" (353). While William is intellectually cautious about analogy, he finds it difficult to avoid seeing "his own life in terms of a diminishing analogy with the tiny creatures"—the male ants (*Angels and Insects* 100). This view of himself becomes a trap—or perhaps it is the first step out of the trap, in that it implies a recognition of his situation.¹⁹ The terms of the anagram game that William and Matty play with the uncomprehending children—insect, incest, sphinx, phoenix—chart William's liberation from that trap. First he must understand the relation between incest and insect—that is, he must see that Bredely Hall is, like the ant-hills, essentially an incestuous society, must become conscious of what Sally Shuttleworth calls "the incestuous dynamics that lay at the heart of the Victorian family" ("Writing Natural History" 153). Only then is he enabled to see Matty as the sphinx who set him this liberating riddle—"the asker of riddles and the answer too" (*Angels and Insects* 134). (This word "sphinx" is left for the reader to solve from the letters William has dealt to him.) After this, he can liberate himself and become like the phoenix, reborn out of his own ashes.

In a poem Byatt wrote for her character Randolph Henry Ash in *Possession*, he/she asks, "Are we automata or Angelkin?" (*Possession* 273). This question, which in itself crosses the traditional boundaries of the disciplines, recurs in various forms in all Byatt's later fiction: in *A Whistling Woman*, the computer scientist John Ottokar comes to feel, through his calculations for a geneticist, that his "work is [...] soul-destroying" because he works "to prove the individual is nothing"

(340). In choosing Matty and freedom, William decides to be angel rather than automaton—or ant. He uses and discards the insect analogy. Byatt comments that "the problem for the writer, for me, is to do with Wallace Stevens's great line in *Notes towards a Supreme Fiction*, 'To find, not to impose / It is possible, possible, possible. It must be / Possible.'"²⁰ She says finally of *Angels and Insects*, "I think the stories are studies of the danger of thinking with images that think with images themselves [...] and I do think that in some curious way they find, not impose" (*History* 122). Perhaps that "curious way" comes from the intensity with which she imagines different fields of knowledge, so that it becomes apparent that they exist in themselves rather than operating merely as metaphors.

Like all of Byatt's fiction, "Morpho Eugenia" explores the complex intellectual lives of human beings, as well as their practical and emotional lives. Byatt refuses to accept the division between feeling and intellect as she refuses to accept the division between the "two cultures" of science and the arts, a division taken for granted at the time and place at which she was educated. She is acutely aware of the interplay between intellectual and emotional life—perhaps it is for this reason that she so often expresses admiration for the writing of George Eliot. Increasingly her writing is concerned with the actual operations of the mind, the brain, whether physical or metaphysical. Inevitably such concerns finally refuse the boundaries of academic discipline.

Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, British Columbia

NOTES

¹The other three are *The Virgin in the Garden*, *Still Life*, and *Babel Tower*.

²Wijn Nobel, who also appears in *Still Life* and *Babel Tower*, is the Vice-Chancellor of the (fictitious) University of North Yorkshire.

³Frederica publishes a book entitled "Laminations" in *The Whistling Woman*. *Babel Tower* speaks of her "vision of being able to be all the things she was: language, sex, friendship, thought, just as long as these were kept scrupulously separate, *laminated*, like geological strata" (*Whistling Woman* 314-15, Byatt's emphasis).

⁴The implications of Eugenia's name and that of Bredely Hall are obvious, as is William's family name, Adamson. Byatt says that William and Harald refer to William the Conqueror and Duke Harold, the new man and the old. At Bredely, Matty/Matilda gets called Matty but she insists that in her room she is Matilda. "Matty" suggests Miss Matty, the quintessential "old maid" in Gaskell's *Cranford*, while Matilda was the Queen of William the Conqueror.

⁵Matty's/Matilda's status in the Alabaster household is deliberately indeterminate. She is one of "the people in houses, between the visible inhabitants and the invisible, largely invisible to *both*," of whom she speaks (*Angels and Insects* 155, Byatt's emphasis).

⁶The functions of story-telling are also of importance in her earliest novels, *The Shadow of a Sun* and (especially) *The Game*. The fairy stories in *Possession* reappear in *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye: Five Fairy Stories*, transformed by their new context. "Flight North" begins to appear in *Babel Tower* and is completed and published in *The Whistling Woman*.

⁷Naturally *In Memoriam* is even more important in "The Conjugal Angel," the second novella of *Angels and Insects*, which focuses on Emily Tennyson Jesse and in which Tennyson himself briefly appears. Judith Fletcher sees the Odyssey as a "narrative template" for *Angels and Insects* (Fletcher 217).

⁸Dieter E. Zimmer, quoted by Alfer and Noble (2). *The Virgin in the Garden* is also a profoundly literary work. For instance, the chapter called "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is indeed deeply involved with Keats's poem, both directly and indirectly.

⁹See also Glitzen 92.

¹⁰Not only does it include Jude Mason's Sadean fable, "Babbletower," parts of Agatha Mond's "Flight North," and Frederica's "Laminations," it also concludes fictional transcripts of parts of Frederica's divorce and custody cases and the obscenity trial of "Babbletower." It also includes a Royal Commission on the teaching of English in schools. For Richard Todd's comments on language in *Babel Tower* see Todd 64-65.

¹¹*The Biographer's Tale* is a case in point. The parasitic nature of biography is indicated by the parasite names of some of the main characters.

¹²Richard Todd notes her concern in *Angels and Insects* with "what it is to give a name to a living creature" (Todd 32).

¹³The narrator of *The Biographer's Tale* abandons the study of literary theory because he needs "a life full of things [...] full of facts" (*Biographer's Tale* 4).

¹⁴See Alfer and Noble.

¹⁵Shuttleworth gives an excellent account of its story in relation to the late twentieth century historical novel in *The Third Culture*. Del Ivan Janik's article looks only at *Possession* in this regard.

¹⁶Byatt says that "Morpho Eugenia is related to the reading of Darwin in connection with George Eliot's novels and essays and also to modern Darwinian ideas and fictions" (*History* 92).

¹⁷William is of course referring to Tennyson, *In Memoriam* 55: "an infant crying in the night / And with no language but a cry."

¹⁸Issues of class and gender in Victorian society and the relation between class and gender are central to a narrative that opposes the reproductive woman (Eugenia) to the intellectual woman (Matty/Matilda), and that explores the stratified complexities of country house society. The narrative of *Possession* springs from some of the same concerns: for Christabel Lamotte conflicting reproductive and intellectual imperatives tear her life apart, while her great-great-great-granddaughter, Maude Bailey, can (though not without difficulty) learn how to combine them. Such concerns recur through the tetralogy, set in the 1950s and 60s. *The Virgin in the Garden* begins with two brilliant sisters, Stephanie and Frederica. Stephanie will be literally killed by domesticity; in *Babel Tower* Frederica's marriage nearly extinguishes her, so that her escape appears like the re-emergence of Persephone. In all these texts gender expectations are clearly related to historical period.

¹⁹I am grateful to the reviewer for *Connotations* who made this suggestion.

²⁰In fact, Byatt has condensed Stevens's lines. He writes in "It Must Give Pleasure," from *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*: "But to impose is not / To discover. To discover an order as of / A season, to discover summer and know it / / To discover winter and know it well, to find / Not to impose, not to have reasoned at all, / Out of nothing to have come upon major weather, / / It is possible, possible, possible. It must / Be possible" (133-40).

WORKS CITED

- Alfer, Alexa, and Michael J. Noble. "Introduction." *Essays on the Fiction of A. S. Byatt: Imagining the Real*. Ed. Alexa Alfer and Michael J. Noble. Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 2001. 1-15.
- Byatt, A. S. *Angels and Insects*. London: Vintage, 1993.
- . *A Whistling Woman*. London: Chatto and Windus, 2002.
- . *Babel Tower*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1996.
- . *On History and Other Stories*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1999.
- . *Possession*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1990.
- . *Still Life*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1985.

- . *The Biographer's Tale*. London: Chatto and Windus, 2000.
- . *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye: Five Fairy Stories*. London: Vintage, 1998.
- . *The Virgin in the Garden*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1978.
- Fletcher, Judith. "The Odyssey Rewoven: A. S. Byatt's *Angels and Insects*." *Classical and Modern Literature: A Quarterly* 19 (1999): 217-31.
- Glitzen, Julian. "A. S. Byatt's Self-mirroring Art." *Critique* 36 (1995): 83-96.
- Janik, Del Ivan. "No End of History: Evidence from the Contemporary English Novel." *Twentieth Century Literature* 41 (1995): 160-88.
- Levenson, Michael. "*Angels and Insects*: Theory, Analogy, Metamorphosis." *Alfer and Noble* 161-74.
- Noble, Michael J. "A Tower of Tongues: *Babel Tower* and the Art of Memory." *Alfer and Noble* 61-74.
- Shuttleworth, Sally. "Writing Natural History: 'Morpho Eugenia.'" *Alfer and Noble* 147-60.
- . "Natural History: The Retro Victorian Novel." *The Third Culture: Literature and Science*. Ed. Elinor S. Shaffer. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998. 253-68.
- Stevens, Wallace. *Selected Poems*. London: Faber, 1954.
- Todd, Richard. *A. S. Byatt*. Plymouth: Northcote House, 1997.
- Wachtel, Eleanor. *Writers & Company*. Toronto: Knopf, 1993.
- Worton, Michael. "Of Prisms and Prose: Reading Paintings in A. S. Byatt's Works." *Alfer and Noble* 15-30.

Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas



School of Literatures
The Hebrew
University of
Jerusalem

Biannual interdisciplinary academic periodical devoted to the analysis of literary works and ways in which they relate to strands of philosophical, sociological, economic, scientific, and political thought.

Published in a region where the need for consciousness of the contingency of one's ideological position is intensely felt, the journal does not claim to offer absolute answers to the questions raised; it encourages contributors to be explicit regarding their partialities and their philosophical agenda.

Book reviews: three to four books pertinent to the journal's focus are reviewed in each issue.

Editorial correspondence: *Partial Answers* c/o Department of English,
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem 91905, Israel.

Tel.: 972-2-5882581, 5881237.

Fax: 927-2-5881245. Inquiries: partial_answers@h2.hum.huji.ac.il

Subscription: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, P.O.Box 39099,
Jerusalem 91390, Israel. Fax: 972-2-5633370; e-mail: magneshl@pob.huji.ac.il

Further information, contents, abstracts, and current Call for Papers available on

<http://partialanswers.huji.ac.il>