

Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate



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Editor's Note

Judith Dundas, one of the founding members of the editorial board of *Connotations*, has passed away in April 2008. We gratefully remember the expertise and enthusiasm with which she enriched our symposia at Münster and Halberstadt, and the encouragement and advice she gave us in the early years of our journal.

To our regret, Professor Dale B. J. Randall has announced his retirement from the Editorial Board of *Connotations*. My co-editors and I are grateful to him for his support and advice over many years and wish him the very best, both personally and in his further contributions to the study of literature.

We are also grateful to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation) for a grant that will enable us to put online all the articles published in *Connotations*; our efforts can be viewed at www.connotations.de. The printed issues will not be affected in any way and continue to be published.

Last but not least, thanks are due to the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung for generously supporting the 2007 *Connotations* symposium “‘Restored from Death’ in Literature and Literary Theory” and the publication of revised conference papers.

Matthias Bauer

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Each issue consists of articles and a forum for discussion. The forum presents, for instance, research in progress, critical hypotheses, responses to articles published in *Connotations* and elsewhere, as well as to recent books. 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. All contributions should be submitted by e-mail; they should be in English and must be proofread before submission.

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Donne's Sermons as Re-enactments of the Word

MARGARET FETZER

Whenever John Donne preached at Lincoln's Inn or at St. Paul's, he may well have been aware of that other institution which competed with him for his listeners—even on church days: the theatre. There were two contradictory ways in which this challenge might be met: the most straightforward strategy was to use the pulpit for a thorough denunciation of the theatre as the epitome of (Catholic) heresy and ungodliness in order to prevent listeners from going anywhere near a theatre at any time, let alone on a church day.¹ The other possible response was to seize upon the potential of dramatic communication for the production of the sermon itself in order to equal or even outdo the theatre on its own terms—for, although the theatre was denounced, in particular by Puritans, for how it played on and manipulated the senses of its audiences, its great potential in managing to do so did by no means go unnoticed. This can be seen, for example, when John Donne encourages his listeners to re-enact the Biblical script and to take St. Paul's part in his dialogue with the blinding light of Christ by responding to Christ's question "*Cur me?*" with the words of that same apostle: "Answer this question, with *Saul's* answer to this question, by another question, *Domine quid me vis facere? Lord what wilt thou have me do?*" (6.10: 222).

As his contemporary Richard Baker tells us, in his youth, Donne had been "a great frequenter of plays," as well as "a great visitor of ladies"²—and just as he did not leave behind his erotic passions when approaching God in his divine poetry, so did he retain his predilection for the theatrical mode in his preaching.³ Moreover, the relatedness of Donne's sermons to the theatre must be seen in the context of the

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debfetzer01701.htm>>.

liturgical shifts that had taken and were still taking place in the aftermath of the Reformation. In what follows, I shall endeavour to illustrate how Donne's sermons are indebted to theatrical practices of showing and re-enacting the return to life of persons and events otherwise long dead and gone. In Donne, this strategy of theatrical revival is predominantly employed in the service of that grand story of Christianity, namely Christ's passion and resurrection from death. Like the majority of early modern preaching, Donne's sermons, too, share with dramatic (re-)enactments their strong dependence on rhetorical concepts of *enargia* and *energia*. However, what is specific about Donne's preaching is, as I shall show, the way in which it adapts the communicative system of the theatre to the genre of the sermon in order to re-enact Christ's sacrifice and resurrection.

Reformation theology was fundamentally a theology of homiletics, so much so that the sermon gradually came to surpass the sacramental relevance of the Eucharist,⁴ and, according to Ferrell, Donne himself also appears to have "favoured communication over Communion" (63). This shift towards a greater significance of sermon over sacrament during and after the Reformation went hand in hand with the larger significance that was accordingly attributed to preaching: the preacher was expected 'to do,' and not merely say, 'things with words,' and he was to do these things to and together with the people he had before him. The sermon was to make a difference to people's lives, just as the consecrated host had always been (and still was) considered to have a conversional effect on those who received it. As Donne himself puts it: "It hath always been the Lords way to glorifie himselfe in the conversion of Men, by the ministry of Men" (6.10: 205). "In the same way [...] as each Christian participates in the activity which is the Lord's Supper, taking and eating the Bread, receiving and drinking the Wine, so also in the audible Sacrament which is the sermon he actively hears and takes into himself the Word of God" (Parker 48)—in other words, each faithful Christian has to swallow that for himself which the preacher brings before him.

In a side-swipe at Roman Catholic priests, Donne, in one of his sermons, makes the following ironic confession: "whereas these men [i.e. Roman Catholic priests] make man, and God too of bread, naturally wholly indisposed to any such change, for this power we confesse it is not in our Commission" (10.5: 129). That he himself should be lacking this ability to make God "of bread," is, however, of little relevance, as, "for that power, which is to work upon you, to whom we are sent, we are defective in nothing" (10.5: 129). Since this sermon on "2 Cor. 5:20 We pray yee in Christs stead, be ye reconciled to God" is explicitly concerned with the function and position of the preacher, "that power" Donne refers to is clearly that of preaching. Consequently, he seems to imply that the sacrament of the Eucharist is less significant for salvation than the process of conversion initiated through the sermon.

Donne's concept of conversion is based on the understanding that man's union with Christ is not effected by the Lord's agency alone but relies on the individual's adequate response. Christ, according to Donne, "proceeds with man, as though man might be of some use to him, and with whom it were fit for him to gold good correspondence"; he approaches man "as though God needed us, to intreat us to be reconciled to him" (10.5: 120). Conversion towards God is the result of a reciprocal process, and we are not surprised to find that this should be so, for, if God was happy to redeem us even without our consent, preaching, the act of advertising for our voluntary consent to be united with God, would be superfluous. This necessity of human responsiveness also explains why the subject of obstinacy should trigger some of Donne's most tempestuous outbursts, such as in a sermon from 1617 where he rails against "[t]hat stupid inconsideration [...], that sullen indifferency in ones disposition, to love one thing no more than another, not to value, not to chuse, not to prefer, that stoniness, that inhumanity, not to be affected, not to be entendred" (1.5: 241-42).⁵

How is this cooperation, which is at the heart of the relationship between God and man, then to be effected through the sermon? If the

central agenda of the Biblical word is to move and invite individuals to consent to their conversion, the difficulty of making real and vivid the Biblical word in all its might will best or even solely be brought about by means of performing, i.e. re-enacting that which is said in the Bible in the process of each sermon itself. The 'histoire' of the Bible, is to be not only narrated by the sermon, but performed through its discourse—and this is exactly how Donne himself likes to think of his sermon on 2 Cor. 5:20, "We pray yee in Christs stead, be ye reconciled to God." The preacher serves as God's ambassador, and this concept of embassy is reflected by the sermon's *divisio*: "our parts will be three: *Our Office towards you; yours towards us; and the Negotiation it self, Reconciliation to God*" (10.5: 120). The relation between the preacher and his audience parallels that between God and man which ought to manifest itself in the listeners' acceptance to be reconciled with God. This intrinsic connectedness becomes even more obvious in the further subdivisions suggested by the preacher: "for, in the two first (besides the matter) there are two kinds of *persons, we and you, The Priest and the People (we pray you.)* And in the last there are two kinds of persons too, *you and God; Be ye reconciled to God*" (10.5: 120).

God's offer of salvation and the preacher's invitations to identify with the exempla introduced by the sermon equally rely on being taken up by the audience.⁶ An inability or unwillingness to identify coincides with declining God's offer of salvation:

it is indeed an incorrigible height of pride, when a man will not believe that he is meant in a libel, if he be not named in that libel. It is a fearfull obduration, to be Sermon-prooffe, or not to take knowledge, that a judgement is denounced against him, because he is not named in the denouncing of that judgement. (6.10: 219)

The 'story' about the choice each human being faces to either accept or refuse God's offer of salvation is re-enacted in the discourse of each sermon which invites identification without ever being able to force it. Not surprisingly, the success of each sermon, i.e. its listeners' acceptance of these invitations, firmly depends on the preacher's rhetorical power, a power which is, of course, also the hallmark of all poetry and

drama: "He came to save by calling us, as an eloquent and a perswasive man draws his Auditory, but yet imprints no necessity upon the faculty of the will; so works Gods calling of us in his word" (1.9: 313). Evidently, each preacher would need to do all he could to overcome that "fearfull obduration, to be Sermon-prooffe" with all rhetorical cunning, and just as ritual "is designed to do what it does without bringing what it is doing across the threshold of discourse or systematic thinking" (Bell 93), so does the preacher not only attempt to convince his congregation intellectually but also by means of the emotions. In their sermons, preachers inevitably confront the ancient dilemma of *magnitudo* and *praesentia*, that is the rhetorical challenge of making present the divine which, due to its sheer greatness, cannot actually ever be made present as such (see Shuger 196-97). This is why early modern preaching cannot possibly do without appealing to its hearers' emotions in order to be successful in conjoining this "the greatest object with the most vivid representation" (Shuger 199). *Enargia*, that is the presentation of evidence, the bringing before our eyes that which we are to recognise, goes hand in hand with *energia*, that is the passionate vigour which is to support that evidence.

According to Shuger, the kind of rhetorical *enargia* sermons usually draw upon is best understood in theatrical terms, for it "is less like a painting than a play, [...] throwing everything into motion through dialogue, narration, and personification" (Shuger 219). This is how rhetoric, as Donne himself succinctly argues, "'will make absent and remote things present to your understanding'" (*Sermons* 4.2: 87, qtd. by Shuger 227). It does so wherever Donne not only narrates the Biblical word but engages his audience in a multi-layered dialogue, as for example in a sermon preached at White-hall in 1618 where he challenges his listeners thus: "He [i.e. Christ] hath been in a pilgrimage towards thee long, coming towards thee, perchance 50, perchance 60 years; and how far is he got into thee yet? Is he yet come to thine eyes? Have they made *Jobs* Covenant, that they will not look upon a Maid; yet he is not come into thine ear? Art thou rectified in that

sense? yet voluptuousness in thy tast, or inordinateness in thy other senses keep him out in those" (1.9: 308). Christ is here personified as a pilgrim towards and into each listener. Ideally, each congregation member ought, at the end of the day, use all his senses to embody Christ. Moreover, Donne introduces Job to encourage his audience to imitate the latter's exemplary oath not to "look upon a Maid," so that each listener is presented as implicated in a dialogue with both the Biblical example of Job and of Christ Himself. The inevitability of this involvement is reflected and reinforced by the nagging questions which the preacher forces upon his listeners.

In order to enliven the Holy Word for each member of the audience and to make them *see*, early modern preachers were encouraged to "take a more rhetorical—indeed a more theatrical—approach to their calling" (Knapp 118) and even frequently "undertook play-acting as part of their clerical training" (Knapp 2). However, although Knapp here primarily refers to the actual performance of the early modern sermon, Donne's sermons are not only theatrical in as far as they constitute "blueprints for performance" (Crockett 64). A structure resembling that of theatrical performance is, as I want to argue, also already inherent to the texts of Donne's sermons themselves.

If we are to transfer the theatre's communicative situation to the genre of the sermon, then the Biblical text each sermon relies on would be the dramatic script, written by God as the author. The sermon would constitute an actualisation or current production, indeed a bringing to life, of the Biblical text, which ought to prevent listeners from considering themselves exempted from God's addresses to us: "Postdate the whole Bible, and whatsoever thou hearest spoken of such, as thou art, before, beleve all that to be spoken but now, and spoken to thee" (6.10: 220). If the actualisation and realisation of the Biblical text primarily takes place with the help of exempla into which listeners are to insert themselves, then the congregation, apart from being audience, would also provide the (surrogate) actors for the sermon's performance. Church-goers are not allowed to simply sit back and consider themselves as nothing but audience: "Hath God

made this World his Theatre, *ut exhibeatur ludus deorum*, that man may represent God in his conversation; and wilt thou play no part? But think that thou only wast made to pass thy time merrily, and to be the only spectator upon this Theatre?" (1.3: 207). Not only with regard to the world, or rather, the *theatrum mundi*, but also with respect to Donne's sermons are congregations expected to do more than merely pass their "time merrily," instead, they should be "fit to be inserted" (1.3: 208).⁷

In the early modern period, the part of the 'master of revels,' whom we would nowadays refer to as the director of a play, was mostly taken by the author of that play. Alternatively, an actor, or someone who was both author of and actor in the respective play, thus situated above and implicated in the theatrical plot, assumed that function. Likewise, in Donne's sermons, the preacher, who is clearly in a position superior to his congregation, deigns to feature as an actor in the play of the exempla he is producing: rather than simply pronouncing an invitation to the listeners to identify, the speaker, through his own example, illustrates what it is that his listeners are expected to do with the exempla he has provided—as when the speaker appears to be making his own confession, mingling it with the fate of Jeremy in a sermon on Psalm 38:2: "I impute nothing to another, that I confesse not of my selfe, I call none of you to confession to me, I doe but confesse my self to God, and you" (2.1: 53). Through the preacher's alignment with his listeners, the sermon turns into a shared stage where both members of the congregation and the preacher himself have their common appearances.

The fact that the preacher is simultaneously God's representative and an ordinary sinner in need of redemption shows him to be, as Nardo emphasises, a liminal figure: "In between pulpit and pew, heaven and earth, God's presence is given, received, and by its reception returned to the giver—thereby multiplying to a triple presence of preacher, sinner, and God in a holy interchange of selves" (162). The most exemplary figure for such a "triple presence of preacher, sinner, and God," is, of course, Christ. Thus, as preacher, Donne not only

imitates, but performs, re-enacts and brings to life the most important dogma of Christian doctrine, namely that of God stooping so low as to become man and to take on a physical body in Christ, in whose person God and man, author and actor, coincide.⁸

For preachers, St. Paul was probably the most popular Biblical figure to identify with,⁹ and Donne's own proclaimed conversion from Jack Donne to Dr. Donne (or, as we may add, from Roman Catholic to Anglican) recalls the Apostle's Biblical conversion from Saul to (St.) Paul. The preacher St. Paul, however, was in turn frequently aligned with Christ: "*Saul was no longer Saul, but he was Christ: Vivit in me Christus, sayes he, It is not I that live, not I that do any thing, but Christ in me*" (4.10: 209-10). The preacher's calling thus blends with what Christ himself has done: "*Arma nostra preces & fletus, we can defend our selves, nor him, no other way, we present to you our tears, and our prayers, his tears, and his prayers that sent us, and if you will not be reduced with these, our Commission is at an end*" (10.5: 122); "*Obsecramus, we have no other commission but to pray, and to intreat, and that we doe, in his words, in his tears, in his blood, and in his bowels who sent us*" (10.5: 125). That it should be far from easy to disentangle the various personal pronouns and adjectives in these preceding quotations is precisely the point: whereas it is quite clear that all second-person references are addressed to listeners of the sermon, and that the third-person singular evidently refers to Christ, the first-person plural references deliberately oscillate between the "we" of a community of preachers and a "we" that includes Christ Himself, which implies that preachers are, by the nature of their office, images and intimate companions of Christ. Not surprisingly, this has consequences for the way in which the congregation should receive their preachers: they should simply "say to us, we acknowledge that you do your duties, and we do receive you in Christs stead; what is it that you would have us doe?" (10.5: 134). The final part of this advice clearly echoes and harks back to the question which the Apostle Paul asked of no less an authority than Christ himself, and that would come up again in a later sermon—congregation members are thus

encouraged to turn to their preacher in the same way as St. Paul, at the very moment of his conversion, is said to have approached the Lord Himself.

The performative imitation of Christ is, however, by no means the exclusive prerogative of the speaker: rather, the imaginative performance of Christ, in particular of Christ's passion, plays an extremely important role in everyone's life: "as Christ feels all the afflictions of his children, so his children will feel all the wounds that are inflicted upon him" (2.3: 121). Towards the end of "Death's Duel," Donne re-stages the passion of Christ in extenso and invites his congregation to "[t]ake in the *whole day* from the *houre* that *Christ received the passeover* upon *Thursday*, unto the *houre* in which hee *dyled* the *next day*. Make *this present day* that *day* in thy *devotion*, and consider what *hee did*, and remember what *you have done*" (10.11: 245). This strategy of re-staging, which may be said to recall the tradition of Roman Catholic passion plays, in fact invokes crucial features from both a Protestant and a Catholic understanding of ritual. A Protestant approach "tends to constitute ritual as merely commemorative," with the death of Christ being "utterly unlike any subsequent ritual commemoration or enactment" (Humphrey and Laidlaw 157), and Donne's use of the terms "consider" and "remember" might indicate that his imitation of Christ's passion is, in good Protestant fashion, basically commemorative. However, the past of Christ's passion and the present of our sins are brought very closely together: indeed, Christ's actions even appear to be closer to the present than what we "have done," for whereas the verb "consider," which refers to Christ's deeds, may be used with events both past and present, the verb "remember," which refers to our own doings, is predominantly used with things past. Also, the deictic expressions of Donne's exhortation to "[m]ake *this present day* that *day* in thy *devotion*" make it impossible to decide whether the day of Christ's passion or the present day is referred to as more or less remote than the other.

Thus, although the speaker is clearly aware of the commemorative character of his meditation, he deliberately foregrounds the domi-

nance of the speaker's and congregation's re-enactment of the crucifixion in the here and now of his sermon—and the concept of this (performative) 'imitatio Christi' in fact echoes specifically Catholic practices of doing penance, as exemplified in some of Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. As a preacher, Donne is thus on two levels concerned with the project of live re-enactment: on the level of discourse, he employs rhetorical and theatrical strategies to revive and actualise the Biblical text, and on the level of story, his primary thematic focus lies on the passion and resurrection, i.e. the coming (back) to life of Christ which is considered pertinent to each man's life and death. Both of these aspects come together when Donne points out: "But the life of his death lies in thy acceptation, and though he be come to his, thou art not come to thy *Consummatum est*, till that be done" (10.5: 137). The listener's enactment of Christ's final words, his personal "*consummatum est*," not only entails the sinner's reconciliation with Christ but also coincides with the sermon's success, as both listener and preacher meet and merge in the figure of Christ and his passion.

Only rarely does Donne in his sermons acknowledge the risks inherent to that strategy of employing examples which listeners are asked to follow and identify with, but in a sermon on the conversion of St. Paul from 1624 he warns listeners to beware of "the danger of sinning by precedent, and presuming of mercy by example" (6.10: 209). But, as we have seen, this does not generally prevent homiletic speakers from aligning themselves with the figure of Christ, even as they insist on their humility ("we are led by a low way" 10.5: 122) and see themselves exposed to charges of drunkenness, madness and foolishness: "Lower then this, we cannot be cast, and higher then this we offer not to climbe" (10.5: 125). However low, mad, and foolish the day-to-day business of preachers may be since there is nothing left for them to do but to pray and weep—the paradox of this concluding remark is resolved in the figure of Christ, who excelled in humility. Preaching thus becomes a 'gloriously' humble task, highly reminiscent of the mission the son of God Himself had been sent into the world for. The more the preacher succeeds in humbling himself, the

more does he make himself resemble Christ—and the more should he beware of making a virtue and a proud confidence of that humility since this may place him on the verge of “the danger of sinning by precedent, and presuming of mercy by example” (6.10: 209). Therefore, as is true also of some of Donne's devotional poems,¹⁰ readers and listeners may be wary whenever the preacher “doth protest too much” his own humility. Despite all its considerable advantages, any exaggerated theatricality runs the danger of being considered nothing but theatrical—and thus, some of Donne's performances, regardless of their professed humility, may come across not at all as coming “by a low way,” but rather as altogether ‘over the top.’

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NOTES

¹For the link between popery and theatre see, for example, J. Rainolds, *Th' Overthrow of Stage Plays* (1600), who accuses Catholics (and Jesuits, in particular) that, “instead of preaching the word, they cause it to be played” (qtd. by Lake and Questier 447). Also note Lake and Questier's argument that sermons and plays were directed at an overlapping audience and that “preachers were as much in the contemporary ‘leisure industry’ as was the theatre and, therefore, the two were in direct competition for an audience” (430).

²Raymond J. Frontain alerted me to the fact that, whereas the second part of this famous quotation of Baker's, that is Donne's preoccupation with the ladies, has been notoriously elaborated and speculated upon by literary critics, the first part, which addresses Donne's predilection for the theatre, has so far not been treated as thoroughly. In a sense, this essay constitutes a modest attempt to redress that negligence.

³That Donne himself should nowhere directly refer to the institution of the theatre in his sermons may in fact be said to strengthen my argument further as this may hint that, being only too much aware both of his sermons' dependency on theatrical effect and the theatre's dubious moral status, he would have done well not to betray himself by any unmediated commentary. There are, however, as will be seen, various instances where theatre is at least implicitly on the preacher's mind.

⁴See, for example, Albrecht and Weber (2) or Carrithers (10).

⁵I am grateful to Matthias Bauer for pointing out to me that Donne's insistence on the relevance of emotionally moving one's readers or listeners may be linked also to Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, where he stresses the uselessness of teaching virtue without at the same time emotionally moving one's listeners or readers towards it: "For who will be taught, if he be not moved with desire to be taught, and what so much good doth that teaching bring forth (I speak still of moral doctrine) as that it moveth one to do that which it doth teach?" (Sidney 21). The poet, and, we may argue, also the dramatist, "doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter into it" (Sidney 21). Such an enticement clearly is in the best interest also of a preacher of sermons.

⁶The concept of "take-up" goes back to Austin's theory of speech acts. Austin argues that some speech acts, such as, for example, bets, require a take-up on the part of the audience to be felicitous. By transferring this concept onto the speech act of the sermon, I want to indicate that, in order to perform a successful and felicitous sermon, the preacher depends on the congregation members' adequate response. An adequate response would mean the listener's identification with the exempla offered by the preacher whereas a refusal to identify would render the speech act of the sermon infelicitous.

⁷Admittedly, however, each listener will oscillate between the position of role-committed actor and fairly uninvolved spectator, depending on whether the individual example applies to one's own situation or not.

⁸In his essay on "Dramatic Technique and Personae in Donne's Sermons," Paul W. Harland draws attention to the significance of personal identification and theatrical insertion for the discourse of Donne's preaching. However, whereas he sees Donne's frequent appropriations of the voice of Christ as so many instances of the resurrection, I have tried to point out in this paragraph that the strategies of restoring Christ in the discourse of the sermons are more complex and further-reaching than Harland argues.

⁹See Webber (16) for a more thorough account of early modern preachers' identifications with St. Paul.

¹⁰For religious identity in Donne's divine poetry being, possibly, a mere fabrication see, for example, Healy.

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The Intrusion of Old Times: Ghosts and Resurrections in Hardy, Joyce and Beyond

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I

Since Positivism, ghosts and *revenants* have, if not entirely disappeared, at least been subjected to severe scrutiny. Notwithstanding the fascination for vampires and other creatures of Gothic horror which the Victorians inherited from the Romantic age,¹ *Jane Eyre* represents the new spirit of anti-Romanticism when she dismisses the idea of goblins “covet[ing] shelter in the common-place human form” (128). Despite the fact that he is twice confronted with the ghost of his father, Hamlet anticipates modern secular tendencies when he denies the existence of *revenants* and maintains that death is an “undiscovered country from whose bourn / No traveller returns” (3.1.78-79). While Hamlet considers death to be an unexplored realm, however, late nineteenth-century writers frequently incline towards an emergent nihilism that, in the wake of Darwin and Spencer, is bent on completely destroying the mystery of death and its manifold bodily representations.² Thus, the fiendish clergyman in James Thomson B. V.’s *The City of Dreadful Night* (1870-74) not only suggests that there is “no God” and “no Fiend with names divine” (XIV.40); but he also stresses the fact that death is an everlasting sleep during which each man’s body is dissolved and then, according to the idea of the earth as a tomb and womb, re-assembled into “earth, air, water, plants, and other men” (XIV.54). The ideas of death and rebirth held by Thomson’s clergyman point ahead towards the later scepticism of James Joyce’s Leopold Bloom who, in the ‘Hades’ episode in *Ulysses* (1922), sees the last judgement only in terms of a large-scale reassembly of

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rotten bodily organs: "every fellow mousing around for his liver and his lights and the rest of his traps" (102).

II

In the context of the late nineteenth-century break with metaphysics, Goethe's apparently outdated maxim "die Geisterwelt ist nicht verschlossen"³ can only retain its validity if the reader is prepared to re-define traditional notions of ghosts and of resurrection. In 1881, Henrik Ibsen wrote the controversial play *Gengangere* (*Ghosts*), which was translated into English the following year. The ghosts, here "no less powerful because they are unseen,"⁴ are vices of the past, ancestral curses that relentlessly intrude upon the characters' lives and eventually destroy them. It is these Ibsenian ghosts from the past that also hold the eponymous heroine of Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) in their clutches.

Ironically conjured up by the parson, who at the very outset of the novel proves to be less of an exorcist than a capricious necromancer, the ghosts of the past not only lead the haggler John Durbeyfield to be infected with the deadly sins of pride and luxury; but from then on, they also ruthlessly haunt Tess in a variety of manifestations. In this context, Alec D'Urberville's role is vexingly polyvalent: as a representative of the *nouveaux riches* who try to give their prosperity an aristocratic aura, he is a descendant of the Stokes family who adopted the name of the D'Urbervilles and thus brought about a spurious—and for Tess even fatal—resurrection of an extinct county family. In his dandyish appearance, which fails to gloss over "the touches of barbarism in his contours" (40), he, moreover, becomes an ominous agent of fate, an *homme fatal* who alerts Tess to the fact that the ghosts of the past can never be pacified or escaped. In her rape at the end of the first section of the novel, which is described as the appropriation of the refined by the powers of the coarse and which triggers off a chain of fatalistic events, the atrocities of the remote past are not only

suddenly revived, but also inevitably linked with Tess's biography: "Doubtless some of Tess D'Urberville's mailed ancestors rollicking home from a fray had dealt the same wrong even more ruthlessly upon peasant girls of their time" (74). In contrast to the popular genre of the *bildungsroman* which frequently shows protagonists disengaging themselves from the burden of the past, Hardy's novel persistently emphasizes the fact that Tess is not only hampered by the moral depravity of her ancestors, but also constantly exposed to intruders from her more recent past. Hardy visualizes this bleak and deterministic concept of the human condition by the image of the rat chase: seeking shelter in the corn fields as in a fortress, the rats, like the other small animals, are unaware of the extent to which their refuge is destroyed by the relentless movements of the reaping machines, until the last yards of wheat are cut down and they fall victim to the cruelty of the harvesters.

In the same way as the rats are persecuted by the "teeth of the unerring reaper[s]" (87), i.e. the modernized version of the Grim Reaper, Tess is haunted and tracked down by the numerous ghosts of her past. Vainly striving to "dismiss the past" (192), she cannot shut her eyes to the threats of "gloomy spectres" prowling and "waiting like wolves just outside the circumscribing light" (195) and always on the point of eclipsing the rare moments of pastoral happiness she enjoys in Talbothays. While Tess goes to great lengths to stave off the ghosts of her Tantridge past, and hopes that the loss of her virginity will remain secret until after her marriage, gory legends revolving around the D'Urberville coach and forbidding life-size portraits of her ancestors make it patently obvious that all endeavours to break with the past will be as futile as Oswald Alving's efforts to cope with the consequences of his syphilitic heritage in Ibsen's *Ghosts*. While these various features of the uncanny are usually considered to be illustrative of Hardy's indebtedness to the gothic novel, the reader tends to overlook the fact that they are functional parts of an intricate pattern of images which Hardy uses to subvert Christian ideas of eschatology and to grimly parody hopes of restoration from death. The ghosts

from the past that accompany Tess's descent into the hell of her existence are, thus, closely interwoven with several passages in the novel in which the notion of resurrection is inverted and subjected to cynical comment.

The first instance of such an inverted resurrection is an (implicit) reference to Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," which Hardy uses to make the location of Tess's bridal feast a *locus terribilis*. While the newlyweds are depicted sitting at the tea table, "the restful dead leaves of the preceding autumn were stirred to irritated resurrection, and whirled about unwillingly, and tapped against the shutters" (218). In Shelley's poem, the dead and "[p]estilence-stricken multitudes" of leaves, "chariot[ed] to their dark wintry bed," supply the seeds of regeneration and ultimately triumph over disease and death;⁵ in Hardy's novel, however, the spurious resurrection of the leaves prefaces not so much a dialectical process of renewal as the ongoing decline into the realms of death and hell. Having listened to Tess's confession and associated her lack of purity with the moral degeneration of effete aristocratic families—"Decrepit families postulate decrepit wills, decrepit conduct" (232)—, Angel walks about with his wife "as in a funeral procession" (233); later on, while sleepwalking, he takes her to a dilapidated abbey church where he carefully lays her in the empty sarcophagus of an abbot. The motif of the beloved rescued from death, as in the myth of Orpheus and Eurydike, has now been replaced with that of the girl entombed alive. When Tess sits up in the coffin and sees her husband lying beside it in a "deep dead slumber of exhaustion" (249), the effect is hardly less aporetic than in *Romeo and Juliet* when Juliet awakes in the family vault to find her husband beyond help. Although Angel fancies in his dream that Tess has risen from the dead and, like a modern Beatrice, is leading him to heaven, the allusions to resurrection and Dantean bliss are the result of a temporary eclipse of reason and cannot prevent the protagonists from coming to grief.

When Hardy's narrator goes on to connect the theme of resurrection with the sinister character of Alec D'Urberville, the effect is not so

much one of contradiction as one of cynicism and Mephistophelean sarcasm. When Tess accidentally re-encounters Alec, the former dandy has miraculously turned into a preacher and exchanged his crude hedonistic desires for the strict principles of Paulinism. He warns Tess not to look at him and accuses her of being the re-incarnation of the witch of Babylon, thus not only anticipating the misogyny of Iokanaan in Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* (1892), but also amply confirming Tess's suspicions about his sudden conversion; he eventually gives her "an almost physical sense of an implacable past which still engirdled her" (307). Reminded of the fact that "the break of continuity between her earlier and present existence" (307) is a fallacy, she is horrified to see how rapidly the zealous preacher becomes a sensual tempter again. This metamorphosis is described using words associated with death and resurrection:

The corpses of those old black passions which had lain inanimate amid the lines of his face ever since his reformation seemed to wake and come together as in a resurrection. (324)

Hardy, via his narrator, relies on his readers to notice the religious discourse which he utilises for blasphemous and provocative ends. The corpses reanimated in Alec's face are his "old black passions" which, in a world listlessly watched by a *deus absconditus*,⁶ have replaced the time-honoured symbols of resurrection such as the phoenix⁷ and ultimately show the rapist for what he is: a luciferic creature that enjoys the change of masquerades in the places Tess is doomed to wander—clearly identified as infernal by references to Tophet, Pluto, and the confusion of Pandemonium (325, 335). When he has grown tired of the role of the preacher, he quickly re-assumes his chameleon identity and resurrects himself in the persona of the fiendish dandy, "dressed in a tweed suit of fashionable pattern" and "twirl[ing] a gay walking-cane" (327). From then on, Tess, identified as "a bled calf" (335) about to be sacrificed on the pagan altar slab of Stonehenge, is tied to her tormentor, who likes to pose as the "old Other One come to tempt you in the disguise of an inferior animal" (349).

In what manner the devilish Alec likes dallying with Tess's beliefs and epistemological habits is amply shown when he makes a mockery of the idea of resurrection in the churchyard. Evicted from her home and, after her father's death, compelled to seek refuge with her family under the churchyard wall, Tess wanders about the graves and eventually faces the sepulchre of her ancestors, the negative endpoint towards which her life in this inverted *bildungsroman* has always been gravitating. As if meant to recapture the scene in Henry Bowler's 1855 painting *The Doubt: "Can These Dry Bones Live?"*, in which a young woman is faced with the logical gap between decaying bones in a churchyard and Victorian ideas of the "heavenly resurrection body,"⁸ Tess is lost in her meditations about the numerous deceased "tall knights" (363) whom she envies because they lie beyond the door of the sepulchre. While in Bowler's painting nothing disrupts the elegiac atmosphere of the *memento mori*-theme, Tess, the object of the assaults of the past, is violently jolted out of her musings when she suddenly becomes aware of an effigy that seems to move on an altar-tomb:

As soon as she drew close to it she discovered all in a moment that the figure was a living person; and the shock to her sense of not having been alone was so violent that she was quite overcome, and sank down nigh to fainting, not however till she had recognized Alec d'Urberville in the form. (363)

In this episode, which again proves Hardy's familiarity with the gothic novel tradition, Alec ridicules the idea of a restoration from death by giving it a literal twist and boldly resurrecting himself from the tomb. Seen in terms of a morality play, Alec's mock resurrection is meant to signify the (temporary) triumph of luciferic dandyism over the realm of pastoral serenity, fallaciously embodied by Angel. This fallen *angelus clarus* fits into the pattern of mock or anti-resurrections since, in an earlier conversation with his father, he had strictly refused to adhere to Article 4 of the Anglican Church (115) which holds that Christ was physically raised from the dead. When the rebellious angel then returns from his disastrous stay in Brazil, almost appearing as a skeleton restored from death and, as the narrator points out, in the shape of Carlo Crivelli's dead Christ (368), the reader notices that the

progress towards a fatal ending is inevitable and that the numerous allusions to resurrection are either ineffectual or persistently translated into a negative and satanic context.

All that Tess can do in a life that is overshadowed by the past and in which devils reduce the idea of resurrection to absurdity, is to adopt an almost Hamletian attitude: emphasizing her readiness to face the consequences of her futile attempts to liberate herself from the ghosts—"I am ready" (396)—, she not only resigns herself to the powers of the past, but also to the mechanisms of institutionalized death. Lamenting the fact that a reunion with her lover in a world to come is an illusion and at variance with the pervasively pagan idea of circularity, Tess finally discards the Christian concepts of resurrection and teleology which she had tacitly acquiesced in since her early childhood.

III

In Hardy's last novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895), the "ghostly past" (83) takes on a diversity of shapes: roaming the streets of Christminster at night, Jude, like a Gulliver transferred to the nineteenth century, has imaginary conversations with numerous dead poets and philosophers whose phantoms still seem to haunt the historic buildings and colleges with their forbidding resemblance to "family vaults" (83). With the great men's spirits having disappeared at dawn, Christminster becomes not only a place of death and decay, but also the stage for the most destructive visitation from Jude's past: a little boy with the paradoxical name of Father Time,⁹ who, as the re-incarnation of Chronos, embodies the notion of devouring time (*tempus edax*), and, by killing himself and his step brothers and sisters, proves the annihilating effect of the past on the future.

In contrast to this *puer senex* suffering from "the coming universal wish not to live" (337), the ghost of the past in James Joyce's last story in *Dubliners*, "The Dead," is less spectacular but equally shattering,

despite the fact that it is conjured up simply by a piece of music. As the title of the story suggests, the people coming to the Misses Morkan's annual dance are the inhabitants of a necropolis that scarcely differs from the various 'cities of dreadful night' envisioned in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century literature. This impression is underlined both by the snow and the fact that the "dark gaunt house" (138) is located on Usher's Island, a quay on the south bank of the Liffey, which could also be an oblique reference to Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*. As in Poe's story, not only the house appears to be moribund but also the assembly of people that stand so markedly in contrast to the Feast of the Epiphany, the day on which the story apparently takes place. In Joyce's story, death seems to be all-pervasive: the face of one of the hostesses is described in terms of a *memento mori* still life, "all puckers and creases, like a shrivelled red apple" (141), the conversation during dinner revolves around monks who sleep in their coffins, and Freddy Malins, a man who is around forty, is characterized not only by his "high-pitched bronchitic laughter" (146), but also by the bloated pallor of a face that is heavily marked by the excesses of alcohol and the signs of early death.

Unable to escape from this atmosphere of death and decay, the protagonist, Gabriel Conroy, is ultimately reduced to a non-entity by a tune which at first induces him to idolize his wife, but then makes him painfully aware of the fallacious character of his marriage. While the plaintive ballad "The Lass of Aughrim" is sung, Gabriel sees his wife undergoing a change: "There was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something" (165). Watching her with renewed erotic interest, he misinterprets the colour in her cheeks and her shining eyes as signs of the rekindling of her love for him, but the reader, who follows the story from Gabriel's limited homodiegetic perspective, is to learn that the tune has restored something from death that, in the end, proves detrimental to the speaker. The uncanny now palpably encroaches upon the characters and is aggravated by the extended farewell scene with the manifold repetition of the word

“Good-night,” which—like the final lines of the second section of T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*—evokes Ophelia’s last words¹⁰ and her imminent death. These intertextual reverberations of finality and frustrated love, which are also supported by an oblique reference to a “picture of the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*” (146), are subsequently intensified by the imagery of the “dull yellow light” (167), of the oppressive sky that seems “to be descending,” and of the “ghostly light from the street lamp” (170). While Gabriel still persists in thinking that he will “make her forget the years of their dull existence together” (168) and erroneously believes that they have now managed to “escape from their lives and duties, [...] from home and friends” (169), he is deluded like Tess and Jude, who fail to take into account that the ghosts of the past can never be evaded. The climax of the story is reached when Gabriel feels his heart “brimming over with happiness” (171) and his wife thwarts his expectations of her yielding to his desires by telling him that the song has rekindled her love for a young and delicate boy called Michael Furey, who died when he was only seventeen. The intrusion of this ghost from the past upon the apparent seclusion of the hotel room, “the evocation of this figure from the dead” (173), shatters Gabriel’s existence and—as the “large swinging mirror” (170) where he sees himself as a “pitiable fatuous fellow” (173) stresses—he realises that his various attempts at intellectual self-fashioning and redefinition are all based on an illusion. All of a sudden unmasked as “a ludicrous figure” and “a nervous well-meaning sentimentalist” (173), he is compelled to understand that his bourgeois complacency is threatened by unseen ghosts and *revenants*:

[...] at that hour when he had hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him in its vague world. (174)

While Hardy’s later novels are loosely aligned with Ibsen’s concept of the past as a succession of ghostly (and degenerative) intrusions, Joyce’s “The Dead” has a strong relationship with Ibsen’s last play *Når vi døde vågner* (*When We Dead Awaken*; 1899). According to Robert

Spoo, it is not only the “exasperating unreadability of women” (100) apparently embodied in the character of Irene, but rather the whole cluster of elements—“a marriage dulled by routine, a peripeteia brought about by a figure returning from the past, the half-conscious sufferings of the living dead, awakenings that only confirm a sense of loss and emotional aridity” (101)—that Joyce seems to have taken over from Ibsen’s play and translated into the context of his narrative.¹¹ The sudden onset of the uncanny, which radiates from the dead in their “vague world” and rapidly leads to the protagonist’s loss of self-confidence, shows that both Ibsen and Joyce introduce a quality into their texts that almost anticipates the Pinteresque. The Pinteresque theme of people being constantly exposed to the threat of an intrusive and ghostly past can also be found in the poem “She Weeps over Ragoon.” Written in Trieste as early as 1914 and then integrated into his scanty collection *Pomes Penyeach* (1927), the poem is supposed to have been inspired by a visit the Joyces made to the grave of Nora’s ex-lover, Michael Bodkin.¹² The male persona of the poem is exactly in Gabriel’s position when he is painfully made aware of the fact that the power exerted by the ghosts of the past can never be broken. While in the story it is a simple tune that conjures up Michael Furey’s disruptive presence and marks the beginning of Gabriel’s deterioration, in the poem, it is the atmosphere of the cemetery that seems to cast a spell over the female speaker and make her susceptible to the voices of the dead.¹³ Standing in front of the grave, she mystically feels reunited with her dead lover, while her male companion is almost eclipsed and changed into a mute addressee:

Love, hear thou
 How soft, how sad his voice is ever calling,
 Ever unanswered, and the dark rain falling,
 Then as now. (5-8)¹⁴

The poem ends on a note of *memento mori*—“Dark too our hearts, O love, shall lie and cold / As his sad heart has lain” (9-10)—and on the prospect of the couple joining the deceased lover and the male protagonist being the odd man out even in the realm of death,

"[u]nder the moongrey nettles, the black mould / And muttering rain" (11-12).

The main difference between the poem and the story thus, lies in perspective alone: the poem gives the reader an insight into the female speaker's necrophilism and her yearning for a reunion with her deceased lover; the story, by contrast, emphasizes the male position and the way Gabriel copes with the fact that, in a newly discovered love triangle, he has been ousted from his secure position by a dead adolescent. Alienated from his wife, whose sound sleep is also a sign of withdrawal from communication, Gabriel feels himself increasingly drawn into the region of the dead: "[...] in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree. [...] His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead" (176). While, in the poem, the mute male protagonist is given a glimpse of the end of his death-bound existence, in "The Dead," it is the sudden negative epiphany which brings about Gabriel's collapse and consequently triggers off a longing for self-annihilation and the wish to see the sharp contours of the world blurred to nothingness.

IV

Both narratives, Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and Joyce's "The Dead," put a great deal of emphasis on the liminal character of their protagonists' lives, which precariously hover between past and present, death and life. Towards the end of Hardy's novel, Tess is seen contemplating the door of her ancestors' sepulchre, while Alec plays the role of a scoffing and impish *psychagogos*. At the end of Joyce's story, Gabriel turns to the window, another symbol of liminality, and what he sees is fundamentally different from what the "[c]harméd magic casements" of Romantic poetry used to reveal.¹⁵ Keats's "faery lands forlorn" beyond the window have been transformed into a topography of death and annihilation. In "She Weeps over Ragoon," it

is the incessant rain that is about to inundate the insecure world of the living; in “The Dead,” it is the snow that covers everything and obliterates the objects of reality and finally—as in the snow chapter in Thomas Mann’s *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*, 1924)¹⁶—transports the speaker into the region of death and decomposition:

His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead. (176)

Both Hardy’s and Joyce’s way of dealing with the theme of resurrection, with intrusive ghosts from the past and the imminence of death makes it clear that they subscribed to a bleak view of human life, according to which man is not so much fettered by a vengeful God—the reference to the President of the Immortals at the end of *Tess* seems to be mainly of an intertextual kind—as by the ruthless potency of the past. In this respect, both Tess and Gabriel are victimised and paralysed by the various incarnations, legends and evocations of the past and, consequently, denied the privilege fully enjoyed by Kate in Harold Pinter’s 1971 play *Old Times*: faced with the past in the figure of Anna, Kate not only refuses to be intruded upon and manipulated by narratives “one remembers even though they may never have happened” (27-28), she even feels free to sever the bonds with the past and to verbally kill Anna, who is either physically present or just conjured up by the characters in their obsessive attempts to reconstruct the past:

I remember you lying dead. You didn’t know I was watching you. I leaned over you. Your face was dirty. You lay dead, your face scrawled with dirt, all kinds of earnest inscriptions, but unblotted, so that they had run, all over your face, down to your throat. [...] Last rites I did not feel necessary. Or any celebration. I felt the time and season appropriate and that by dying alone and dirty you had acted with proper decorum. (67-68)

Even though, at the end of the novel, Tess actually murders the ghost of her past, what she does is essentially different from Kate’s act of emancipation. While Kate has reasserted her superiority by her verbal

act of destruction, Tess's action is as futile as Dorian Gray's attempt to destroy the obsessive ghosts of his conscience reified in his portrait. Right up to modernism, man is thus tied to the past in the same manner as a lost soul is to the Ixionian wheel,¹⁷ and it was only with the advent of existentialism that man gradually extricated himself from the claws of a paralysing past. While characters like Stanley Webber in *The Birthday Party* (1958) still seem to be deplorable descendants of Tess, Gabriel and numerous other slaves to the past, Kate belongs to a new era in which the past no longer sends forth its ominous henchmen, but is itself manipulated, re-created, and more often than not even eradicated.

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NOTES

¹See for the wider context Flasdieck.

²Cf. Guthke. According to him, "[i]mage-making is one of those urges that define humans" (8), thus, the plethora of ghosts like the many representations of death in literature and art amply proves that the imagination "does not stop short of the 'unimaginable.'"

³*Faust* I. 443.

⁴Nicoll 451.

⁵"Ode to the West Wind" I. 5-6, *Poetical Works* 577.

⁶In a world in which the *deus absconditus* or the "President of the Immortals" reigns, the traditional symbolism of resurrection has fallen into disuse and is hence replaced by mock resurrections which play with the protagonist's eschatological expectations.

⁷Seen within the context of the religious imagery of the phoenix—"ales, / Quae exoriens moritur: quae moriens oritur"—the upheaval in Alec's face becomes even clearer. For the emblem of the phoenix and its Latin *subscriptio*, see e.g. Barthélmy Aneau, *Picta poesis* (1552). 29 Dec. 2008 <<http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/emblem.php?id=FAaNa081>>.

⁸For Victorian ideas of resurrection see also Wheeler 139.

⁹Father Time personifies the cultural paradoxes of Romanticism which Hardy exposed to criticism: instead of being the harbinger of innocence, he is the agent of

death and, as an ironic response to Wordsworth's concept of the child as the father of man in the "Intimations Ode," Father Time symbolizes barrenness and the impossibility of believing that children are "[a]pparelled in celestial light," l. 4, *Poetical Works* 460.

¹⁰*Hamlet* 4.5.72-73.

¹¹Joyce's interest in Ibsen's plays is clearly expressed in his essay "Ibsen's New Drama" (1900); *The Critical Writings of James Joyce* 47-67.

¹²Cf. Ellmann 257.

¹³See also Lennartz.

¹⁴*Poems and Shorter Writings* 54.

¹⁵"Ode to the Nightingale" l. 69, *Complete Poems* 348.

¹⁶Despite many differences, there is a strong similarity between the snow chapter in the *Zauberberg* and the symbolism of snow at the end of "The Dead": in both narratives, the snow symbolizes the decadent longing to let go, to "set out on the journey westward" (176), or, in Mann's terminology, the "Wunsch und Versuchung, sich niederzulegen und zu ruhen" (Mann 679). The snowstorm and an avalanche as images of annihilation can also be found at the end of Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken*: it is only in the death-inflicting avalanche that Irene and Professor Rubek can escape the straitlaced conventions and the monotony of their petrified lives. Cf. also Englert.

¹⁷This image is used with reference to Tess's aporetic and hellish existence (380). The imagery of wheels is pervasive in the novel.

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“Stand and live”: Tropes of Falling, Rising, Standing in Robert Lowell’s *Lord Weary’s Castle*

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Tropes of falling, rising, and standing recur frequently in Robert Lowell’s poetry from *Lord Weary’s Castle* (1946), whose title-page illustration depicts Abel falling backwards in a field after having been assaulted by Cain, caught leaving the scene of the crime, to *Day by Day* (1977) and to poems left unpublished at the time of Lowell’s death in 1977.¹ I wish to draw attention here to their centrality in *Lord Weary’s Castle*, where they are connected with the volume’s overarching theme of life restored. My close readings focus on how the tropes collaborate with verse form, allusion, and intertextual metamorphoses to project fictions of life restored, and on how journeying, buildings, and apocalyptic scenarios incorporate the tropes within religious, historical, and autobiographical frames of reference. While ultimately wedded to a Christian hope in life restored, the tropes undergo perilous trials during the course of a journey from the initial poem, “The Exile’s Return,” to the final poem, “Where the Rainbow Ends,” which bids the poet himself “Stand and live.”

1.

In “The Exile’s Return,” first published in *The Nation* on February 23, 1946, tropes of falling, rising, and standing frame a prophetic vision of life restored in Germany after World War II. When readers encountered it at the outset of *Lord Weary’s Castle*, published in December, it was still a very contemporary poem, and was the first of many poems in the volume that alluded to wars in Europe from the Middle Ages to

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the twentieth century, and in North America from King Philip's War to the Civil War:

The Exile's Return

	There mounts in squalls a sort of rusty mire,	<i>a</i>	
	Not ice, not snow, to leaguer the Hôtel	<i>b</i>	
	De Ville, where braced pig-iron dragons grip	<i>c</i>	
	The blizzard to their rigor mortis. A bell	<i>b</i>	
	Grumbles when the reverberations strip	<i>c</i>	
	The thatching from its spire,	<u><i>a</i></u>	(sestet)
	The search-guns click and spit and split up timber	<i>d</i>	
	And nick the slate roofs on the Holstenwall	<i>e</i>	
	Where torn-up tilestones crown the victor. Fall	<i>e</i>	
10	And winter, spring and summer, guns unlimber	<u><i>d</i></u>	(quatrain)
	And lumber down the narrow gabled street	<i>f</i>	
	Past your gray, sorry and ancestral house	<i>g</i>	
	Where the dynamited walnut tree	<i>h</i>	
	Shadows a squat, old, wind-torn gate and cows	<i>g</i>	
	The Yankee commandant. You will not see	<i>h</i>	
	Strutting children or meet	<u><i>f</i></u>	(sestet)
	The peg-leg and reproachful chancellor	<i>i</i>	
	With a forget-me-not in his button-hole	<i>j</i>	
	When the unseasoned liberators roll	<i>j</i>	
20	Into the Market Square, ground arms before	<u><i>i</i></u>	(quatrain)
	The Rathaus; but already lily-stands	<i>k</i>	
	Burgeon the risen Rhineland, and a rough	<i>l</i>	
	Cathedral lifts its eye. Pleasant enough,	<i>l</i>	
24	<i>Voi ch'entrate</i> , and your life is in your hands.	<i>k</i>	(quatrain)

"The Exile's Return" marshals a sequence of *where-when-where-where-when* subordinate clauses attended by an accretion of *and* additive elements to structure its configurations of space and time. One begins to realize after reaching line 6 that Lowell's iambic pentameter verse paragraph is not blank verse but a systematically built edifice for which sestets and quatrains also serve as building blocks. The *abcbcadeed* rhyme scheme of the first sestet+quatrain unit, with a trimeter introduced to conclude the sestet, recurs in the second sestet+quatrain unit's *fghgfhijji* rhymes, the sixth line again being a trimeter. The "extra" final quatrain (*kllk*) solidifies the base on which the

whole rhyming structure stands. Lowell's incorporation within the verse paragraph of the ten-line stanza that Matthew Arnold used for "The Gipsy Scholar" is thematically allusive, insofar as Arnold's stanzaic poem recounts the self-exile of one "Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door, / One summer-morn forsook / His friends, and went to learn the gipsy lore, / And roamed the world with that wild brotherhood." Unlike Lowell's exile, he "returned no more" (335). In *Lord Weary's Castle* Lowell makes repeated use of the "exile" stanza, including at the end in "Where the Rainbow Ends," another rendition of the exile returned theme.²

In a poem rife with religious and literary allusions, a link is forged with the stoning of St. Stephen, alluded to in the epigraph to *Lord Weary's Castle*, when falling "torn-up tilestones crown the victor," with a pun on "crown" (enhanced by "Stephanos," Greek for "crown" or "garland").³ There is no outright pun on "Fall" at the end of line 9, but after a late caesura "Fall" lingers for a split second as an appendage of the line's semantic thrust ("Where torn-up tilestones crown the victor. Fall"), even as it fulfils the line's delayed metrical aspirations. Perched at line's end, it also pledges rhyming allegiance with the preceding line. The "Holstenwall / Fall" rhyme lodged within a quatrain (*deed* in the ongoing rhyme scheme) echoes Humpty Dumpty's wall / fall, leaving us with a pun, after all, on "Fall." Lowell was given to making odd connections of this sort through wordplay, rhyme, dead metaphors, jaded idioms, and unlikely allusions.

Without naming the city alluded to in "The Exile's Return," Lowell scatters clues in the form of phrases from the H. T. Lowe-Porter translation of Thomas Mann's novella "Tonio Kröger."⁴ Insofar as Tonio intertextually slips into the role of the "you" addressed, he becomes the "exile" who returns to Lübeck, his North German birthplace, which he had left to pursue a vocation as a poet, initially in Italy and then in Munich. In his novella, Mann draws on his own leaving of Lübeck for Munich in 1894, and directly uses his brief revisiting of Lübeck in 1899 while on the way to Denmark. Tonio very briefly returns, after thirteen years' absence, while on his way to Denmark.

During the war an exile in America, where he became an American citizen in 1944, Mann broadcast addresses to the German people via the BBC from his Pacific Palisades fastness in California. In them he defended Allied firebombing of Germany, which began in 1942 with the bombing of Lübeck, about which he expressed sorrow a few days afterwards; but he asked his fellow Germans the stark question, “Hat Deutschland geglaubt, es werde für die Untaten, die sein Vorsprung in der Barbarei ihm gestattete, niemals zu zahlen haben?” (*Politische Schriften und Reden* 223) [“Did Germany believe that it would never have to pay for the misdeeds which its lead in barbarism enabled it to commit?” (*Listen Germany!* 85)]. Lübeck’s most famous son returned to receive an award of honorary citizenship in 1955, the year of his death, in a ceremony that took place before the same *Rathaus* (i.e., town hall) referred to in Lowell’s poem.⁵ For his part, Lowell condemned Allied firebombing of German cities, and sentenced in October 1943 to a year and a day as a conscientious objector, he became an exile of sorts within his own country.⁶

“Not ice, not snow” (l. 2) gives an intertextual game away that associates “The Exile’s Return” with “Tonio Kröger.”⁷ The Lowe-Porter translation of Mann’s novella begins, “The winter sun, poor ghost of itself, hung milky and wan behind layers of cloud above the huddled roofs of the town. In the gabled streets it was wet and windy and there came in gusts a sort of soft hail, not ice, not snow” (76). Lowell’s “the Holstenwall” picks up a reference to it in “Tonio Kröger”: “‘All right; let’s go over the wall,’ [Tonio] said with a quaver in his voice. ‘Over the Millwall and the Holstenwall, and I’ll go as far as your house’” (86).⁸ Search-guns replace machine saws, when Mann’s sentence “Hans’s people had owned for some generations the big woodyards down by the river, where powerful machine saws hissed and spat and cut up timber” (88) becomes in the poem “The search-guns click and split up timber / And nick the slate-roofs of the Holstenwall” (ll. 7-8).

“The Exile’s Return” also assimilates nostalgic memories of the Lübeck to which Mann’s Tonio Kröger returned in a kind of reverie:

"he looked at everything: the narrow gables ... the Holstenwall... . Then he ... went through the squat old gate, along the harbour, and up the windy street to his parents' house... . The garden lay desolate, but there stood the old walnut tree where it used to stand, groaning and creaking heavily in the wind" (108, 111, 113). The poem accords Tonio another opportunity to return to Lübeck decades later, after its destruction in World War II. Although dynamited as if in a wilful attempt to fell it, the walnut tree continues to stand, and its resistance even to dynamiting crows the Yankee commandant.⁹ An emblem of survival, it stands imposingly enough to shadow the gate. Tonio's youthful self-consciously poetical verses about the walnut tree that Mann writes of with ironic humor (94) are an additional element in Lowell's intertextual game. He takes up where the versifying young Tonio left off, but in an altogether different manner, and accords the walnut tree, a new emblematic significance of stoic survival. By contrast, "your gray, sorry and ancestral house" alludes dourly to the Kröger family home and covertly, perhaps, to Lowell's own "ancestral house."

At a dream-logic level, Lowell transforms and transfers other motifs, giving them contemporary historical resonance. Tonio's father, for example, who twice reproached him for his low grades at school, is recurrently described as wearing a wildflower in his button-hole, a motif that Lowell transfers to "the peg-leg and reproachful chancellor / With a forget-me-not in his button-hole." The conflated father/chancellor's being made "peg-leg," injuring him but rendering him in a way more ominous, associates him with a traditional depiction of the devil as lame, and might be taken as a way of intimating that the old, conservative-patrician class, of which Tonio's father is a representative, must bear their share of the blame for the Third Reich. One also recalls that Goebbels, the most diabolical of Hitler's henchmen, did not sport a peg leg but had a bad limp, a clubfoot, and his right leg was shorter than his left. Historically, the only chancellor in question is, however, "forget-me-not" Adolf Hitler himself, who after being named Chancellor of Germany by Hindenburg in January, 1933,

appointed Goebbels his Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda.¹⁰ Read within German historical contexts, the “reproachful chancellor” you “will not meet” can be taken as a wisecracking allusion to Hitler’s not being around to reproach the Lübeckers for their inglorious capitulation, he having committed suicide in his Berlin bunker on April 30, 1945, full of reproach toward his “Volk” for having failed him. For their part, the “strutting children” of Lowell’s poem resurrect the children, Tonio among them, who are walking home from school at the outset of Mann’s novella, but I suspect that some 1946 readers associatively superimposed on Lowell’s “strutting” image familiar newsreel and movie images of marching Hitler Youth groups and, more direly, the goose-stepping German soldiers that a generation of German children became.

An adversative “but” (line 21) heralds a switch to a visionary mode, and as the poem shifts its gaze from northern, Protestant Lübeck southwestward toward the Catholic Rhineland Marian floral symbolism blossoms as “lily-stands / Burgeon the risen Rhineland.” There life is flourishing, and a resurrection graced by two religious associations of the lily has already occurred: the spray of lilies that the angel Gabriel holds in his hand when he appears before the Virgin Mary to announce that she is to be the mother of the Christ child, and the lily as a floral emblem of the Resurrection. Lowell also makes “burgeon,” normally intransitive, function as a transitive verb when the lily-stands, themselves risen and burgeoning, “burgeon” the “risen Rhineland.” Marian associations proliferate insofar as after the angel’s presentation to her of the lily, Mary herself “burgeons,” pregnant with the fruit of her womb, Jesus. Lowell does not sever the hyphenated compound noun “lily-stands” (“stand” in the sense of a group or growth of small trees or plants), but in collaboration with “risen” the verbal force of “stands” asserts itself. The blizzard that the gargoyle dragons gripped to their “rigor mortis” at the outset of the poem is no more, and a rough cathedral that “lifts its eye” stands in place of the apocalyptic “rough beast” of Yeats’s “The Second Coming,” which seeing “its hour come at last, / Slouches toward Bethlehem to be

born."¹¹ In his own "second coming" poem of return and rebirth, Lowell adopts the biblical topos "to lift one's eyes," as in Psalm 121:1, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help," and Psalm 123:1, "Unto thee I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens."

Lowell's pentameter responds to the visionary burgeoning with a trochaic substitution that foregrounds "pleasant" and initiates a rhythmically pleasing choriamb, "Pleásant enóugh." The preceding syntactic full-stop after three iambs ("Cathédral lífts its eýe. Pleásant enóugh,") confers a pause, as if the "eye" were given a moment to see, and as if the prospect it surveys were indeed "Pleasant enough." Lowell's genial obiter dictum is followed up by a revocation of the initial portion of a line from Dante's *Inferno*, "Lasciati ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate" (iii: 9), "Abandon every hope, ye that enter" (Sinclair translation). Quoting only the "ye that enter" portion of it, Lowell in effect emends Dante's inscription, making "Pleasant enough" its first half as if offering assurance that things are not so bad as all that. Hope need not be abandoned: "Pleasant enough, / *Voi ch'entrate*." After all, it is not Hell that "you" are being bidden to enter, which would be an inferno more lasting than the one Lübeck became in the firebombing of March 28, 1942 during the night before Palm Sunday, when Christ entered Jerusalem.¹² The postwar prospect that the cathedral's lifted eye surveys is perhaps no land of milk and honey, but as a token of divine forgiveness and of life restored the vision is indeed pleasant enough. The sentence's elliptical syntax also allows for the option of entering the cathedral itself, an indubitably pleasant enough alternative to entering the gate of Hell. Ironic understatement is followed by a codicil that serves as a vademecum, "and your life is in your hands." Much difficult journeying lies ahead, before the author, casting himself as exile in "Where the Rainbow Ends," enters a counterpart of the "rough / Cathedral."¹³

2.

Perilous journeying in *Lord Weary's Castle* is regularly figured in tropes of falling and sinking, as in "The Blind Leading the Blind" (64) with its allusion to Matthew 15:24, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." And fall they do in Brueghel's "The Parable of the Blind," which gave Lowell a visual point of departure for a poem employing the "Scholar Gipsy" stanza. "The Slough of Despond" (63) alludes to the episode in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* in which Christian sinks into the Slough of Despond but rises out of it thanks to a figure called Help. No such "Help" comes to the rescue in Lowell's version, which begins, "At sunset only swamp / Afforded purse-y tufts of grass ... these gave, / I sank," and ends with a "rising" that debases the traditional Christian sun/son punning association of the risen Son with the risen sun, "All the bats of Babel flap about / The rising sun of hell." In "Mr. Edwards and the Spider" (59-60) a yet more dire "perilous sinking," that of a condemned soul, is likened to the sinking of a spider "thrown into the bowels of fierce fire: / There's no struggle, no desire / To get up on its feet and fly— / It stretches out its feet / And dies." The spider's supine passivity—it has no wish to "stand and live"—is one of several textual occasions in *Lord Weary's Castle* when tropes of falling, rising, and standing are appropriated by sin, despondency, and death.

Lowell also employs falling tropes in his clandestine association of himself with Cain in "Rebellion" (32), which he originally thought of calling "The seed of Cain" or "The blood of Abel" and making the climax a four-poem sequence titled "The Blood of Cain; a New England Sequence."¹⁴ "Rebellion" restages as parricide an incident when Lowell, nineteen years old, enraged by his father's efforts to terminate a supposedly unsuitable engagement, struck his father, knocking him down.¹⁵ Lowell's hapax legomenon "hove backward" to denote his father's falling backward, like Abel in the illustration, comically alludes to his father's career as a naval officer by as it were "reversing" the nautical locution "hove to."¹⁶ Ramming against his "heirlooms" as

he falls backward, the father brings about the fall of the "house" of Lowell, and curses his son: "You damned / My arm that cast your house upon your head / And broke the chimney flintlock on your skull" (ll. 5-7). This mayhem has the makings of a scene out of *Laurel and Hardy*, ending with something falling on Hardy's head. A flintlock, a symbolic relic of New England's revolutionary past, indeed falls from its display place over the chimney and itself breaks when it falls on the father's head. At the end of the poem we learn that the flintlock gave as good as it got, "When the clubbed flintlock broke my father's brain" (l. 22).

Another "falling" action occurs in a dream which the speaker relates, addressing his brained and presumably dead father:

Last night the moon was full:
I dreamed the dead
Caught at my knees and fell:
It was well
With me, my father... . (8-12)

Meter contracts from the iambic pentameter of lines 1-7, first to iambic trimeter, then iambic dimeter, before returning to iambic trimeter with initial stress on "Caught" as if a clenched ballad stanza were taking shape. In end-line position and followed by a colon "fell" acquires additional weight, also as the terminus of what would seem to be a hysteron proteron, "I dreamed the dead / Caught at my knees and fell."¹⁷ Rhyming with "fell," "It was well" terminates anything resembling ballad stanza metrical procedures or rhyme scheming. Already teamed with "full" in a frame rhyme (i.e., CVC), "fell" is given a seal of approval by full rhyming "well." "It was well / With me, my father" evokes the satisfaction of a crazed serial killer, and the plural "the dead" indeed anticipates a fantasized doing away with "our mighty merchants" of New England (ll. 12-14). Given the poem's Cain-figure compositional strata, "It was well / With me, my father" might also be heard as an ironic riposte to the Lord's use of "well" in addressing Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door" (Genesis 4:7).

The son-father confrontation in a room with a fireplace is followed by a son-mother rematch in "Mother and Son," the first of four sections of "Between the Porch and the Altar" (44-47), each written in frequently enjambed iambic pentameter couplets.¹⁸ The mother, an altogether more imposing figure than the father in "Rebellion," instead of falling rises, whereas by the end of their twenty-six line confrontation the son is reduced to crawling. Mellifluous *m*-alliteration at the beginning embellishes her presence:

Meeting his mother makes him lose ten years,
 Or is it twenty? Time, no doubt, has ears
 That listen to the swallowed serpent, wound
 Into its bowels, but he thinks no sound
 Is possible before her, he thinks the past
 Is settled. It is honest to hold fast
 Merely to what one sees with one's own eyes
 When the red velvet curves and haunches rise
 To blot from the pretty driftwood fire's
 Façade of welcome. Then the son retires
 Into the sack and selfhood of the boy
 Who clawed through fallen houses of his Troy,
 Homely and human only when the flames
 Crackle in imagination... . (ll. 1-14)

The scene, drenched in Freudian implications, combines a confrontation of the male with the overwhelming figure of the mother rising to greet him, seductively, and the motif of the hero's return after long absence to a hearthside, welcomed by the female. Odysseus was away ten years at the siege of Troy, plus as many more wandering before his return to Penelope. The "driftwood" ablaze in the fireplace signifies that this hero's wandering is now over. No flintlock above the fireplace is ready to fall, as in "Rebellion," nor is there any threat of the son, now facing the mother, becoming rebelliously rambunctious. Ten years, or is it a full Odyssean twenty, of separation from the mother instantaneously dissipate in "meeting" her, which leads to infantile regression. First, the son's mock-epic heroic status is solidified by an allusion to the *Aeneid* accompanied by what Yenser detects

(46) as a play on sack, as in the sack of Troy but also the amnion sac. The “fallen houses of his Troy” takes up the fallen house of Lowell theme in “Rebellion,” where the father was symbolically killed. In “Mother and Son” the Freudian family romance takes a new turn, with the mother’s “Body presented as an idol” (l. 16) effusing sexual allure: Crawling before “a mother and a wife,” the son regresses into the realm of Oedipal fantasy. Why should he ever rise and stand?

A portrait of his maternal grandfather seems to direct him to do precisely that:

The forehead of her father’s portrait peels
 With rosy dryness, and the schoolboy kneels
 To ask the benediction of the hand,
 Lifted as though to motion him to stand,
 Dangling its watch-chain on the Holy Book—
 A little golden snake that mouths a hook. (ll. 21-26)

The “hand/stand” rhyme reactivates the “stands/hands” rhyme in “The Exile’s Return,” in a parody of a religious confirmation/initiation rite in which the kneeling “schoolboy” is bidden to “stand.”¹⁹ The painted, peeling, superannuated adult male before whom he kneels is no real match for the mother-wife “painted dragon” (l. 18), and the symbolic summons to join a community of males is in any event suspect. The dangling of the golden watch-chain on the Holy Book symbolizes emblematically the liaison of Calvinism and commerce that fostered the rise of the same New England mercantile class whose destruction the son fantasized in “Rebellion.”

The Minuteman statue at Concord, the most cherished icon of New England’s heroic past, “stands guard” at the outset of “Adam and Eve” (45), section two of “Between the Porch and the Altar,” but the farmer thus restored to life is, unfortunately, melting down on a particularly hot day in modern-day Concord:

The Farmer sizzles on his shaft all day.
 He is content and centuries away
 From white-hot Concord, and he stands on guard.
 Or is he melting down like sculptured lard? (ll. 1-4)

Lowell's description of the statue and of how the farmer "stands guard" necessarily brings to mind the canonical description of the statue, Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Hymn Sung at the Completion of the Concord Monument, April 19, 1836," which generations of American schoolchildren could recite, beginning with an account of how the valiant farmer-militiamen "stood" in the first military engagement with the Redcoats, on April 19, 1775: "By the rude bridge that arched the flood, / Their flag to April breeze unfurled, / Here once the embattled farmers stood, / And fired the shot heard round the world."²⁰ The poem, ostracized from recent editions of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, concludes with the raising of the "shaft" ("But Time and Nature gently spare / The shaft we raise to them and thee") on which the farmer of Lowell's poem continues to stand, at least until he melts away while standing guard.

The first-person speaker in "Adam and Eve," none other than the son in "Mother and Son," takes on the role of an adulterer who has come to Concord not to do a bit of historical sightseeing but for a tryst with his mistress, who plays Eve to his Adam. Presumably the Minuteman, no longer standing on guard against the Redcoats, will guard the pair from Peeping Tom intruders. His meltdown proceeds apace even as the guilty lovers in the last lines of the section "fall":

You cry for help. Your market-basket rolls
 With all its baking apples in the lake.
 You watch the whorish slither of a snake
 That chokes a duckling. When we try to kiss,
 Our eyes are slits and cringing, and we hiss;
 Scales glitter on our bodies as we fall.
 The Farmer melts upon his pedestal. (ll. 26-32)

Lowell's lines may bring to mind the theological proposition, rejected in *Paradise Lost*, that sex was a consequence of the Fall, but what Lowell is really doing in this transformation of the lovers into snakes is adapting Milton's vivid account of how, after the Fall of Adam and Eve, Satan and the other fallen angels are transformed into snakes (X: 504-84). When Satan returns to Hell to inform his followers of his

splendid achievement in bringing about the downfall of Eve and Adam, all the applause he gets is "A dismal universal hiss" (X: 508). They who had already fallen from Heaven into the depths of Hell undergo a yet more humiliating fall, as they find themselves involuntarily falling to the ground, converted into snakes, hissing, hissing, hissing. Lowell provides a kiss-rhyme for the hissing-instead-of-kissing Adam and Eve, who, falling to the ground, become serpents. In "Katherine's Dream," section 3, it is no longer a farmer who "stands on guard" as if to shield the lovers but nuns who "stand on guard" before a church where penitents enter. Finding herself incapable of joining them, Katherine, the fallen Eve of "Adam and Eve," speaks in dream-recording present-tense, "I stand aside." She ends up falling, however, once again, "I run about in circles till I drop" (l. 32).

In the final section, "At the Altar," Katherine's partner in sin also falls again:

I sit at a gold table with my girl
 Whose eyelids burn with brandy. What a whirl
 Of Easter eggs is colored by the lights,
 As the Norwegian dancer's crystallized tights
 Flash with her naked leg's high-booted skate,
 Like Northern Lights upon my watching plate.
 The twinkling steel above me is a star;
 I am a fallen Christmas tree... . (ll. 1-8)

Lowell later identified the locale of the opening lines as "a Boston night-club in which there is an ice-skating floorshow," which the speaker is watching with Katherine alongside him (see Staples 88). Given the title "At The Altar," the "gold table" may be read as a sacrilegious allusion to the table at the altar fashioned for the Temple by Solomon: "And Solomon made all the vessels that pertained unto the house of the Lord: the altar of gold, and the table of gold, whereupon the shewbread was" (1 Kings 7:48).²¹ The speaker's giddiness turns to silliness, and Old Testament to New Testament sacrilegious allusion, as he conflates Easter, the Star of Bethlehem, a star on top of a Christmas tree, and the children's verses, "Twinkle, twinkle little star / How

I wonder what you are. / Up above the world so high, Like a diamond in the sky."²² As "a fallen Christmas tree," he is, in the colloquial phrase, "lit." Or, to choose another idiom, "falling down drunk."

The "fallen Christmas tree" promptly resurrects itself to become a drunk driver who sets out on a hell-bent journey through the seven deadly sins ("Our car / Races through seven red lights"). It ends fatally when the car crashes into "a Gothic church," and stones fall:

... I am dying. The shocked stones
 Are falling like a ton of bricks and bones
 That snap and splinter and descend in glass
 Before a priest who mumbles through his Mass
 And sprinkles holy water; and the Day
 Breaks with its lightning on the man of clay,
Dies amara valde... . (ll. 18-25)

These stones are "shocked" by the impact of the car crashing against the church, but no victor is "crowned" by stones falling as in "The Exile's Return."²³ The priest celebrates a Requiem Mass, during which holy water is sprinkled on the deceased (see Staples 88). An orthographic pun on *Dies* / "dies" accompanies what becomes, heralded by line-ending "Day" (l. 23) capitalization, the Day of Judgment (*dies amara valde* = "day bitter above all [others]"), when God will come to judge the world with fire.²⁴ A denouement situates the protagonist in Hell, where his bier also serves as a baby carriage. Standing in as a babysitter, Lucifer as if in a Bosch painting of the tortures of the damned turns the bier/baby carriage and its occupant on a spit: "Here the Lord / Is Lucifer in harness: hand on sword, / He watches me for Mother, and will turn / The bier and baby-carriage where I burn."

3.

The reference to the Day of Judgment toward the end of "At the Altar" is one of several incidental Judgment Day references in *Lord Weary's Castle*, which together presage the two apocalyptic poems that

conclude the volume, "The Dead in Europe" and "Where the Rainbow Ends." A third, "As a Plane Tree by the Water" (49), comes somewhat earlier, and introduces tropes of falling, rising, and standing in an apocalyptic scenario set, as in "Where the Rainbow Ends," in Boston. The biblical verse cited in its title, from Ecclesiasticus 24:14, is hardly foreboding, "I was exalted like a palm-tree in Engaddi, and as a rose-plant in Jericho, as a fair olive-tree in a pleasant field, and grew up as a plane-tree by the water," but little is left of the rose-plant in desiccated Boston, "where the Virgin walks / And roses spiral her enameled face / Or fall to splinters on unwatered streets," recalling the splinters/falling imagery of "At the Altar." In stanza 2, Boston is conflated apocalyptically with Babylon, and the devil's golden tongue "Enchants the masons of the Babel Tower / To raise tomorrow's city to the sun." The tropes mount a counter-action in stanza 3, initiated by St. Bernadette's vision of "Our Lady standing in the cave," followed by an evocation of the falling walls of Jericho, and culminating in a communal hymn, "Sing for the resurrection of the King," which expresses a yearning "for" as much as a celebration of Christ's resurrection.

A plea for Mary's benevolent intervention on "Rising-day" is yearningly voiced in "The Dead in Europe," the poem in *Lord Weary's Castle* most closely connected with Lowell's refusal to serve in World War II after the fire-bombing of Hamburg in August, 1943. First published in the July 12, 1946 issue of the Catholic magazine *Commonweal*, it grants voice to those, the young especially, who fell "hugger-mugger in the jellied fire."²⁵

The Dead in Europe

After the planes unloaded, we fell down	A
Buried together, unmarried men and women;	b
Not crown of thorns, not iron, not Lombard crown,	a
Not grilled and spindle spires pointing to heaven	b
Could save us. Raise us, Mother, we fell down	A
Here hugger-mugger in the jellied fire:	x
Our sacred earth in our day was our curse.	x

Our Mother, shall we rise on Mary's day	A
In Maryland, wherever corpses married	b
Under the rubble, bundled together? Pray	a
For us whom the blockbusters marred and buried;	b
When Satan scatters us on Rising-day,	A
O Mother, snatch our bodies from the fire:	x
Our sacred earth in our day was our curse.	x
Mother, my bones are trembling and I hear	A
The earth's reverberations and the trumpet	b
Bleating into my shambles. Shall I bear,	a
(O Mary!) unmarried man and powder-puppet,	b
Witness to the Devil? Mary, hear,	A
O Mary, marry earth, sea, air and fire;	x
Our sacred earth in our day is our curse. (68)	x

Lowell formally alludes to a traditional stanza whose rules he proceeds to break, lending declamatory force to the central tropes of falling and rising. A seven-line stanza initially rhyming *abab* evokes the canonical seven-line stanza of English-language poetry, variously referred to as the Chaucer or *Troilus* stanza or rhyme royal, whose rhyme scheme is *ababbcc*. After the *abab* introductory rhymes of Lowell's first stanza, the fifth line "ought" to sound another *b* rhyme, to go along with the weak rhymes (i.e., on unaccented terminal syllables) "women / "heaven." Instead, the "we fell down" of line 1 is repeated word for word, "we fell down." The expected *ababb* rhyming pattern thus undergoes a sea change, and thanks to the "we fell down" refrain emerges as *AbabA*. A further rupture in the canonical rhyming program occurs in lines 6 and 7, which fail to rhyme with any preceding lines or with each other to form a prescribed *cc* couplet. One is left instead with *AbabAxx*, and with "fire" and "curse" raging alone. Their autonomy is reinforced by their eschewal of the [n] consonance terminating lines 1-5: "down," women," crown," "heaven," "down."

The "Lombard crown" that sounds the medial *a*-rhyme in stanza 1 might be glossed as a coin, but an allusion to the Lombard crown, an icon of European Christian unity, takes precedence. Its iron band, which might account for the "iron" in line 3, was said to have been

held together by a nail from Christ's cross, which made the crown also a relic of the crucifixion. In the poem's scheme of things, neither Christ's crown of thorns, nor his crucifixion, nor Charlemagne's Lombard crown, nor "grilled and spindle spires pointing toward heaven" (suggesting Gothic church spires) proved sufficient in the most recent European war to preserve the unity of Christian Europe, much less the lives of those who "fell down." Hence the agitated plea, "Raise us, Mother," making her more than merely an intercessor on "Rising-day."

In stanza 2 the "day" A refrain rhyme, "Mary's day" / "Rising-day," switches from foregrounding a trope of falling to one of rising, and renders "Mary's day" and "Rising-day" synonymous. The "married" / "marred" contribution to the poem's Marian wordplay incorporates the god of war, Mars, and invents a participial form for the occasion. A grisly allusion to the colonial New England practice of "bundling" is buried in "married / Under the rubble, bundled together," which suggests a yet closer uniting of bodies than that granted unmarried New England couples.²⁶ The "fire / curse" non-rhyming *xx* conclusion of stanza 1 is repeated in stanza 2, creating a litany-like refrain repeated again at the end of stanza 3. They who perished in "the jellied fire" implore Mary to save them from the fire next time—from the apocalyptic fire that will consume the world, and from the everlasting fire to which the damned will be eternally sentenced on Rising-day, which brings with it the Day of Judgment.

"Where the Rainbow Ends" brings closure to *Lord Weary's Castle* by involving the poet himself in a divine promise of life restored. Tropes of "descending" and "rising and descending" participate in a cosmic drama in stanzas 1 and 2, but in the concluding stanza everything is scaled down to actions the speaker himself performs, or is bidden to perform, climbing altar steps, kneeling, and standing.

Where the Rainbow Ends

I saw the sky descending, black and white,
Not blue, on Boston where the winters wore
The skulls to jack-o'-lanterns on the slates,

And Hunger's skin-and-bone retrievers tore
 The chickadee and shrike. The thorn tree waits
 Its victim and tonight
 The worms will eat the deadwood to the foot
 Of Ararat: the scythers, Time and Death,
 Helmed locusts, move upon the tree of breath;
 The wild ingrafted olive tree and root

Are withered, and a winter drifts to where
 The Pepperpot, ironic rainbow, spans
 Charles River and its scales of scorched-earth miles.
 I saw my city in the Scales, the pans
 Of judgment rising and descending. Piles
 Of dead leaves char the air—
 And I am a red arrow on this graph
 Of Revelations. Every dove is sold
 The Chapel's sharp-shinned eagle shifts its hold
 On serpent-Time, the rainbow's epitaph.

In Boston serpents whistle at the cold.
 The victim climbs the altar steps and sings:
 "Hosannah to the lion, lamb, and beast
 Who fans the furnace-face of IS with wings:
 I breathe the ether of my marriage feast."
 At the high altar, gold
 And a fair cloth. I kneel and the wings beat
 My cheek. What can the dove of Jesus give
 You now but wisdom, exile? Stand and live,
 The dove has brought an olive branch to eat.

In "Where the Rainbow Ends" the poet who throughout *Lord Weary's Castle* had flayed Boston and New England culture as enervated, mercenary, and hidebound stages an exile's return of his own, the venue now being northern, cold, Yankee Boston in place of northern, cold, Hanseatic Lübeck. The "Pepperpot" of stanza 2 is in popular parlance Longfellow Bridge, which connects Boston with Cambridge. Echoes of "The Exile's Return" abound, however, beginning with "I saw the sky descending, black and white, / Not blue," which returns the reader to "The Exile's Return" and its "mounting" opening lines, "There mounts in squalls a sort of rusty mire, / Not ice, not snow." Verbal links between the two poems (I give line numbers parentheti-

cally) include "slates" (3) [i.e., early New England slate gravestones with their engraved skulls] and "slate roofs" (8); "thorn tree" (5) and "walnut tree" (13); "The Chapel's sharp-tinned eagle shifts its hold / On serpent-Time" (19-20) and "braced pig iron dragons grip / The blizzard" (3-4); "exile" (29) and "The Exile's Return." A "rough / Cathedral" becomes a church with a high altar, and an olive branch confirms the vision of postwar peace in "The Exile's Return."

Biblical echoes also abound, beginning with the "I saw" prophetic formula that Allen Ginsberg employs to begin his "Howl" ("I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving, hysterical naked"). Lowell uses it twice, "I saw the sky descending" in the first stanza and "I saw my city in the Scales" in the second, where it evokes Revelations 21:2, "And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." The mystic bridal theme takes on personalized form in stanza 3, "I breathe the ether of my marriage feast," even as the speaker undertakes a role-change from self-proclaimed apocalyptic visionary ("I am a red arrow on this graph / Of Revelations") to a ritual victim, to a participant in a marriage feast.

One may take "the victim" who "climbs the altar steps" as the speaker's reference to himself in the third person, an abrupt switch after his declamatory "I saw," "I saw," "I am." This objectification of himself in the role of victim suggests a ritual role he will play in a sacrifice willingly undertaken, as he climbs the altar steps, singing. An analogy with Jesus as the "victim" who undergoes an "unbloody sacrifice" in the Roman Catholic Mass, in a re-enactment of Christ's "bloody sacrifice," suggests itself.²⁷ One might also read the speaker's assumption of the role of "the victim" in a broader, inclusive sense, however, as a ritualized assumption of a transpersonal, communal identity. The "victim" in *Lord Weary's Castle* is a collective role, initially enacted in the illustration by the biblical first victim, Abel, then by Stephen, the first Christian martyr, who is alluded to along with all subsequent Christian martyrs in the liturgical source of the epigraph (see notes 1 and 3). Both Abel and Stephen are typologically linked

with Jesus, the victim whose redemptive sacrifice is reenacted at the altar. If one includes Lord Wearie's wife and child in the ballad that Lowell's title alludes to, four victims (discounting Lamkin, who is executed) have so to speak died before the reader has reached the first poem. Poem by poem, war by war, homicide by homicide, the number of victims increases. Massacres of the innocent begin with the second poem, "Holy Innocents," which spans biblical times to the present: "Still / The world out-Herods Herod; and the year, / The nineteenth-hundred forty-fifth of grace / Lumbers up the clinkered hill / Of our purgation."²⁸ 1945, still very much in the minds of 1946 readers of *Lord Weary's Castle*, had included a continuation of Allied firebombing of German cities (Dresden being just one), continued firebombing of Japanese cities and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and revelations of unspeakable massacres of the innocent in Nazi concentration camps carried out to the very last. The twentieth century, with its massacres of the innocent on an unprecedented scale, had become the worst century for humanity on record.

Still and all, a tonal transformation occurs in stanza 3 which Albert Gelpi summarizes aptly, "The liturgical decorum of the scene surrounds and tempers and mediates 'the furnace-face of IS,' and the sequence of shorter sentences, fitted into verses with more end-stops than usual, contributes to the air of serene and ecstatic assurance" (64). Subtle modulations in the rhyme scheme also occur, as when at the beginning of the stanza the "sold/hold" rhyme of the preceding stanza turns "cold" before becoming transmuted to "gold." The *c*-rhyme "beast/feast" consolidates into the *d*-rhyme "beat/eat." Such incidental rhyming events need not be over-interpreted, or even interpreted at all, but they serve to suggest something important is going on, transformation is taking place. Meter is also affected. Instead of the line-six iambic trimeter that the "Scholar Gypsy" stanza predicates, one encounters a six-syllable line whose four final syllables require three heavy stresses, "At the hígh áltar, góld." Scan it as you will, call it an Iconic (minor) followed by an iamb if you must, the line cannot possibly be read as iambic trimeter. The following line also

begins with a pyrrich followed by a spondee, "And a fáir clóth." Quietly expressing wonder, with "fair" echoing Shakespearean diction, the sentence fragment jettisons the declamatory rhetorical mode of the poem thus far to render in something like *erlebte Rede* the private, internal speech of the protagonist-poet.

"At the high altar, gold" brings to mind the gold at the altar built by Solomon for the Temple, alluded to in "At the Altar" (see above, p. 41). Lowell now alludes to his own allusion, shriving it of its earlier sacrilegious application. The locution "the furnace-face of IS" evokes God's self-declaration to Moses from the burning bush Exodus 3:14, "I AM THAT I AM," Lowell substituting a furnace for a bush, as it were. Associatively more to the point is the burnt sacrifice to God on an altar of a male animal (or Isaac, until Abraham is told to desist), which is rendered in Hebrew by "'olah," meaning "that which goes up." The *'olah* was consumed by fire, causing smoke to rise.²⁹ In biblical Greek translation *'olah* becomes *holokauston* ("that which is completely burned"), hence modern English Holocaust. Many prefer "Shoah" (Hebrew, "calamity") as it avoids the implication that the Jews who "went up in smoke" in concentration camp crematoria were sacrifices to a furnace-face god requiring burnt sacrifice. Lowell did not write directly of the Holocaust, but associations with both the victims who died "in the jellied fire" and those who died in concentration camp crematoria are stirred as the victim who climbs the steps to the altar sings his hymn, praying for deliverance. The following line, "I breathe the ether of my marriage feast," attests that the furnace-face of IS has been (to paraphrase Gelpi) tempered through mediation. The victim, who like Isaac is spared, in the simplest and most basic life-giving act "breathes." As he breathes in, the smoke and smell of human sacrifice on an altar to a furnace-face god are replaced by the ether of a mystic marriage feast.

In another transposition, a dove supersedes the winged "lion, lamb, and beast" and awakens associations with the dove that descended from Heaven at Christ's baptism, "the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him" (Matthew 3:16). Addressing himself as

an exile, the kneeling protagonist asks "What can the dove of Jesus give / You now but wisdom, exile?"³⁰ No longer a self-styled doomsday prophet, he self-ironically acknowledges his lack of wisdom as if he were belittling it, whereupon he hears a voice bid him "Stand and live," an injunction that echoes in a different tone and grammatical mood the "and your life is in your hands" concluding advisory in "The Exile's Return." What the poet-protagonist hears now is a voice pronouncing the biblical formula that Christ utters in Mark 5:41, "And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Tal-i-tha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise." The very words Jesus speaks to the girl whom he restores from death are preserved in Aramaic in the Greek text, and in the King James English translation. Luther and other German translators use "Stehe auf" for the vernacular gloss on the Aramaic, which conveys the straightforward literal meaning "stand" or "stand up" that English translators commonly render "arise" or "rise up," as in Acts 3:6: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The voice addressing Lowell, if one will in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, prefers plain-style "Stand and live."³¹

Switching from the imperative to the indicative, the sentence continues on, into the final line of the poem: "The dove has brought an olive branch to eat." The speaking voice, also continuing, conflates the dove of Jesus conceived of as the Holy Spirit, dispenser of wisdom, and the dove bearing an olive branch signalling to Noah the end of the Flood (Genesis 8:11). The voice thus annuls the protagonist's doomsday allusion to the Flood proclaimed in stanza 1, "The worms will eat the deadwood to the foot / Of Ararat." Within the poem's autobiographical frames of reference, the olive branch symbolizes a peace to be struck, in a newly found spirit of wisdom, between the poet and the Boston/New England culture he had excoriated throughout *Lord Weary's Castle* and in the initial stanzas of "Where the Rainbow Ends." In Roman Catholic sacramental terms, the olive branch also serves as a Eucharist which the poet is bidden "to eat."

Lowell had converted to Roman Catholicism in 1941/2, but his faith waned during the years following the publication of *Lord Weary's Castle*. No longer imbued with a Christian promise of resurrection, recurrent tropes of falling, rising, and standing manage nonetheless in Lowell's later poetry to affirm capacities of human endurance. In "Skunk Hour" they culminate after tropes of falling and climbing in the figure of the poet, mentally and spiritually battered, standing: "I stand on the top / of our back steps and breathe the rich air" (192). Lowell no longer proclaims "I breathe the ether of my marriage feast," and he records no quasi-mystical experience. Only a capacity to endure. He did find one occasion, however, to quote directly from "Where the Rainbow Ends." Incised on his father's gravestone is "Stand and live / The dove has brought an olive branch to eat."

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NOTES

¹The illustration is reproduced in Lowell's *Collected Poems* (3), on which my quotations from Lowell's verse are based. In the 1946 first edition the illustration appeared at the center of the title page, between "Lord Weary's Castle" and "Robert Lowell," where it emblematically inaugurates a master trope of the book. Viewed exegetically, it portends a Christian transfiguration of Abel. Lines radiating from his head register the impact of his fall, but also inscribe a type of halo that often adorns statues of saints or of Jesus himself. The slightly twisted body recalls depictions of Christ's body after the deposition from the cross, but the distortion of perspective and seemingly inverted position of the "upside-down" body also bring to mind the martyrdom of Saint Peter, traditionally portrayed as an inverted crucifixion, as in Rubens's altar painting in Saint Peter's Church in Cologne, Germany. A determinedly exegetical reading of the title page might include the cross-like design formed by "Lord Weary's Castle," "Robert Lowell," and the illustration. A reader would have found initial help with the provenance of the title in a note on a subsequent page where Lowell quotes the opening stanza of "an old ballad": "It's Lambkin was a mason good / As ever built wi'stane: / He built Lord Wearie's castle / But payment gat he nane ..." (5). An anonymous Scottish ballad titled "Lamkin" proves to be the source which a diligent first-edition reader could have found in Child's *The English and Scottish*

Popular Ballads (2: 320-42, with alternate versions). The stonemason Lamkin, spelled "Lambkin" in Lowell's note, is, like Cain, a murderer. When Lord Wearie refuses to pay him for building a castle, he revenges himself by killing Lord Wearie's wife and son. Lamkin is subsequently executed, after Lord Wearie "returned from o'er the sea." Lord Weary makes a subliminal appearance, accompanied by Abel, in "Shako" (41), an adaptation of Rilke's "Letzter Abend" which features a "falling" with no equivalent in Rilke's sonnet: "Wearily by the broken altar, Abel / Remembers how brothers fell apart." On the following day, the Battle of Waterloo in Lowell's adaptation, "brothers" will fall apart and become enemies, and in a grisly literalization will also "fall apart" on the field of battle. Lowell's "the broken altar" is a virtual quotation of the initial line of George Herbert's "The Altar," "A broken Altar, Lord, thy servant reares." Herbert's analogy of a broken altar and a broken heart casts the Lord in the role of master stonemason: "A Heart alone / Is such a stone, / As nothing but / Thy pow'r doth cut." The poet as the Lord's apprentice stonemason "reares" (rhyming with his "teares") a poem in the visual form of an altar, in the Christian hope "That if I chance to hold my peace, / These stones to praise thee may not cease."

²Lowell employs the stanza at greatest length in "In Memory of Arthur Winslow" (23-25), a sequence of four poems, each composed in two ten-line stanzas, and in "The Death of the Sheriff" (66-67), written in six ten-line stanzas. Some poems work minor variations, such as by retaining a pentameter in the sixth line or by altering the sestet's rhymes to *abcabc*. "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket" (14-18), whose opening lines rhyme *abcbca*, makes inventive use of the stanza in sections IV and VI. Years later, Lowell humorously alluded to Arnold's poem (using American spelling) in the opening lines of "Soft Wood" in *Near the Ocean*: "Sometimes I have supposed seals / must live as long as the Scholar Gypsy" (370). I know of no other poet who has adopted the stanza, which Arnold himself used subsequently in "Thyrsis."

³An epigraph on a page otherwise blank in the first edition reads: "Suscipe, Domine, munera pro tuorum commemoratione Sanctorum: ut, sicut illos passio gloriosos effecit; ita nos devotio reddat innocuos," which the *Collected Poems* translates: "Receive, O Lord, these gifts for the commemoration of Thy saints, that just as their passion made them glorious, so may our devotion free us from sin" (1006). The *CP* identifies the Roman Catholic liturgical source of the epigraph as "the Secret of the Mass for the finding of the body of St. Stephen Protomartyr, celebrated August 3." Lamkin's trade as a stonemason associates him covertly with the stoning of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr: a stone said to have been used in his stoning may be viewed in St. Stephen's Cathedral in Halberstadt, Germany. In the biblical account of his martyrdom, Stephen falls to his knees in prayer: "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7: 60), echoing Christ's prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23: 34). Typologically, Abel is a forerunner of both Christ and St. Stephen, a linkage supported by a Jewish tradi-

tion which records that Cain used a stone to kill his brother. Milton draws upon it in Book XI of *Paradise Lost* when Adam is accorded a revelation of postlapsarian human history, beginning with a murder: Cain “inly raged, and as they talked, / Smote him into the midriff with a stone / That beat out life; he fell, and deadly pale / Groaned out his soul with gushing blood effused” (ll. 444-47). On the tradition and Cowley’s use of it as well, see Fowler’s note on Milton’s lines. Milton no doubt intended “gushing blood effused” to be read as a typological anticipation of the crucified Jesus’s effusion of blood from his side. Lowell began his own account of human history in “History” (421), the opening sonnet in his massive sequence *History*, with a reference to Cain’s murder of Abel.

⁴The H. T. Lowe-Porter translation of “Tonio Kröger” was published in England by Secker and Warburg in 1936 and in America in 1945 by Knopf as part of Mann’s *Stories of Three Decades*. I quote from a paperback reprint of the American edition. “Tonio Kröger” was first published in Germany in 1903.

⁵See Prater 31, 497, 501 and *passim* for biographical details referred to in this paragraph.

⁶In his letter of September 7, 1943 to President Roosevelt, Lowell declared his grounds for refusing military service after the firebombing of Hamburg, the mining of the Möhne and Eder Dams, and the declaration of a policy of unconditional surrender (*Collected Prose* 367-70). On the firebombing of Hamburg, code-named Operation Gomorrah, and the massive firestorms it generated, see the 424-page study by the British military historian Martin Middlebrook, *The Battle of Hamburg: The Firestorm Raid*. In a 1969 interview, Lowell recalled: “It was a time when Churchill, Brendan Bracken and Roosevelt met and said: we intend to burn something, and ruthlessly destroy, and we’re saturating Hamburg and the northern German cities, the civilian population. They announced their policy of unconditional surrender. It seemed to me we were doing just what the Germans were doing. I was a Roman Catholic at the time, and we had a very complicated idea of what was called ‘the unjust war.’ It is obviously a possibility that there may be two kinds of wars and one merges into the other. But this policy seemed to me to be clearly unjust. So I refused to go to the army and was sent to jail. I spent about five months in jail and mopped the floors. Then I was paroled and free to write. After that I felt that you weren’t getting beyond your depth in protesting unjust wars” (“Et in America Ego” 143). For further material on Lowell’s conscientious objection and a discussion of several poems related to it in *Land of Unlikeness* (1944), *Lord Weary’s Castle*, and others published in magazines during World War II, see my 1999 essay.

⁷Staples first noted, briefly, a connection with *Tonio Kröger* (34, 93).

⁸Readers of Lowe-Porter’s translation of Mann’s “Ja, wir gehen nun also über die Wälle” as “All right; let’s go over the wall” would mistakenly assume that “die Wälle” was a wall, and that Tonio and Hans climbed over it. David Luke’s 1970 translation makes a better job of it: “Well, then, let’s go round along the

promenade!" Similarly, and correctly, Luke has "Along the Mühlenwall and the Holstenwall, and that'll take us as far as your house, Hans" (153).

⁹Lowell indulges in poetic license by making it "cow the Yankee commandant." Lübeck was taken and occupied by the British. For a first-hand British account of the liberation/occupation of Lübeck in 1945, see Arthur Geoffrey Dickens. The British were indeed regarded as liberators, as Lübeck was taken and occupied by them rather than the Russians (81-82 and *passim*). The Rathaus, before which in Lowell's poem the "unseasoned liberators" ground arms, was the seat of the British military government (32). Dickens, a distinguished historian fluent in German and a devotee of Mann's novels, does not record the fate of the walnut tree, but he notes that the Mann family house, fictionalized in "Tonio Kröger" and *Buddenbrooks*, "like many another fine patrician residence, consists of nothing more than a pathetic baroque façade" (32).

¹⁰On his deformity and his career, see Shirer 123-29.

¹¹If understood as seen at a distance, the Rhineland cathedral "roughly" envisioned that one immediately thinks of is the lofty Cologne Cathedral, whose outline one sees against the horizon as one approaches Cologne from afar. It survived pretty well intact "the night of the thousand bombers" and succeeding raids on Cologne; used for targeting orientation, it was precious. On Allied bombing of Cologne, see Grayling (his index directs one to extensive coverage).

¹²On Lübeck's selection as the first German city for firebombing, Grayling comments: "Because Bomber Command's primary focus was now the 'enemy civilian population,' the Air Staff was eager to experiment with a bombing technique using a high proportion of incendiaries. For this purpose the old Hanseatic city on the Baltic coast was chosen, because it contained many timbered buildings dating from medieval times... the RAF's experimental bombing of the wooden city of Lübeck, suggested that bomb load should consist entirely of incendiaries" (51, 119). In summer of 1942 Arthur "Bomber" Harris warned German civilians "We are bombing Germany, city by city, and ever more terribly, in order to make it impossible for you to go on with the war. That is our object. We shall pursue it remorselessly. City by city; Lübeck, Rostock, Cologne, Emden, Bremen, Wilhelmshaven, Duisburg, Hamburg—and the list will grow longer and longer" (qtd. by Grayling, 50; from Probert 252).

¹³Yenser speaks of a "journey" completed in "Where the Rainbow Ends," but notes that the term "might give a false impression of the organization of this volume, for the concluding poem is hardly different in outlook from 'The Exile's Return.'... The journey might be thought of as circular ..." (80). Not explicitly invoking journeying as a metaphor, Axelrod foregrounds a pattern of contested movement leading ultimately to life restored: "In a pattern characteristic of his later books, *Lord Weary's Castle* moves through death to life, through pain to wisdom, affirming finally, after bitter testing, the value of experience and the necessity of survival" (73).

¹⁴On the textual evolution of the poem (in manuscript versions a Cain-like speaker addresses his victim as "Brother"), see Axelrod 65-68. Although Lowell discarded "The Blood of Cain; a New England Sequence" as a sequence title, "Rebellion" still follows "Salem," "Concord," and "Children of Light" and "accurately reveals his underlying notion that the history of colonial (Puritan) and modern (Protestant) New England in some sense parallels Cain's murder of Abel. Lowell's use of the metaphor is complicated by the fact that it enacts one of his deepest contradictions: his sense of himself as both sinner and sinned-against. Intellectually, Lowell may abhor Cain's violent rebellion, which he identifies as Satanic ..., but emotionally he identifies himself *with* Cain... . Lowell thus brings to his poems on New England history a deep division within his own mind" (64-65).

¹⁵In a March 4, 1937 letter to his father, Lowell wrote: "one cannot get away with striking his father or for that matter using violence to anyone. I am sorry and wish to be forgiven" (*Letters* 13).

¹⁶See *OED*, "hove," *v.*¹ l. b. "To lie at anchor," or to "heave," 20. c., "heave to," "to bring the ship to a standstill by setting the sails so as to counteract each other; to make her lie to."

¹⁷Presumably the falling occurred before the catching, and the dead in any event "fell" long before. Travisano provides, however, a classical foil for Lowell's tableau: "On this moonlit night, the speaker's dream seems to take him to a Vergilian underworld, where the dead reach out in supplication" (156).

¹⁸Williamson draws attention to the uniqueness of "Between the Porch and the Altar" in *Lord Weary's Castle*: "There is one remarkable poem ... that treats both the Catholic and the Protestant experiences, both Edwardsian melancholy and apocalyptic imagination, in a context of contemporary personal problems that are, presumably, in part autobiographical. It is also the first poem to hint at Lowell's disillusionment with Catholicism ... and [it] represents a break with earlier work, too, in its overt use of Freudian insights, and in its multiplication of perspectives: it employs the first-person voice of two of the characters, and, in the first section, an authorial third-person that can modulate into and out of the consciousness of the obsessed protagonist" (47). Lowell's title echoes Joel 2:17, "Between the porch and the altar, the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep, and shall say: Spare, O Lord, spare thy people." It also recalls George Herbert's *The Temple*, with its two-part division "The Church Porch" and "The Church," which begins with "The Altar." Jean Stafford, Lowell's wife at the time, used the same title for her short story "Between the Porch and the Altar," which appeared in the June 1945 issue of *Harper's Bazaar* (reprinted in Stafford 407-11); Hobsbaum (37) notes a parallel between it and the "Katherine's Dream" section of Lowell's poem.

¹⁹Years later, Lowell used the "stands/hands" rhyme in "Near the Ocean," (394), "The hero stands / stunned by the applauding hands" (ll. 2-3) and in "Brunetto Latini" (414): "'O Son,' he answered, 'anyone who stands / still a

moment will lie here a hundred years, / helpless to brush the sparks off with his hands." By breaking his line at "stands" and thus semantically severing "stands still" for a moment, Lowell engineers a now-you-see-it, now-you-don't play on the antithesis stands/lie.

²⁰The shot was fired from a flintlock of the sort that the memorial Minuteman holds in his right hand; the flintlock that fell from above the chimney in "Rebellion" became a blunt weapon in a different New England rebellion. The militiamen acquired the sobriquet "Minutemen" as they were ready to take up arms in a minute in defense of liberty; hence much later the "Minuteman" missile. At a reading in 1955 Lowell confirmed (see Staples 88) that the object of the speaker's facetious remarks is the memorial statue, also referred to in "Concord" (30): "Ten thousand Fords are idle here in search / Of a tradition. Over these dry sticks— / The Minute Man, the Irish Catholics, / The ruined bridge and Walden's fished-out perch—" For a color photograph of the statue, see Concord's website, <<http://www.concordMa.com>>.

²¹Hobsbaum states flatly, though implausibly, that the opening locale is "a nightclub ironically called 'The Altar'" (37). One might simply read the title "At the Altar" as synonymous with "at a gold table" in line 1. This evokes the age-old controversy (implying more "Catholic," "Lutheran", or "Reformed" views of the Eucharist) as to whether the requisite accoutrement in a church should be called "table" or "altar" and where it should be placed.

²²The complete text of Jane Taylor's poem "The Star," generally known simply as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," is available online at <<http://www.kiddies.com/lyrics>>. The Mad Hatter's song in Chapter VII of *Alice in Wonderland* parodies it, and the Hatter's singing causes the Dormouse to sing in its sleep "Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle."

²³The "stones / bones" rhyme echoes the "stones / bones" rhyme in "Children of Light" (31), "Our fathers wrung their bread from stocks and stones / And fenced their gardens with the Redman's bones" (ll. 1-2), which echoes Milton's "stones / bones" rhyme in "On the late Massacre in Piedmont," "Avenge O Lord thy slaughtered saints, whose bones / Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold, / Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old / When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones" (ll. 1-4).

²⁴The *Collected Poems* notes that the Latin is from the Responsory of the Mass on Ash Wednesday, and that in a Requiem Mass it appears not as part of the opening "Dies irae" sequence but in "Libera me" (1019).

²⁵Recipes for incendiary bombs included magnesium, phosphorous, and petroleum jelly, hence "jellied fire" (see Grayling 17). Anthony Hecht, although principally concerned with Holocaust victims among the dead in Europe, apparently alludes to the "jellied fire" of Allied bombing in "Words for the Day of Atonement," section IV of "Rites and Ceremonies" in *The Hard Hours* (1946), which reads in part: "And to what purpose, as the darkness closes about / And the child

screams in the jellied fire" (*Collected Earlier Poems* 45). Allied firebombing of civilians explicitly identified as Germans is linked with devotion to Mary in "The North Sea Undertaker's Complaint" (36), and the bombing of Hildesheim is alluded to in "The Blind Leading the Blind" (64). In my 1999 essay I discuss additional poems on Allied bombing of civilians that were published in *Land of Unlikeness* and separately in magazines during the war.

²⁶See Dana Doten, *The Art of Bundling* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1938), available online at <<http://www.threeriverms.com/bundlingartcontents.htm>> and Patricia Cummings, "Bundling: A Courtship Ritual With Ancient Roots" at <<http://www.quiltersmuse.com/bundling.htm>>.

²⁷In the liturgy with which Lowell as an ardent convert was familiar, the priest who has climbed the altar steps will utter at the consecration of the Host Christ's words, "Hoc est enim Corpus meum" ["For this is my Body"] and at the consecration of the wine "Hic est enim Calix Sanguinis mei, novi et aeterni testamenti, mysterium fidei, qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum" ["For this is the Chalice of my Blood of the new and eternal covenant; the mystery of faith, which will be shed for you and for many unto the forgiveness of sins"]. There follows, in the official formulation of the bilingual *Saint Joseph Sunday Missal* (published 1953), "the offering of the victim" and the offering up (to quote the English translation) of "the pure Victim, the holy Victim, the all-perfect Victim."

²⁸Lowell echoes Hamlet's instruction to the players, "it out-Herods Herod, pray you avoid it" (III.ii), which alludes to the ranting mass murderer of medieval mystery plays.

²⁹See the entry "Sacrifice" (599-616) in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* on the eleven types of sacrifice and, specifically, on the "burnt offering" (601-02).

³⁰Yenser maintains that "the 'exile' of this poem is surely that of the first poem, this arrival at the altar must be intended to conclude the journey begun in the first poem" (80); similarly, Hobsbaum writes, "'Where the Rainbow Ends' ... is a vision of Boston at the end of its tether as seen by, quite explicitly, the protagonist of 'The Exile's Return'" (35). I prefer to speak of linkage rather than unitary identity; one also needs to distinguish between "the protagonist" of "The Exile's Return" (to some degree Tonio restored to textual life) and the speaker, unless one wishes to read the entire text as an interior monologue of a fictively resurrected Tonio (or Mann). One might read "exile" as a direct object, along with "wisdom," of "give," a possibility not considered by Yenser, Hobsbaum, or Axelrod (73); while I find such a reading forced, it remains latent within the text, ready for the reader to activate it as a witty equivocation. The voice that the protagonist will hear dissolves any pretence to wittiness: there are more serious things at stake.

³¹Donne himself voices the "arise from death" formula in Holy Sonnet VII, followed, however, by his metamorphosis from a declamatory, apocalyptic visionary

to a subdued lyric self. In the Petrarchan octave he is a self-appointed impresario of a spectacular vision of a rising-day like that summoned up in "The Dead in Europe," but in the sestet he abjures eschatological theatricality, humbling himself in the here and now on "lowly ground":

At the round earths imagined corners, blow
 Your trumpets, Angels, and arise, arise
 From death, you numberless infinities
 Of soules, and to your scattered bodies goe,
 All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,
 All whom warrs, death, age, agues, tyrannies,
 Despaire, law, chance, hath slaine, and you whose eyes,
 Shall behold God, and never taste deaths woe,
 But let them sleepe, Lord, and mee mourne a space,
 For, if above all these, my sinnes abound,
 'Tis late to ask abundance of thy grace,
 When wee are there; here on this lowly ground,
 Teach me how to repent; for that's as good
 As if thou'hadst seal'd my pardon, with thy blood. (343-44)

Lowell is not writing a Petrarchan sonnet, but the rhetorical strategy and structural proportions of his poem are roughly analogous, two stanzas of the sort of ego-inflation attendant upon casting oneself in the role of biblical doomsday prophet, followed by muted internal speech. Lowell's ending, in which a reassuring voice is heard, is more Herbertian (e.g., the ending of "The Collar") than Donnean. It was, however, Milton's uses of tropes of falling, rising, and standing in *Paradise Lost* and elsewhere (*Lycidas*, sonnet on his blindness, etc.) that worked most powerfully on and in Lowell's literary imagination. In my 1999 essay I discuss a striking example in *Land of Unlikeness*.

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Outlooks on Honor in *Henry V* and *Julius Caesar*

CARRIE PESTRITTO

KING [...]

If we are marked to die, we are enough
To do our country loss, and if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.
God's will! I pray thee wish not one man more.
By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
It earns me not if men my garments wear:
Such outward things dwell not in my desires.
But if it be a sin to covet honour
I am the most offending soul alive. (*Henry V* 4.3.20-29)¹

BRUTUS Remember March, the Ides of March remember:

Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake?
What villain touched his body, that did stab
And not for justice? What, shall one of us,
That struck the foremost man of all this world
But for supporting robbers: shall we now
Contaminate our fingers with base bribes,
And sell the mighty space of our large honours
For so much trash as may be grasped thus?
I had rather be a dog and bay the moon
Than such a Roman. (*Julius Caesar* 4.3.18-28)²

For *Henry V*, Shakespeare drew on Holinshed's *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*. When he began to write *Julius Caesar*, he switched to Plutarch, who wrote about the lives of famous Greek and Roman individuals in *Parallel Lives*. Holinshed and Plutarch address their respective topics with different levels of objectivity and accuracy, which we see mirrored in Shakespeare's consequent plays. The

For debates inspired by this article, please check the Connotations website at
<<http://www.connotations.de/debpestritto01701.htm>>.

sources Shakespeare referred to when writing his history plays subtly influenced his portrayals of King Henry V and Brutus.

Henry V and *Julius Caesar* both deal with the issues of morality and honor in the main characters, but approach them in opposite ways; the two characters also approach the idea of honor in different ways. When we consider Henry V's concept of honor in modern literature, we can see it reflected in F. Scott Fitzgerald's portrayal of Jay Gatsby, who transforms himself to outwardly resemble a sophisticated, wealthy man-of-the-world, not caring that he engages in decidedly unrefined, underworld activities to achieve this. The narrator does not condemn Gatsby for his methods and neither do Holinshed or Shakespeare offer subjective criticism of Henry V.

Holinshed and the other authors of *The Chronicles* did their best to present an unbiased history, often including conflicting evidence or interpretations from different primary sources in their compilation.³ When writing about Henry V, Holinshed says,

This in effect dooth our English poet comprise in his report of the occasion, which Henrie the fift tooke to arrere battell against the French king: putting into the mouthes of the said king of Englands ambassadors an imagined speech, the conclusion whereof he maketh to be either restitution of that which the French had taken and deteined from the English, or else fier and sword.⁴

Holinshed makes an obvious effort to source all his material and to present an unprejudiced view of Henry V's life and actions. He cites an English poet as the source of this information and goes on to admit that although the King has many good qualities, which were listed previously, he does not always act with pure intentions, such as when he purposely misinterprets the ambassadors in order to declare war on France. Holinshed does not offer judgment on this deed, however, but lets the readers form their own opinions, something that we particularly see with his use of the words "in effect" at the beginning of the passage, which implies that the passage should not be taken as absolute truth.

We see Shakespeare offer a similar objective portrayal of the King in his play, *Henry V*. Harold Bloom writes, "Shakespeare has no single

attitude toward Henry V, in the play, which allows you to achieve your own perspective upon the rejecter of Falstaff.”⁵ Henry V is shown to be a heroic, masterly figure, but also one who is of dubious morality. Shakespeare does not condemn or praise him for this, but leaves the audience to judge for themselves. We see Henry V decide to invade France, justifying his claims to the throne with the Archbishop of Canterbury’s dubious interpretation of Salique law. The king puts the consequences of his invasion in the Archbishop’s lap when he says,

And God forbid, my dear and faithful lord,
That you should fashion, wrest, or bow your reading
[...]
For God doth know how many now in health,
Shall drop their blood in approbation
Of what your reverence shall incite us to. (1.2.13-20)

Shakespeare does not show disdain for Henry V’s refusal to hold himself accountable for his decision to invade France, nor does he prompt us to. Indeed, instead of disdain, Henry V’s manipulations allow him to win everything: the French princess and the love of his country. When he similarly transfers responsibility for the unpleasantness of his actions on the Governor of Harfleur, whose town is one of the first he attacks, he gains victory over the town, which prefigures his greater victory over France at Agincourt.

Accordingly, he tells the Governor of Harfleur, “What is’t to me, when you yourselves are cause, / If your pure maidens fall into the hand / Of hot and forcing violation?” (3.3.19-21). He assigns blame for the destruction he and his soldiers will cause to the Governor, who has the power to surrender to “yield and this avoid” (3.3.42), when it is obviously Henry V himself who controls his soldiers and their actions. This twisting of responsibility reveals his questionable ethics and integrity. At Agincourt, when he says, “For he today that sheds his blood with me / Shall be my brother; be he ne’er so vile, / This day shall gentle his condition” (4.3.61-63), we see these ethics exposed again. Bloom comments on this as follows, “He is very stirred; and so

are we, but neither we nor he believes a word he says. The common soldiers fighting with their monarch are not going to become gentlemen.”⁶ Yet, even though the king is willing to lie to see his ends achieved, with his soliloquy in the first scene of Act 4 and disguised conversation with Michael Williams, Shakespeare shows that Henry V takes the role of kingship very seriously and has a genuine concern for the beneficial advancement of his kingdom and subjects. However, the route he takes to preserve his kingdom and claim France is not completely principled.

Unlike this balanced depiction of Henry V, in which both the noble and immoral are shown, the character of Brutus in *Julius Caesar* is portrayed as an entirely moral and upright citizen. This subjective representation may have something to do with the influence of Plutarch’s works. *Parallel Lives*, one of Plutarch’s most famous writings, does not endeavor to accurately record historical information, as Holinshed’s *Chronicles* does, but to examine the impact of morality (or lack thereof) on the lives of famous Greek and Roman figures.⁷

Plutarch does this when examining the life of Brutus. He writes:

Moreover, when Cassius sought to induce his friends to conspire against Caesar, they all agreed to do so if Brutus took the lead, arguing that the undertaking demanded, not violence nor daring, but the reputation of a man like him, who should consecrate the victim, as it were, and ensure by the mere face of his participation the justice of the sacrifice [...] since men would say that Brutus would not have declined the task if the purpose of it had been dishonourable. (10.1-2)

In this passage, Plutarch idealizes Brutus as the personification of righteousness, with a spotless reputation. Brutus’s honor causes no one to question his motives for Caesar’s brutal murder and gives him an almost Christ-like aura, which is enhanced by the choice of the words “consecrate” and “sacrifice” in Perrin’s translation.

Shakespeare also creates a Brutus ruled by virtue. He is given no moral flaws; he is not influenced by greed or ambition for power. In fact, his selflessness almost sets him above the other men in the play. Unlike Cassius or Antony, Brutus does not seek to gain power for

himself, but to honorably uphold the Roman Republic. After Brutus's death, Antony says,

This was the noblest Roman of them all:
 All the conspirators save only he
 Did that they did in envy of great Caesar.
 He only, in a general honest thought
 And common good to all, made one of them. (5.5.68-72)

Although the play is called *Julius Caesar*, the true focus of the play is the honor of Brutus and how it shapes his destiny.

He is highly regarded by all Romans as being the epitome of morality and justice, yet his scrupulous actions still lead him to destruction and downfall, because he trusts too much in the honesty of others. When he addresses Cassius, he says, "Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake? / What villain touched his body, that did stab / And not for justice?" (4.3.19-21). These lines show that he truly believed he was acting virtuously when he assassinated Caesar, whereas the other men entered into the pact without such wholesome motives.

Honor is of ultimate importance to both Brutus and Henry V, and is their chief concern throughout their respective plays. Both men talk of their thirst for honor, but their speeches showcase their drastically different methods of obtaining it. Brutus sees morality as indivisible from honor and refuses to engage himself in any venture without both, while Henry V (in true Machiavellian fashion) is willing to suspend his ethics to gain glory. When on the battlefield, Henry V corrects Westmoreland, who wishes that England had more soldiers in her camp. Henry V says, "No, my fair cousin: / If we are marked to die, we are enough / To do our country loss, and if to live, / The fewer men, the greater share of honour" (4.3.19-22). He acts as if honor is something that one must fight others to win. The words "The fewer men, the greater share of honour" give the impression that he is at an Easter egg hunt and is trying to collect the most prizes. We see him take this stance in *Henry IV, Part I*, as well, when he tells Hotspur: "And all the budding honours on thy crest / I'll crop to make a gar-

land for my head" (5.4.71-72).⁸ For Henry V, honor is something to take from others and the method of taking does not matter.

Brutus, in contrast, does not share Henry V's outlook. He says to Cassius,

What, shall one of us,
That struck the foremost man of all this world
But for supporting robbers: shall we now
Contaminate our fingers with base bribes,
And sell the mighty space of our large honours
[...]. (4.3.21-25)

His use of the word "contaminate" clearly shows that he does not approve of sacrificing his morality to garner glory. He goes on to say that he cannot alter his integrity without also forfeiting "the mighty space of our large honours." This phrase implies that honor is something that a man possesses inside of him. "Our" creates a personal relationship and presents the idea each man has individual honor that is his and his alone. This seems to make it all the more valuable for Brutus, since it is not something he can take from other men, but something he must maintain on his own. He displays his disgust at Cassius's words when he spits, "I had rather be a dog a bay the moon / Than such a Roman" (4.3.27-28).

Brutus feels an intimate connection with his honor, whereas Henry V treats it like a material possession to collect and hoard. He compares it to treasure, saying, "By Jove, I am not covetous for gold, / [...] / But if it be a sin to covet honour / I am the most offending soul alive" (4.3.24-29). We can see from his language that Henry V sees no fault with relinquishing his morality to gain honor. The use of the words "sin" and "covet" brings Shakespeare's depiction of the King in direct opposition to Plutarch's Christ-like, pure image of Brutus. Henry V does not care what methods he must use to gain honor: sinful or ethical, whereas Brutus will only rigidly adhere to the straightforward, virtuous path.

Although these two renowned leaders have different interpretations of the relationship between morality and honor, they both set aside

their private emotions for public service. Henry V does not give leniency to his close acquaintances Lord Scroop or Bardolph, but punishes them to preserve English law, just as Brutus does not allow his friendship with Caesar to sway his decision about his assassination. We see this theme of the public versus the private self scrutinized in both plays, along with the connection between morality and honor. In fact, we can see evidence of *Henry V* leading into *Julius Caesar* from these themes, as well as from Shakespeare's use of a Greek Chorus and references to Roman figures, such as Marc Antony and Pompey, throughout the play. With *Henry V* and *Julius Caesar*, we are given a glimpse into Shakespeare's thought process and his creation of two parallel leaders who achieve glory and honor in distinct ways.

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NOTES

¹References are to the Arden ed. of *King Henry V*, ed. T. W. Craik (1995; London: Thomson Learning, 2005).

²References are to the Arden ed. of *Julius Caesar*, ed. David Daniell (1998; London: Thomson Learning, 2006).

³Raphael Holinshed, *The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (London: Printed by Henry Denham, at the expense of Iohn Harison, George Bishop, Rafe Newberie, Henrie Denham, and Thomas Woocke, [1587]) sceti: Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text & Image. 5 Aug. 2008 <http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/printedbooksNew/index.cfm?textID=holinshed_chronicle&PagePosition=1>.

⁴Holinshed 546-47.

⁵Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998) 321.

⁶Bloom 320.

⁷Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, Loeb Classical Library trans. by Bernadotte Perrin (1923). 5 Aug. 2008 <<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/home.html>>.

⁸Quoted from the Arden ed. of *King Henry IV, Part 1*, ed. David Scott Kastan (2002; London: Thomson Learning, 2006).

A Response to Myrtle Hooper's "Textual Surprise in Pauline Smith's 'The Sinner'"*

IRENE GORAK

Myrtle Hooper's study of "The Sinner" in the 2004-2005 issue of *Connotations* is one of five subtle and nuanced readings she has published of Pauline Smith's South African story collection *The Little Karoo* (1925, 1930) and her novel *The Beadle* (1926).¹ Concentrating on individual stories and the multiple meanings of individual words, Hooper's method is to delineate how small details of action and interaction explode into unexpected significance as the narratives unfold. For Hooper, Smith's strength lies in the way she renders extreme situations in understated, and therefore multivalent, words that arouse pity and terror. Smith's language challenges readers to make moral choices while rendering those choices difficult and unsatisfying. These are not the "sketches of Karoo life" promised by Arnold Bennett in his 1925 introduction,² but prismatic explorations of the human condition. A Smith story is recursive, "progressively revealing layers of hidden relationship that recast and reconfigure the meaning of its action" ("Surprise" 70). Dialogue is crucial, because it propels the "dynamics of narrative engagement and narrative distance that enables her to play with our reading expectations" (69). Focusing on details such as modal verbs and the distinctions between "declarative, ascriptive and relational naming" (71), Hooper registers an almost Jamesian level of implication in Smith's language.

Hooper's insights into Smith's Afrikaans inflected English place her among a group of South African critics whose sensitivity to crosscurrents of meaning in a multilingual society results in innovative and

*Reference: Myrtle Hooper, "Textual Surprise in Pauline Smith's 'The Sinner'," *Connotations* 14.1-3 (2004/2005): 68-86.

appropriately technical explorations of the country's canonical texts.³ However, Hooper goes beyond some of her peers in the way she presses a complex analysis of Smith's language into an exploration of the ethical dilemmas expressed in narrative structure. Hooper shows how Smith's stories unfold as moral wagers with ever higher stakes. They are "epistemologically loaded" ("Surprise" 70), not just for her characters but for readers as well. "Smith's stance in relation to her characters confers on us readers an ethical responsibility: to be receptive; to recognise ourselves in her creatures; to register the implications of their actions, their relations, their insights for ourselves" (86).

Hooper offers a more complex view of the moral issues in Smith's stories than was expressed in the wave of criticism that followed her death in 1959. For instance, Geoffrey Haresnape's 1969 study says of the "The Sinner": "the intention of this story is to show how Niklaas comes to learn resignation and to realize that he is in no position to judge others."⁴ Hooper, unlike Haresnape, does not emphasize linear progress from ignorance to enlightenment. Instead, she illuminates a "modality that reflects possibilities, probabilities, consequences of actions, choices and decisions" ("Surprise" 70). The story is not about "learning" in the conventional sense, but rather about "surprise," which Hooper defines as simultaneously "knowing and not knowing things about oneself and about others" (70). Her central insight, that "The Sinner" concerns itself not with a specific set of beliefs but with the "modulation of knowledge" (70), implicitly sets Smith in a modernist context, with Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* rather than Aesop's *Tales*.

Hooper's interest in the trace elements of moral psychology extends into a more interior account of religion in Smith's stories than is often given. All her readers have noted her extensive use of free indirect narrative. As *The Nation* put it in a 1925 review, "She never intrudes, never even enters a room where a character lies sleeping."⁵ This indirection means that critics have had trouble disengaging the religiosity of the characters from the beliefs of the author. Smith's characters often articulate their emotions by appealing to God or to episodes in

the Bible. "The Sinner" can be viewed as a test-case exploration of this habit, since the part of the narrative that focuses on Niklaas, the sinner-in-chief, consists of alternating bands of action and religious reflection. No thought or feeling passes through Niklaas's mind without his reaching for a biblical source. What critics have had trouble deciding is whether the religious framework is primary or secondary. Is Smith's focus on the continuity between Afrikaner settlement and Old Testament narrative or is she mainly concerned with the reception of that narrative in the turn of the century rural Cape?

One implication of Hooper's essays is that religion affects Smith's characters in unpredictable ways, like a third person joining a private conversation. This emphasis on volatility and surprise challenges J. M. Coetzee's political interpretation of Smith's *oeuvre*. Coetzee argues that by infusing her stories of Afrikaner settlement with the rhythms of the King James Bible, Smith reinforced the ideology of separation that culminated in apartheid.⁶ Coetzee discusses religion less at the level of interpersonal dynamics than as a byproduct of narrative tone, where it serves, he thinks, as a dignifying and stabilizing force. Instead of the skeptical and paradoxical moralist proposed by Hooper, Coetzee's Smith paints an idealized portrait of Afrikaner struggle and Afrikaner "specialness."

Hooper cites Smith's "craftsmanship" as the reason why "I find myself disagreeing with the received reading that her work mythologises—and endorses—an ideology of Afrikaner-as-Israelite" (69). And indeed, a version of this reading goes back a long way. Smith's friend and fellow writer Sarah Gertrude Millin quipped that "When I write about poor whites you know they are poor whites—When *Pauline* writes about them you *think* they are saints!"⁷ I am not sure that Hooper's appeal to craftsmanship or her framing of this debate in terms of "classical tragedy" (69) completely deflects Coetzee's attack. At the very least, it might be wise to acknowledge that Smith's artistry battles with her nostalgia. The temptation to defend Afrikaner religious practices rather than anatomize them grows stronger in *The Beadle* (1926), and dooms the sentimental fragment "Winter Sacra-

ment," a paean to rural life and religiosity that she worked on throughout her life but could never finish.⁸

The more interesting and experimental feature of *The Little Karoo* is Smith's use of what David Ker's study of African modernist fiction calls "the dramatized perspective." Small, incremental scenes "composed of the conflicting attitudes of the protagonists,"⁹ repeated with seemingly minor variations gradually expose larger issues of moral integrity and choice. Smith's characters, who often appear in pairs, do not just oppose but also interpret each other, usually with disastrous results. Truth is sliced and spectral. As in Henry James, the past is haunted as well as idealized. All these features appear in "The Sinner," which contrasts two illicit love affairs in an idyllic upland district called the Kombuis. The first occurred in the distant past and involved the landowner Andries van Reenen and the sinner's wife Toontje, who at that time was the daughter of van Reenen's tenant. The second takes place in the present and involves Niklaas and the rather brash woman who persuades him to leave his wife in her company.

Hooper asserts that Toontje's affair in the Kombuis "carries enduring memories both for her and for van Reenen. The fact that Niklaas goes 'up to the Kombuis' is therefore a narrative reiteration. But the experience he has of the Kombuis is a tawdry business compared to the romantic, elegiac past of Toontje and van Reenen" ("Surprise" 80). I think this comment is too idealistic. The narrator does for a moment wrap the past in an elegiac bubble: "In her youth in the Kombuis this tall patient woman, so quiet in her speech, so controlled in all her movements, had been free and beautiful to [van Reenen] as a roe-buck in the mountains." Yet the fine moment is immediately blown away. "But he did not now remember it and saw in her only the bearer of news about that last passion of his life, his tobacco" (73). The point of view is van Reenen's. It is deeply unreliable and unstable, colored not just by the road not taken in his youth but by the hard taskmaster he has spent many years practicing to perfect.

“But he did not now remember it”: the narrator does not lean too hard on the landowner’s finer feelings, and neither perhaps should we. For to see a hard contrast here is to argue that Smith privileges a quintessentially patriarchal relationship over the entrepreneurial (and female led) liaison engineered by sexual freelancer Jacoba Nooi. Smith invites the reader to idealize, but stops just short of doing so authorially.

Her fundamental ideological slant remains elusive and may be more ambiguous in *The Little Karoo* than in her later work. Coetzee detects in *The Beadle* “her vision of a patriarchalism purged of its tyrannical side” (72). This comment illuminates Smith’s development but perhaps does not reflect the more open-ended, exploratory qualities of the best stories in *The Little Karoo*. Granted, Niklaas’s rebellion against the insecurity of his tenure is presented as a sexual aberration, rather than as the legitimate grievance of a landless exploited worker. Still in “The Sinner,” after all, Toontje manages to dethrone not just one but two patriarchs, the landowner and Niklaas. As Hooper implies, the pathetic, undignified figure of Niklaas with his eleven children—one of whom he is in love with and wants to marry!—seems an odd vessel for a conservative patriarchal message. There are elements of parody and even romantic irony in Smith’s early stories that bolster Hooper’s argument for the importance of surprise.

This aspect has also been explored by Harold Scheub, who notes that the oral material in Smith’s journals often consists of trickster narratives, in which “a sense of irony is generated by the slow growth of awareness that the tricksters are actually the dupes.” Scheub shows that when she worked up this material in her published stories, the result was “dualism, bringing diverse imagery into parallel alignment.”¹⁰

Unlikely though it seems given the seriousness of its themes, a trickster narrative is a basic structural element in “The Sinner.” Niklaas, the *bijwoner* (tenant farmer), provides the story’s first, but not its only dupe. (The landowner is the other.) Niklaas, who initially sees himself as God’s charioteer, soon reveals himself to be a pathetic, one dimen-

sional figure smothered by his oversized spiritual clothes, “a small, weak, religious man” dwarfed by a “tall, patient, silent” wife (68). Niklaas sees himself as an elect follower whose special relationship with God has suddenly crumbled. Actually he goes further than this. As Hooper points out, Niklaas thinks he has been deserted by a God who “was no longer his friend. God was, in fact, but another Toontje ... as patient and as secret, and as silent” (“The Sinner” 71). One of Smith’s fortes is the presentation of religious beliefs at a psychic level, where she shows an almost comic “mash up” between Old Testament narrative and its practical redaction in the peasant mind. Niklaas wanted his favorite daughter Saartje to remain unmarried, but a fickle deity somehow double-crossed him. Now Niklaas hates everyone but this one daughter—his God, his master, his wife, his ten other children. Consumed by dissatisfaction, he succumbs to the charms of an incomer to the area, flirtatious Jacoba Nooi.

Hooper notes that women “initiate the action and men respond to it” (80) in Smith’s plots. This point can be pressed further. Koba is one of three women (the others being the daughter and the wife) who, in structural terms, undermine Niklaas’s belief that he belongs at the center of his own story. Koba’s shell-encrusted mirror is just one of several mirrors in “The Sinner,” which, as in “Desolation” and “The Schoolmaster,” explores storytelling itself as a “fork in the road”—a way of accessing, but also of misinterpreting, interpersonal experience—of truth telling as well as lying. Storytelling for Smith is a coping mechanism, a crutch that propels human beings forward through hardship. It is a hop-along way of pushing through life’s treacherous currents rather than an authoritative shaping scheme. An imperfect and dangerous mirror, storytelling breaks down separation and aloneness but threatens to consume those who naively believe in it.

Mesmerized by Koba’s sing-song speech and the image of himself in her dancing mirror, Niklaas leaves his wife, children, and tobacco fields, following Koba across the river to the fertile hills of the Kom-buis. At this point, Smith unveils the “back story” that will displace the husband’s story. This is the typical mid-point of her narratives, the

reversal that challenges the reader's projections about the future course of the characters. While Niklaas completes his transformation into "the sinner" of the title, his wife Toontje secures not just their tenancy on their Platkops farm but her husband's reputation in the community by forging a brutal bargain with the landowner. The master's initial response to the news of his tenant's defection—"May his soul burn in hell and Koba's also" (74)—mirrors Niklaas's puritanical absolutism. However, by evoking shared memories and posing hard rhetorical questions, Toontje provokes the master to recollect their own affair in the Kombuis, which occurred just before her marriage. Toontje uses Niklaas's infidelity as a mirror to reveal ("darkly" as well as "face to face") some hidden facets of her relationship with Niklaas's master. Just as Koba worked on Niklaas, so Toontje provokes van Reenen to recall an affair that apparently resulted in her pregnancy with Saartje. For a fleeting moment, Toontje's mirror to the past reveals the emotional warmth underneath the landowner's oppressive façade:

'Toontje!' cried the old man, his mind moving, slow and bewildered, from his tobacco to the past. 'Toontje!'

'Andries!'

For a moment their eyes met, and in that moment the secret which Toontje hid in her heart and Niklaas had never fathomed, lay bared between them. The moment passed ... as if it had never been. (74)

Note that "the moment passed." The threefold repetition of the word "moment" is crucially important. Toontje exhibits an almost stoic refusal to cling to pleasure, or even to love. When van Reenen threatens resistance to her pleas to continue Niklaas's tenancy, Toontje shows the steel in her sinews. "Did I not marry the fool to save the master?" (75).

Their livelihood secured during Niklaas's absence, Toontje writes to her husband, asking him to return, not to public judgment as a failed patriarch, but to the more pathetic, and therefore more human, role of landless farmer and doubting father. "For there is not one of us that has not sinned" (82), she obliquely states. Toontje's New Testament echo both mirrors and supplants Niklaas's habitual Old Testament

frame of reference. Even so, Toontje's religiosity, unlike her husband's, resides at some distance from full disclosure. She neither judges Niklaas's "sin" nor reveals her own.

My reading of Toontje's veiled revelation is slightly different from Hooper's. She comments: "This exculpates Niklaas of his evidently incestuous obsession with his daughter, but incriminates Toontje in duping him as well as cuckolding him. It also contextualises Toontje's efforts to protect her husband from the likely consequences of his moral dereliction, because she has done the same for her lover in the past" ("Surprise" 78). I question this rich insight into Toontje's "cover up" in one respect. Hooper implies that the landowner's paternity of Niklaas's beloved daughter is definitely stated in the text. It is important to note, however, that the narrative is as reticent here as Toontje herself. The "secret" the narrative reveals is not of paternity but of love, a love that flashed and flickered once but that Toontje herself wisely does not rely on. Hooper says that Saartje is their "eldest" daughter ("Surprise" 72), but this is never stated in the text, nor do we know whether she is the first child to marry. All we are told is that she is Niklaas's "favourite daughter" (68). We are *not* told that Saartje is van Reenen's child rather than one of Toontje's ten other children. We are not told that Saartje is her oldest child nor even whether the landowner fathered any of her offspring. Toontje strongly hints that he did, but she is bargaining for her family and her livelihood. Smith's narrative mirror turns away from the plot at a key moment.¹¹ Readers are asked to respect the narrator's limited understanding of the ultimate basis of human affairs and to purge their curiosity. Smith, like Toontje, preserves her secrets.

In the story's final scene Niklaas cries when he reads his wife's message of forgiveness, which he interprets as the word of God. But if Niklaas is anything like his master, his moment of humility will quickly pass. Smith lays equal weight on the poverty of the mind, the foul rag and bone shop, and its strength. A tempered fool, Niklaas returns to his children, his master, and his master's master, his tall, silent wife.

Compared with Toontje, Niklaas remains a victim rather than an agent. This is a man who can abandon his wife but cannot elude her because she is literally and figuratively “taller.” Toontje’s growth in stature culminates in her letter to Niklaas, a tissue of near truths and ventriloquized fabulation that rivals her creator in its story-telling arts. “The master told me this day that he will leave the lands to Ockert and me till you come again to Platkops dorp, and to all that speak of it he says that he himself has sent you to the Kombuis For surely, Niklaas, when your madness leaves you, you will come again to our children and me” (82). Of course, it is Toontje, not the master, who has invented a purposeful journey to cover up her husband’s wanderings, just as it is Toontje, not Niklaas, who sees the larger narrative horizon, the swelling and ebbing of the tides of lust. A covert feminization of Niklaas whittles away his patriarchal self-image, ridiculing his *droit de seigneur* fantasies about his daughter and wife, undermining his core identity as the sole husbandman of his allotted plot, and even turning him into a loose woman’s “kept man.” His wife’s and his mistress’s point of view on Niklaas prove to be surprisingly complementary. As she “sends on” Niklaas’s clothes, his wife first practices and then broadcasts a story: “Up to the Kombuis has the master sent Niklaas, to see how the Hollander works his tobacco” (76). His mistress likewise complains “Did I not bring you here to please the Hollander, and now you will not please him” (78). The emphasis is on Niklaas as a servant, a creature “sent” and “brought.” In a sustained assault on its two male characters, “The Sinner” unravels the patriarchal interpretation of Afrikaner life.

I would argue, in addition, that the structural intertwinement between Koba and Toontje overrides the binary classification that presents one as a virtuous wife and the other as a wicked interloper. Like the narrator, they are both plotters and concealers. Unlike Niklaas, both women practice conscious choice. Their attention is directed outward whereas he is buffeted by his own strong feelings. Moreover, Niklaas’s feelings are tangled up with religion in a feedback loop that confuses his own mind with the mind of God. Koba’s world is com-

pletely “God free,” whereas Toontje has arguably a “just enough” practical grasp of religious precept. Even so, the theodicy in Smith’s early stories seems to me to be more stoic than providential. The contrast between purposeful and irrational, emotion driven travel that Smith explores in “Desolation” and “The Schoolmaster” reappears in “The Sinner.” The schoolmaster’s self-imposed sentence—“I that have killed mules must now work like a mule if I would live” (51)—echoes Cleanthes’ famous dictum. “Like a dog tied to a cart, and compelled to go wherever it goes,”¹² human beings must endure their fate, but can choose to do so willingly or unwillingly.

We know from her journals that Smith felt solidarity with people like her farmer friend Thys Taute, who “had never been able to believe in Christ.” She says “We got to feel ... like two sinners shut out of Heaven by the *predikant*. If the *predikants* would preach the humanity of Christ, not the divinity, take him for a peasant teacher instead of the Son of God ... they would do more for sinners like Thys and me.”¹³ Perhaps the most basic question she explores in “The Sinner” turns on the contradictory and self-destructive ways human beings hold a mirror up to God. Who does God mirror? The first half to the story shows that Niklaas’s fixed conception of God is actually fluctuating and unstable. God is like himself, righteous where all others are wrong. God is like his master, overbearing and oppressive; God is like his wife, inscrutably withdrawn. Niklaas has to silence his own phantom gods to allow God—or maybe just his wife—to speak. As Hooper points out, religious language, like other forms of speech in Smith’s stories, can block communication and understanding. Just beyond the narrator’s consciousness, the nexus of parallels and reversals aligns the rich imagery of the Bible with the flowery locutions of Koba Nooi. Against the “logos,” the order of rules, prohibitions, and singular words, Smith sets the “mythos,” the order of stories, imperfect, ambiguous, and doomed to be repeated.

In a terse summary of the economic backdrop to “The Sinner,” the narrator lists the work sequence in tobacco cultivation as “plant, weed, cut, dry, strip, dip, and twist” (70). The terms “strip, dip, and

twist" echo the structure of the story, which is an ordeal for "the sinner" that incorporates a reversal engineered by his wife. Niklaas is "stripped" of his religious pretensions and "dipped" in the destructive elements of lust and travel. The "twist" or chiasmus occurs when Toontje chooses not to reject him for his infidelity but to see in her husband's sudden turbulent emotions a mirror of her own affair with the landowner. Viewed in this way, "The Sinner" becomes a kind of John Barleycorn story adapted to South African conditions, an ordeal of spiritual death and rebirth through which Niklaas is pressed. This mythic interpretation of the story's pattern accommodates Hooper's concern with the complexities and paradoxes of moral behavior, but extends it to storytelling as well. As Scheub points out, the trickster is an artist blurring divisions "until reality and fantasy are experienced if only for a few moments as identical" (11). In tobacco planting, as in tricking and storytelling, the stripping and twisting has to be done at exactly the right time.

And this is surely one of the functions of the proper names analyzed by Hooper, such as the allusion to the biblical Sarah in Niklaas's daughter Saartje. Evocative names take the sting of solitariness out of the story. Smith's artful deployment of structures of parallelism and allusion holds up a mirror to the narrator's arts. The storyteller in turn holds up a mirror to other stories. Niklaas sees only a phantom image of himself in Koba's mirror, whereas his wife sees in Niklaas a mirror of her own history and a lesson about the borderline between illusory and permanent attachments.

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NOTES

¹Hooper's essays are: "'Desolation,' Destitution, Dereliction," *English in Africa* 26.1 (May 1999): 33-43; "The Ethics of Modality in Pauline Smith's 'The Sisters,'" *Textual Ethos Studies or Locating Ethics*, ed. Anna Fahraeus and AnnKatrin Jonsson, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005) 133-44; "Homeless: The Motif of Eviction in Two

Early South African Narrative Texts," *Flight from Certainty: The Dilemma of Identity and Exile*, ed. Anne Luyat and Francine Tolron (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001) 238-50; "Naming the Father: Terms of Endearment, Sexuality and Servitude in *The Beadle*," *Nomina Africana* 10.1-2 (1997): 67-78; "The Renunciation of Voice and the Language of Silence: Pauline Smith's 'The Schoolmaster,'" *English Studies in Africa* 34.1 (1991): 21-26; "Textual Surprise in Pauline Smith's 'The Sinner,'" *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate* 14.1-3 (2004-2005): 68-86.

²Arnold Bennett, "Introduction" to Pauline Smith, *The Little Karoo* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930) 11.

³Some examples are Cherry Wilhelm, "The Style of Poverty: The Language of Pauline Smith's Little Karoo," *English Studies in Africa* 20 (1977): 65-78; Tony Voss, "Die Pêrels van Pauline or, The History of Smith," *English in Africa* 11.1 (May 1984): 107-17. See also two important articles by Michael Cosser "Undercurrent Dialogue: Free Indirect Discourse in Pauline Smith's 'The Pain,'" *English in Africa* 19.2 (Oct. 1992): 85-100; and "A Question of Silence: The Deployment of the Interrogative Statement in Pauline Smith's *The Beadle*," *English in Africa* 20.2 (Oct. 1993): 47-66.

⁴*Pauline Smith* (New York: Twayne, 1969) 56.

⁵Unsigned review. *The Nation*, 2 September 1925: 261.

⁶J. M. Coetzee, *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1988) 115-26. See also Coetzee's "Pauline Smith and the Afrikaans Language," *English in Africa* 8.1 (March 1981): 25-32.

⁷Smith herself cites Millin's comment in a 1948 letter to Jonathan Cape. Quoted in "Introduction: A Fundamental Simplicity," *Secret Fire: The 1913-14 South African Journal of Pauline Smith*, ed. Harold Scheub (Pietermaritzburg: U of Natal P, 1997) xl.

⁸Two chapters from "Winter Sacrament" and an account of Smith's struggle to push it forward are included in *The Unknown Pauline Smith*, ed. Ernest Pereira (Pietermaritzburg: U of Natal P, 1993) 151-76.

⁹David I. Ker, *The African Novel and the Modernist Tradition* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997) 16.

¹⁰"Pauline Smith and the Oral Tradition: The Koenraad Tales," *English in Africa* 8.1 (March 1981): 1-11, 10; 7.

¹¹There is a similar aporia in Smith's *Little Karoo* story "The Schoolmaster." See Cherry Wilhelm, "The Style of Poverty" 74. Hooper offers a different interpretation from Wilhelm. See "The Renunciation of Voice" 24.

¹²The analogy is credited to Cleanthes in Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2004) 243. Giovanni Reale in *The Systems of the Hellenistic Age*, vol. 2 of *A History of Ancient Philosophy*, ed. John R. Catan (Albany: State U of New York P, 1985) 254 quotes a longer version by Hyppolitus.

¹³*Secret Fire* 344.

Excavating a Secret History: Mary Butts and the Return of the Nativist

ANDREW RADFORD

I

She reminded herself of the pleasure it would be to show a stranger their land, as they knew it, equivocal, exquisite. From what she had observed of Americans, almost certain to be new. [...]

“God! What a beautiful place”, [Dudley Carston] said. When ‘beautiful’ is said, exactly and honestly, there is contact, or there should be. Then, “This is the England we think of. Hardy’s country, isn’t it?”

(Mary Butts, *Armed with Madness* 11)

In her most strongly experimental novel *Armed with Madness* (1928), Mary Butts describes the American visitor Dudley Carston’s enthralled perception of “Hardy’s country,” the austere beauty of whose chalk uplands, cliffs and imperilled prehistoric residues has achieved “totemic status in the national imagination” (Wright, *Village* xii). That Carston is designated as “a stranger” in this scene is, I will argue, highly significant in Butts’s non-historical fiction. The trespassing “outsider” (AWM 115), against whom her female protagonists must activate and marshal south Dorset’s animistic undercurrents, functions as a crucial element in Butts’s dialectic of modernity. Her fictional priestess becomes “a dynastic defender” (Armstrong 70): the force and figure that not only taps the primal, perennial energies of “Hardy’s country,” but also expunges would-be foreign interlopers, thus returning “England” to its rightful, indigenous, patrician inheritors.

Though Lawrence Rainey acclaims *Armed with Madness* as “a masterpiece of Modernist prose” (“Good Things” 14), Butts remains a neglected author who has “slipped through the net of literary histo-

ries of the period" (Blondel xv).¹ That her novels were formally challenging for the reading public at large, printed in relatively modest runs and lacked a high profile champion does not fully explain why Butts's stylistic contribution to British interwar fiction has been overlooked by academic criticism.² As will become clear, there is imbuing Butts's novels a punitive political agenda whose "intolerance" towards strangers would, according to her friend Bryher [Winifred Ellermann] in 1937, make "easy fame impossible" (160). Alongside this "intolerance," however, and what deserves more measured scrutiny, is a feeling for space and place in which "[s]trictly contemporary experience is lit by an antique [...] light; life an 'infernal saga' [...] coming up to date" (Bilsing, "Rosalba" 61). Butts strives to reclaim, consolidate, and enshrine her birthplace as a locus of memory and revelatory vigour, evoking a carefully historicised English past to offset moribund metropolitan values.

Born in a house overlooking Poole Harbour in Dorset in 1890, Butts eventually settled in England's most westerly-inhabited village Sennen Cove, Cornwall, where she lived from 1930 until her untimely death in 1937 (Wright, *Old Country* 94-95). Like her more renowned literary precursor Thomas Hardy, Butts considered herself an "imaginative archaeologist" positioned at a cultural crossroads: keenly responsive to the dislocating complexities of modernity, yet driven by a historical responsibility to recall and reanimate ancient traditions. Indeed, her detailed evocation of her unspoilt environment is symbolic of an infinitely stratified sense of place. She occupied one of the most precious tracts of archaeological terrain in Western Europe, replete with the tangible remnants of Celtic, Roman, Saxon, and Norman occupation.³ Butts's literary enterprise is devoted to making Wessex "novel" again, but without replicating what she judged the aestheticised southern landscape marketed through Hardy's fiction, aimed primarily at a suburbanised bourgeois "nature cult" (Butts, *Warning to Hikers* 283).

As Patrick Wright notes, Butts's imaginative enterprise overlaps with the "return to a rural England" that imbues much British writing

of the 1920s and 1930s (Hilaire Belloc, John Buchan, E. M. Forster, the Powys Brothers, Rolf Gardiner, A. E. Housman, and the Sussex Kipling), as well as the “established popular culture” of the interwar years more generally (Wright, *Old Country* 104). And the ‘England’ of Stanley Baldwin’s Conservative government was firmly supported by Arthur Bryant, the ‘anti-materialist’ Tory who campaigned strenuously for the safeguarding of national landmarks and who affirmed “the spirit of the past” as that “sweet and lovely breath of Conservatism” (Bryant, *Spirit of Conservatism* 75).⁴ What makes Butts’s project idiosyncratic is her literary refashioning of her birthplace as “sacred geography” (Garrity, “Queer Urban Life” 234), an anthropological “stage,” set with “all the properties of tragic mystery” (Butts, *Ashe of Rings* 185), upon which to test a mystical formulation of femininity. Butts is aggressively opposed to the pastoral concepts of nature which have filtered into, and become automatically falsified by, the mass public consciousness of those “whose life has been passed in towns” (Butts, *Traps for Unbelievers* 283). According to Frank Baker, Butts construed these intruders as

[P]eople unable to live in the rhythm of the natural forces they seek to bring to submission by unnatural means: the television set, the transistor, the yap-yap of the news announcer, the advertisement hoarding—all those ephemeral products of the mass mind which ignore the timeless heritage forever expanding the seemingly short span of a man’s life. (116)

Against the whimsical pastoralism of mere retinal sensation, which the American Dudley Carston embodies in *Armed with Madness*, Butts posits a visceral alternative version of “Hardy’s country.” The embattled bucolic enclaves in her fiction resonate with contested conceptions of Englishness, a rapt rediscovery of stable location triggered by what Butts interpreted as a pernicious modern moment whose dynamism of progressive enlightenment had induced a split between the self and the environment. Her more “equivocal” England “off the regulation road” (*AWM* 11-12) stubbornly resists the town-bred interloper’s endeavours to enframe Wessex as if it were a painting of landscaped tranquillity for mass edification.

II

In her posthumously published autobiography *The Crystal Cabinet: My Childhood at Salterns* (1937), Butts remarks that residing in south Dorset was like living in a region “with all its bones showing, whose fabric and whole essence is stone, which is dominated and crowned by stones; standing stones on the moors, cairn and castle [...] each field fixed by a phallus” (CC 12). According to Butts, this Wessex “country” which “no man, not Hardy even, has found full words for” (CC 63), engenders “a fresh ‘spiritual’ adventure [...] a re-statement & a development of our old experience in the field which gave us our religions” (*Journals* 341). In the first full-length critical study of Mary Butts’s oeuvre, Roslyn Reso Foy explicates this “fresh ‘spiritual’ adventure” as one anchored in a commitment to “the beauty and wonder of nature” (xi), overseen by a venturesome “feminine archetype” who calls up “a heritage that offers a universe at once organic, sacred and whole” (99). However, Butts’s conception of Wessex and the “very human Earth goddess” (Foy 65) synonymous with it are far more problematic than Foy’s monograph suggests. Foy underestimates to what degree Butts radically re-imagines Hardy’s literary topography to revile and punish those deracinated “foreign” figures whose hypnotic reverence for machinery subverts the delicate “balance of an old rural constituency” (CC 245). The “sacred nature” that Foy locates in Butts’s scrupulous mapping of her natal home—demarcating boundaries, territorial possessions and geographical landmarks—is not as winsomely idyllic, inclusive or “open” as it initially appears (Foy 29). Indeed, the cardinal duty of Butts’s “priestess” heroine (*AR* 129) is to police with tireless vigilance “the keltic border” of an imagined genetic “nation” (*Journals* 127).

In her 1932 preservationist pamphlet *Warning to Hikers*, Butts unwittingly reproduces and compounds the clichés of urban sentimentalism that are such a frequent target for her ire:

[t]here must be one profound difference between the men of the country and the town, that the most ragged village child who ever went egg-smashing in

spring, sleeping in the dirtiest cottage, has not had his sight and smell and touch and hearing corrupted from without. For unless he was born already with a life in his imagination, there is next to nothing in a town for a growing animal to do, if it is to grow according to human animal capacity. A training in "movies" [...] is no substitute for the various experiences in growth and pleasure and hardihood and danger the hillside gives, the shore, the tree and the stream and the weather, handled by a country child and by which he is handled. (*WH* 272)

The "ragged village child" in this extract implies that the vital sources of animistic energy are heedless of caste, and favours a romanticised conception of the unvarnished country-dweller. However, what emerges from her writing is not a lush, beneficent Wessex available to all. Rather Butts renders a jealously guarded region subject to stringent rules of possession and maintenance by a patrician elite whose members "have never left" the Dorset "countryside" (*Traps for Unbelievers* 278). This ostensibly principled and enduring hierarchy must show unflagging wariness in repelling the incursions of an upwardly mobile urban population. Implicit in this venture is an unsettling eugenic perception: only the *English* child of landed aristocracy can administer a circumscribed corner of Wessex that Hardy saw undergoing severe social and economic upheaval at the end of the nineteenth century. As Patrick Wright remarks, Hardy's novels "strain to describe a landscape [...] abstracted by an increasingly mechanised and capitalised agriculture," while in Butts's fiction "there is no longer any closely experienced country life to recount" (*Old Country* 107).

III

In an impassioned 1931 tribute to her friend, the artist Christopher Wood, Butts reflected:

We both came from the same part of England, the short turf & chalk hills which are like nothing else on earth. They sprawl across counties, & our history & the history of man written on them in flint & bronze & leaf & grey stone. Written on very short grass full of small black & white snail-shells. A

dry country of immense earth-works & monstrous pictures done on the chalk stripped of its grass. From Avebury [Wiltshire] to Stone Cliff [Sussex] it is the same, sprawled across a kingdom, the history of England open. Also its secret history in letters too large to read. (*Journals* 360)

She portrays her birthplace as a seemingly measureless geographical palimpsest, in which myriad generations have inscribed their aesthetic impressions and religious intuitions for posterity. Perhaps the most arresting feature of Butts's fond recollection of growing up surrounded by "short turf" and "chalk hills" is her sense of a Wessex that contains a history that is both "open"—"immense earth-works" and other visible survivals of ancient occupation—alongside an esoteric and encrypted narrative illegible to naïve outsiders such as the American Dudley Carston in *Armed with Madness*: a "secret" script whose meanings can only be deciphered by the privileged few. Palpable vestiges cut out of "chalk," "flint" and "bronze" are her fictional memorials to a vibrantly imagined locality that both awaits completion yet is also precariously perched on the edge of "extinction" (Wright, *Old Country* 96).

In *Cultural Geography*, Mike Crang argues that the "quest for authentic national cultural identity often results in efforts to reconstruct a lost national ethos as though it were some secret inheritance or that cultural identity were a matter of recovering some forgotten or 'hidden music'" (166). On a cursory reading the "secret history" that Butts valorises may seem to laud the native imagination: a sincere pride in a heritage of homely things that fosters ardent regional affiliation, local responsibility and community service.⁵ However, it is apparent that the feeling of umbilical attachment to southern English "turf" which Butts affirms in her allegorical fables of encroachment cannot be divorced from a more elitist and exclusionary sensibility, a fierce *nativism* that demonises the foreigner because of a perceived geographical, racial, class or sexual "inferiority"; Englishness is by no means a convertible ethnic currency in this unforgiving imaginative scheme. Butts's first published novel *Ashe of Rings* adumbrates this perspective by denoting how cultural roots are bolstered by geneti-

cally based ancestral memories: "blood is the life. Mix it and you mix souls" (AR 151).

As Jane Garrity contends in her pioneering analysis of the racial politics informing interwar British women's fiction, Butts's cultural fantasy of Englishness is founded upon a deeply insular definition of "cultural homogeneity" (*Step-Daughters* 191). Butts positions herself as a votary with unswerving loyalties to the spirit of place. Yet she cannot divulge "secret" mysteries of the soil to the boorish, uprooted subjectivities of urban sprawl: "there is a Neolithic earthwork in the south of England. It is better not to say where. The fewer people who pollute that holy and delectable ground the better" ("Ghosties" 349). In her *Journals* she recounts "the horrors done to Salisbury Plain [...] Hoardings & vile villas & petrol-stations, & that most beastly sight, the rotting bodies of cars" (*Journals* 451).

Hardy, in some of his most celebrated novels, as Butts was almost certainly aware, charts how a native countryman's romantic and professional aspirations are tragically derailed by the incursion of a parasitic "foreign" interloper: Sergeant Frank Troy in *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), the Scot Donald Farfrae in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), and Edred Fitzpiers in *The Woodlanders* (1887) are all memorable examples of the "stranger" who infiltrates a bucolic hinterland and threatens a primitive fertility figure, such as Gabriel Oak, Michael Henchard and Giles Winterborne, whose powers of guaranteeing organic plenitude for the community are no longer operant. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), the eponymous protagonist's encounter with the outsider Angel Clare seems to augur the collapse of an entire province once rich in folklore. Butts records re-reading Hardy's *Tess* in her journal of August 16, 1921 and it is this narrative of irremediable dissolution that Butts seeks to correct in her trilogy of "Wessex Novels." Vanna in *Ashe of Rings* (1925), Scylla in *Armed with Madness* (1928), and Felicity in *Death of Felicity Taverner* (1932) all become hierophants and agents of redemptive grace for their beleaguered districts.

Butts's conception of a questing mythical femininity both absorbs and interrogates the seminal research of the Cambridge Ritualists of the early twentieth century,⁶ especially that of Jane Ellen Harrison (1850-1928), who was one of the first women to distinguish herself in the history of British Classical scholarship. Harrison's erudite attempt to excavate a forgotten legacy, the myth of matriarchal origins, left an indelible imprint on Butts's oeuvre (CC 41-42). Butts construes Harrison's anthropological endeavour as consistent with her own—to transmute the “primitive” from an irretrievable developmental phase in the history of civilisation to a more rewarding mode of being, capable of emulation in the contemporary political arena. Butts's *Journals* make repeated references to Harrison's special ability to render the Hellenic past as a vibrant, ever-accessible present ready to serve contemporary personal and cultural imperatives. Harrison's theories about concrete language creating piercingly vivid ideas rather than exemplifying preconceived ones; her eloquent insistence on the importance of desire as a motivating force behind art, marking a decisive shift from personal to collective emotion, resonate through all Butts's published writings. In her opinion, Harrison stripped away the seemingly antiquarian and hidebound discourses of Hellenism to establish dissident configurations of gender and sexuality. In 1916 Butts wrote: “There is no such thing as man and woman—but there is sex—a varying quantity” (qtd. in Garrity, “Mary Butts,” *Encyclopedia* 38). Her abiding fascination with salvaging classical and mythical structures adumbrates alternatives to heterosexuality and erodes dichotomised notions about gender roles. However, Butts's fiction ultimately withdraws from the dynamic disturbance of traditional hierarchies epitomised by this “varying quantity” to laud instead a reactionary and inflexible politics of caste and “racial purity” (Garrity, “Queer Urban Life” 234).

By 1913 Butts was already familiar with Harrison's *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1903) and *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (1912). She read them when they were first pub-

lished and returned to them repeatedly throughout her life. Butts declares in the fourth chapter of *Warning to Hikers* that

Contact with nature is very much what a man has when he participates in any rite or sacrament. Rites and sacraments are a kind of drama, a ritual play taken from universal natural events. They are about the health and ill-health of the soul, about marriage and birth and death. Things which happen. I think it was J. E. Harrison who said that the point of their efficacy, writing of the ancient world, at least, was that a man took out of them in proportion to what he put in. (WH 290)

By 1919 Butts noted: “[t]o remember Greek life is not to adventure into a delicious ideal but to go home to something so familiar that it can bore me” (qtd. in Blondel 22). Butts focuses on the key phrase of Harrison’s *Themis* which proposes that “the Great Mother is prior to the masculine divinities,” repudiating the rationalist-hierarchical thinking exalted by Harrison’s colleague Sir James Frazer as a perspective that subjugates spiritual mysticism and demeans pre-intellectual religious apprehensions. Butts utilizes Harrison’s theories of “the Great Mother” to achieve the bold placement of woman’s agency as fundamental to the project of cultural regeneration. As Anthony Ashe asks of his young bride in *Ashe of Rings*, “Do you not understand the link between yourself and a great goddess—the type of all things which a woman is or may become?” (AR 14).

The sophisticated scepticism and radical ambivalence that inform Hardy’s narratives of strife between vulnerable native and a more resourceful intruder contrasts sharply with Butts’s increasingly strident portrayal of an elemental struggle in which the safeguarding of bloodlines and a sacred topography against a contaminating “foreign” presence becomes paramount. In *Armed with Madness* it emerges that the pollutant is Clarence, a black war-veteran suffering from what we would now call “post-traumatic stress disorder.” “Undecided sexually” (Foy 63) and lacking any profound sense of correspondence with historically embedded Englishness, Clarence is prone to bouts of “sadistic” fury (Foy 69) due to factors which the text implies are inextricably related to his ethnic and sexual makeup (AWM 126). He can-

not obey Scylla Taverner's exhortation to "have faith" (AWM 70) because faith requires the worship of a fecund female principle and a sumptuous ancestral legacy that ultimately marginalizes those who seek to disrupt the heterosexual alliance upon which communal coherence depends.

In *Ashe of Rings* Butts elaborates an allegorical clash between those who venerate their prehistoric Wessex landscape—an occult secret society who view themselves as the "Eumolpidae" (AR 20), rightful inheritors of the Eleusinian Mysteries—and those cynical interlopers who interfere with or betray a locus whose inmost ring may be of "neolithic origins, used by the Romans; a refuge for Celt and then for Saxon, a place of legend" (AR 6). Butts deepens this confrontation motif in *Death of Felicity Taverner*: Felicity approximates to Robert Graves's "The White Goddess" (Graves 10; 44-54), and her threatened estate is a plot of "flawless, clean and blessed, mana and tabu earth" (DFT 258-59), urgently requiring the expulsion of foreign toxins like the Russian Bolshevik Jew Nicholas Kralin, who "would sell" for a pittance "the body" of this "land to the Jews" (DFT 346). Felicity is not so much a highborn young woman as a beguiling distillation of the endangered countryside itself: "the hills were her body laid-down, and 'Felicity' was said, over and over again, in each bud and leaf" (DFT 191). Kralin's racial indeterminacy conflicts with Butts's key notion of "mana": "the non-moral, beautiful, subtle energy in man and in everything else, on which the virtue of everything depends" (*Traps for Unbelievers* 328). Her definition of "mana" as "non-moral" camouflages a vexed component of this revitalising, untrammelled entity in her oeuvre: its disturbing association with the "whiteness" of racial supremacy that indicates an indissoluble link between the initiated daughter's "Saxon sturdiness of blood" (CC 199) and her stratified geographical heritage.

The son of a Tolstoyan proletarian-idealist who fled pre-Revolutionary Russia,⁷ Kralin, according to Butts's fictional scheme, personifies both the furtive movements of capital and the mechanistic science that facilitates its chaotic industrial advance. *Death of Felicity*

Taverner clearly reflects the growth of interwar British anti-Semitism and its investment in the “myth of the Jewish-Bolshevik menace” (Patterson, “The Plan” 130). The iconography of anti-Semitism and anti-Bolshevism is apparent across many literary genres in the 1930s, from detective fiction to John Buchan’s imperial romances, to Virginia Woolf’s writings (who like Butts had a Jewish husband). In Dorothy Richardson’s *Pilgrimage*, Miriam dismisses the “Jew” Bernard Mendizabal as “another of those foreigners who care for nothing in England” (*Pilgrimage* 2: 343)—a reaction which implies that the racial and cultural integrity of her “homeland” is being sullied by the “infiltration” of sinister trespassers (Linett 135). Jane Garrity argues that Butts’s portrayal of Kralin “should be read within the context of the early twentieth-century scientific discourse of racial anti-Semitism, which attributed the Jew’s difference not to religious practice but to eternal and immutable hereditary characteristics” (*Step-Daughters* 226). As the member of an “untraditional part of humanity” who has emerged from the ranks of “crooks, cranks” and “criminals” (*DFT* 314), Kralin is determined to foist his own grotesque private vision onto the verdant surface of the Taverner estate by commercialising it: building suburban villas, cinemas, car parks and shops which will clutter the “Sacred Wood” (*DFT* 359) with “greasy papers” (*DFT* 343).⁸ When *Death of Felicity Taverner* asks “What was Kralin?” (*DFT* 259) it appears that this Jewish “master in his vileness” (*DFT* 281), “of no fixed caste” (*DFT* 314) is a harbinger of “a new agony let loose in the world” (*DFT* 245), with which the priestly heroines must grapple to “keep” an “exquisite part of the earth in the hands of people who will never let it be spoiled” (*DFT* 258).

In a *Journal* entry for November 19, 1917, Butts claimed to “understand anti-Semitism”:

I have seen him again, not a lover, but a race, a people. They come from Asia, creeping across the world into Europe, long tentative fingers. They banked up against our castle walls like the waters before a dam. Now they run free and the blood of our noblest is mixed with theirs. Before them our forms of civilisation may not perish, but may be terribly assimilated. They are right. Where they breed, we decay.

It is rather pitiful to me—they do not love soil or care how things should grow—sentiment is outraged, & the rising sap in my body.

But I understand anti-Semitism.

We are above our races—we crystallise and I say that man's will can prevail over chaos [...] But where the East & the West have met we have Egypt & Babylon & Greece. (*Journals* 93)

It is unclear whether the man participating in this debate about racial politics is Butts's soon-to-be spouse John Rodker (Jewish) or the actor Edwin Greenwood. Nor is it obvious whether the unsettling metaphors "long fingers" and "creeping" are her preferred terms or a derisive mimicry of the hysterical and hectoring tabloid slogans that inflame popular prejudice. Is her sentiment "outraged" by callous xenophobic rhetoric itself or by the Jewish intruders who cannot "love" her English "soil" and who dishonour the "blood" of "our" noblest stock? Although the final paragraph asserts "we are above our races" and Butts freely acknowledges that the finest civilisations derive from a thorough cross-fertilisation of "East" and "West," this does not resolve the issue of her reductive scape-goating of Kralin, whose Jewishness is expressed through his chicanery and debased passions, comprising an injurious "grey web" (*DFT* 226).⁹ He personifies a "usurious" attenuation of the culturally prized to grossly economic factors, a feature which is adumbrated by *Ashe of Rings*: Serge Sarantchhoff, the Russian exile, becomes embroiled in a bid to retrieve stolen property (papyrus fragments, Egyptian beads, and other trinkets of mystical, as opposed to mere cash value) which is eventually traced to the dwelling of a "Jew dealer" (*AR* 59).

IV

Since in Butts's opinion, "Christianity [...] had taken away from women their priestesshood" (*Journals* 422), her typical heroine becomes an adept whose passional intensity flows from a primordial pact of blood with animistic Wessex soil, which has crowned her its custodian. And such a priestess can translate the "secret history"

inscribed upon the pagan earth. This recalls Hardy's comments about Tess Durbeyfield as belonging to a cluster of women "whose chief companions are the forms and forces of outdoor Nature" and so "retain in their souls far more of the Pagan fantasy of their remote forefathers than of the systematized religion taught their race at a later date" (*Tess* 109). Hardy tends to portray the acutely sensitive "readers" of Wessex topography as belonging to a disenfranchised rural proletariat, such as Marty South and Giles Winterborne in *The Woodlanders*:

The casual glimpses which the ordinary population bestowed upon that wondrous world of sap and leaves called the Hintock woods had been with these two, Giles and Marty, a clear gaze. They [...] had been able to read its hieroglyphs as ordinary writing; to them the sights and sounds of night [...] amid those dense boughs [...] were simple occurrences whose origin, continuance, and laws they foreknew [...] they had, with the run of the years, mentally collected those remoter signs and symbols which seen in few were of runic obscurity, but all together made an alphabet. (248-49)

In *Ashe of Rings*, Vanna's habit of "communicating with the chill fingers of the trees" (*AR* 137) using a subliminal "language" that outsiders can never voice, let alone decode, recalls Giles Winterborne's "gentle conjuror's touch in spreading the roots of each little tree, resulting in a sort of caress, under which the delicate fibres all laid themselves out in their proper directions for growth" (*Woodlanders* 50). His caress, quite spontaneous and unconscious, is intended to nurture the young trees. Foreshadowing her cousin Felicity Taverner, Scylla is entwined with, even an articulation of, her luxuriant milieu, "translating" the natural domain "into herself: into sea: into sky. Sky back again into wood, flesh and sea" (*AWM* 67-68). However, Butts fashions heroines whose ultimate allegiance is to an indigenous landed elite, resembling her reconstruction of Cleopatra as a "priestess [...] a woman of the ruling caste in a lost civilisation: an athlete: trained in certain lost rites" (*Journals* 272). Vanna Ashe, Scylla, and Felicity all become "impregnated with a life that is not the *common run* of the blood" (*Cleopatra* 220; my emphasis) and they each reject the

encroaching amorphism of “socialist democracy” in post-war Europe, advocating instead the replenishing irrationality of a nobler “supernatural order” (“Bloomsbury” 321).

The priestess that Butts validates is typified by a readiness freely to “enter” the “mythological world” (*Journals* 181) through genetics, to a wellspring of patrician splendour alien to the “new barbarians” inured to the “vibrating roar” of towns (*Warning to Hikers* 279). Butts addresses the mythical daughter’s savage sense of entrapment within, and desire to elude, an interwar “nightmare” of bourgeois philistinism, fostered in part by the liberal consensus of mass democracy (*Journals* 219). Butts signifies that Vanna Ashe, Scylla, and Felicity Taverner, through their metonymic connection to, and heroic stewardship of a Dorset hinterland, not only have instinctive “rights of inheritance” to the English countryside, but that the spiritual well-being of the nation is clinched through their decisive female cultural intervention (*Garrity, Step-Daughters* 191). These heroines act as proud cultivators of indigenous customs, cherishing also the “[n]ecessity for a new experience of reality after the failure of religion” (*Journals* 242). So the protagonist’s journey entails conjuring up a copious but artificial springtime milieu, lavishly endowed with the forgotten fragments of prehistoric peoples. Butts’s topography of the mind has little obvious link to modern agriculture; it is untouched by what she judges as the fabrications of a barren modern sensibility that knows only how to consume, rather than commune.

V

Butts’s ineffable perception of regional wisdom, founded upon concepts of genetic stock, feudally situated forebears, and passionately remembered legacies, is figured as utterly beyond the grasp of the suburban hordes who desecrate nature’s sanctuaries in her preservationist pamphlets of the 1930s. In the *Journals*, she enumerates the “sufferings” of her post-war generation, especially the tragedy of the

“aristocrat who knows only the aristoi are worth having, & yet seeing the people it was his business to help coming to destroy him” (*Journals* 412). Her dream of emptying the south Dorset landscape of impostors such as Kralin is shadowed by the Gothic conception of a “democratic enemy” (*Warning to Hikers* 270) unable to apprehend “the tricky, intricate, sure and unsure, slow and dangerous and delightful mechanism of the earth, which cannot be hurried or learned quickly” (*Traps* 280). In the final 1929 issue of the *Little Review*, Butts proposed that through the dissemination of mass democracy, “the worst is coming to the worst with our civilisation” (“Confessions and Interview” 21-22).

In her memoir *The Crystal Cabinet* Butts recounts how her idyllic upbringing in an “only slightly sub-aristocratic home,” is cut short through betrayal by a bungling, uncaring mother, whose crass mismanagement of the estate’s finances results in the eventual sale of the sacred property and the dispersal of its ‘pricelessly authentic’ treasures (Wright, *Old Country* 104); flight is the only option left for the child, separated from this enclosure and its “magic of person and place” (“The Magic of Person and Place” 141-43). This theme is explored in *Ashe of Rings*, where Vanna finds herself disinherited from her homeland of Rings (based on Butts’s own Badbury Rings, a set of prehistoric concentric earthworks near Salterns, surrounding an ancient pine-wood).¹⁰ At the opening Anthony Ashe, the ageing patriarch of Rings, seeks a young wife to produce an heir. But his “outsider” bride Melitta has scant respect for the mysterious and pagan aspects of the grounds: “because of the woman he [Anthony Ashe] has married, Rings cannot happen properly which is the life of our race. And our race has become impure. And I, who am true Ashe, am hungry and lonely and thwarted” (*AR* 109). This pointed reference to impurity indicates how the structured hierarchy of an aristocratic clan is tipped into turmoil and dissension through an exogamous alliance.

Butts’s narrative focus on a severely neglected daughter who seeks to reclaim her rightful inheritance affords a complex echo of Hardy’s *Tess*, but with a notable difference. Tess Durbeyfield is forever ex-

cluded from the power, patronage and privilege that her remote patrician forebears took for granted; Butts's heroines are serenely confident within their own conviction of dignified and hieratic descent. The aristocratic daughter's mystical feeling for "secret history" is expressed through ancestral memories of genesis, racial purity, a zealous commitment to auratic objects and eternal rhythms:

[s]ome time after the Religious Wars we left Norfolk, where we had lived since King John's time, and never seriously settled anywhere else. An eighteenth-century great-uncle had been Bishop of Ely, but from our ancestors we had inherited [...] possessions and the love of them [...] A rather small, slow-breeding race, red-haired, with excellent bodies and trigger-set nerves. Persistent stock, touched with imagination, not too patient of convention, and very angry with fools [...] profoundly sure of ourselves, for reasons we ourselves know best.

For reasons of a secret common to the blood. A secret concerned with time and very little with death, with what perhaps medieval philosophers called *aevum*, the link between time and eternity. (CC 15)

Again the stress falls on a "secret common to the blood." Rather than forging relationship across the impediments of caste and formal education that segregate her from others, Butts cherishes and verifies the ineluctability of difference, conserving the safety of the "hidden" (Wright, *Old Country* 97). The retrospectively sanctified site of Butts's birthplace is an anthropological "survival" preserving aesthetic and ethical imperatives long since discarded by the mainstream majority. In Butts's fiction this viewpoint operates both as a scathing cultural critique of a desiccated contemporary actuality and as a defiant affirmation of the blessed few who struggle to find refuge from town-bred invaders and the formally democratic rationality of the liberal marketplace. Jane Harrison averred in 1913 that the "country is always conservative, the natural stronghold of a landed aristocracy, with fixed traditions; the city with its closer contacts and consequent swifter changes and, above all, with its acquired, not inherited, wealth, tends towards democracy" (qtd. in *Old Country* 107). *The Crystal Cabinet* forcefully illustrates how a yearning for a racially distinct bucolic motherland underpins Butts's imaginative re-

invention of “Hardy’s country” as a realm of enchanted, irreplaceable specificity. Her female protagonists achieve what Hardy’s failing fertility figures such as Henchard and Winterborne cannot: the expulsion of foreign contaminants from “pure” Wessex territory.

However particularised questions of secret history might be in *The Crystal Cabinet*, Butts repeatedly signifies how her plight mirrors that of an entire dislocated generation burying its dead, reeling from a loss of “station”; whose hallowed political traditions are engulfed by what Butts thinks of as the corrosive cant of the masses. This is in stark contrast to E. M. Forster’s mature and measured political declarations in which he prioritises personal relations over pressing national claims; his muted praise of a democratic impulse that generously “admits variety” and “permits criticism” of ideological orthodoxies of all kinds (*Two Cheers* 70). Butts’s literary endeavour to resuscitate a “real England” becomes the salvaging of a social coterie whose most gifted members have been unfairly deprived of their time-honoured role and status.

VI

The key principle of Butts’s secret history is not simply a proto-feminist perception of a daughter exposed to the unfathomable mysteries of a numinous bounded locality. Nor is it a clear-cut dramatisation of the desperate battle between a landed patrician elect and a socially mobile, yet aesthetically stunted bourgeoisie. What Butts repeatedly returns to is the coding of English *family* as a peculiarly problematic social institution whose pact with the elemental terrain of Wessex is sullied by an impolitic or hasty marriage alliance, thus becoming a source of generational dismay (see *Old Country* 93-134). Thus the figure of a malign non-indigenous “pollutant,” such as Kralin, acquires a nightmarish tinge in Butts’s writing, which warns of “what will happen to the world if it decides to scrap its tradition & all conscious continuity with it” (*Journals* 325).

In contrast to Kralin, who, like Clarence in *Armed with Madness*, “has no known history behind him” (DFT 315), Scylla Taverner venerates the archives of what Butts elsewhere labels “Country History” (“Green” 64). Like the volumes which Butts claimed to have aided her mother to burn after her father’s death in *The Crystal Cabinet*, or like the Book of Ashe with its arcane inscriptions, or Felicity Taverner’s supposedly reprehensible “diaries” (DFT 259), Butts’s mystical rendering of Wessex has to be kept shrouded in obscurity at all costs, a hermetic “text” impervious to the communicative rationality of public debate (cf. Kemp). However much she wishes to reinvent south Dorset’s scenery as a national spiritual resource, she does not trust the transgressing “outsider” (AWM 115), emboldened by escalating domestic tourism, to manage it discreetly. And yet the need to enshrine the “secret history” becomes increasingly urgent in Butts’s oeuvre. In *Death of Felicity Taverner*, Scylla continues her function as priestly initiate from *Armed with Madness*, and puts her sharpened awareness to work by channelling energy into a wildly ambitious antiquarian venture, which tracks and ratifies the private lives of those who traversed her blessed locality:

Scylla’s passion [...] was—spending if necessary her life over it—to leave behind her the full chronicle of their part of England, tell its “historie” with the candour and curiosity, the research and imagination and what today might pass for credulity of a parish Herodotus. There was material there, for ten miles round about them, which had not been touched; not only manor rolls and church registers or the traditions which get themselves tourist-books. She had access to sources, histories of houses, histories of families, to memories that were like visions, to visions which seemed to have to do with memory. To her the people talked, the young as well as the old; and there were times when the trees and stones and turf were not dumb, and she had their speech [...] She did not know how she knew, Kilmeny’s daughter, only what it looked like—the speechless sight of it—her thread to the use of the historic imagination, Ariadne to no Minotaur in the country of the Sanc Grail. (DFT 299-300)

Scylla lavishly details the Taverner clan as a rich repository of national history. This region is a locus of Arthurian glamour as opposed

to the parched post-war metropolitan “Waste Land” (*DFT* 283). Butts elaborates the concept of a neo-feudal artistic ethos to celebrate an apotheosized Wessex over which her priestly female protagonists preside. Her delineation of “the country of the Sanc Grail” associated with Arthurian romance deliberately recalls the Cornish terrain around Tintagel that was at the very core of nineteenth-century thought about the past. Tintagel Castle may be partly comprehended as a monument to invention, particularly the literary skills of the Norman-Welsh cleric, Geoffrey of Monmouth, who began the long process of creating an Arthurian Tintagel in his twelfth-century “history” (Trezise 65). In 1824, long before Tennyson’s Arthurian Idylls were developed, the poet Parson Robert Stephen Hawker (1803-75) called the Holy Grail a “Sangraal” in an imitation of medieval language and conceived Arthur in a specifically Cornish context, renaming Tintagel “Dundagel.” He had, as Simon Trezise explains, some “success” in putting his mark on the legend in this regard (Trezise 64). Tennyson temporarily incorporated Hawker’s version of the name in his *Idylls* and Hardy quoted it in his Cornish novel, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873).

Butts’s investment in the Arthurian resonances of Wessex is first crafted in *Ashe of Rings* and its depiction of the complex historical strata underpinning the modern moment; the ancient mystical associations disclose a triumphantly national narrative:

It is said of this place [Badbury Rings] that in the time of Arthur, the legendary king of Britain, Morgan le Fay, an enchantress of that period, had dealings of an inconceivable nature there. Also that it was used by druid priests, and even before their era, as a place for holy and magical rites and ceremonies. (AR 6)

In Scylla’s distinctive historiography the Taverner family estate becomes the refined manifestation of the “true” past, in which aesthetic grace, coupled with an acute apprehension of culture and civility, are core principles in constellating a new Avalon. Scylla exploits a voluminous array of sources, both conventional and unorthodox, in order to “leave behind her the full chronicle of [the family’s] part of Eng-

land" (*DFT* 300).¹¹ Scylla's antiquarian undertaking invokes one of Hardy's favourite books: John Hutchins's *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset*, referred to mischievously as "the excellent county history" in his Napoleonic romance, *The Trumpet-Major* (1880).¹² Hutchins, in his Preface to the First Edition (June 1, 1773), saw his "native County of Dorset" as a major focus for antiquarian research: "the advantages of its situation, fertility of its soil, rare productions, the many remains of antiquity with which it abounds [...] well deserves an Historian" (Hutchins, *History of Dorset* 1: vii). There is an element of Hutchins's buoyant eclecticism—not restricting himself to one specific type of source material but dextrously combining literary and material remnants of bygone times—in Scylla's archive. Indeed this enterprise seems recalled by the eponymous protagonist's antiquarian undertaking in John Cowper Powys's West Country novel *Wolf Solent*, published the year after Butts's *Armed with Madness* in 1929:

"Our History will be an entirely new genre," Mr Urquhart was saying. "What I want to do is to isolate the particular portion of the earth's surface called 'Dorset'; as if it were possible to decipher there a palimpsest of successive strata, one inscribed below another, of human impression. Such impressions are for every being made and for every being obliterated in the ebb and flow of events; and the chronicle of them should be continuous, not episodic." (Powys 45)

Scylla's literary testimony is actually a more innovative and arresting demonstration of "the historic imagination" (*DFT* 300) than what Powys delineates in *Wolf Solent*. Scylla foregrounds women's domestic rituals and mystical promptings, especially the speech of "trees and stones and turf" (*DFT* 300). She can apprehend the "speechless sight" (*DFT* 300) of things that appear not to be there, assuming a double viewpoint which merges verifiable concrete evidence with flights of visionary trance: "she saw their land as an exfoliation, not happening in our kind of time, a becoming of the perfected" (*DFT* 300).

VII

A “becoming of the perfected” is what Butts’s secret history of Wessex discloses to those initiates who are attuned to its subliminal resonances. In order to dramatise this concept Butts is forced to smother what she applauds elsewhere in her work: the brilliant diversity and experimental brio of literary modernism. In her short story “Green,” a genuinely “English” consciousness registers intuitively the “[p]ropriety, simplicity, the routine of country-house life” (“Green” 64)—disavowing a bracing plurality of traditions in favour of a single, already completed “national narrative,” rooted in Arthurian imagery and savoured only through exclusive rites of remembrance (Garrity, *Step-Daughters* 207). Butts’s twenty-acre family estate Salterns, hallowed by the poignancy of childhood memory (“[t]he kind of house the Dorsetshire gentry lived in”) is central to her anthropological venture, embodying and invoking in her mind “the old, hardy, fragrant rural world” of “Dorset, the county where, if anywhere, the secret of England is implicit, concealed, yet continually giving out the stored forces of its genius” (CC 14). If from childhood Butts reacted to the comfortless grandeur of her native terrain through the mannered artifice of mythical allusion, it only served to accentuate the “precarious purity” of her birthplace.

“Purity” is the term that reverberates through all Butts’s references to a cryptic history of her homeland. In *Ashe of Rings* Butts indicates that Vanna displays “qualities and values pure” (AR 100). Butts’s rhapsodic evocation in *The Crystal Cabinet* of British prehistory as a “temenos,” an enclosure promising ancient purification, is measured against the tense, neurasthenic languor she imagines as the dubious inheritance of the lifelong urbanite:

[t]hat afternoon, I was received. Like any candidate for ancient initiations, accepted. Then in essence, but a process that time after time would be perfected in me. Rituals whose objects were knitting up and setting out, and the makings of correspondence, a translation which should be ever valid, between the seen and the unseen [...] Like any purified, I was put through cer-

tain paces; through certain objects, united to do their work, made from the roots of my nature to such refinements of sense-perceptions as I did not know that I possessed, made aware of those correspondences. (CC 266)

The goal of “this business of the unseen,” as she calls it, is to “sense a design” traceable to a pre-industrial English culture whose national ideal is rooted in the exiled daughter’s deep feelings for her venerable vicinity. When Hardy designates Tess Durbeyfield as a “Pure Woman,” ironically misapplying the terminology of Christian respectability in the provocative subtitle to his most famous novel, it is meant as a seditious and robust challenge to those repressive attitudes that Mary Butts would go on to attack in her own writing, such as those voiced by the National Vigilance Association, which appealed for sexual abstinence as a woman’s “patriotic” responsibility (Garrity, *Step-Daughters* 217-18).

Tess utilises the imagined female body as a trope for the resplendent Dorset downs, while Butts refuses to equate the “purity” of her natal habitation with female sexual restraint or timidity. She depicts priestly heroines whose behaviour debunks the stern regulation and “fetishizing” of “female chastity” (Garrity, *Step-Daughters* 220). Through Vanna Ashe, Scylla and Felicity, Butts demonstrates how libidinal gusto infuses a lofty spirituality. In *Armed with Madness* Scylla is specifically presented as a young woman familiar with the “scandalous” terms of “erotic conversation” (AWM 32), whose virginity is “hypothetical” (AWM 132). Felicity’s spirited insouciance is based on an implied sexual promiscuity, yet this “erotic expert” (DFT 26) paradoxically retains her stainless corporeal purity (Garrity, *Step-Daughters* 221). Through this descriptive strategy Butts is able to render femininity at once as recognisably human and wispily ethereal: Scylla is both “witch” and “bitch” (AWM 10), combining cosmopolitan panache and chthonic monstrosity. Her cousin Felicity Taverner also evinces a malevolent potential: this “[o]ther Felicity” is compared to “the crescent moon” showing you “its teeth” (DFT 171).

VIII

By 1932, when *Death of Felicity Taverner* was published, Butts's narrative persona was neither able to brook the socio-political ferment she witnessed around her, nor to sanction unreservedly any of the existing counter-movements. She becomes a panicked expatriate from an imaginary Wessex, stranded in a "hideously fabricated world, under conditions that man has never known before" (WH 277), conquered by "people of the towns" with unparalleled motorised access to the countryside, "of whom so large a proportion form our new kind of barbarian" (WH 291). In 1937, the year of her death, Butts still reserved undiminished venom for those she held responsible for despoiling a once mystical province. She evokes the specificity of an intimate locale, and the allure of its threatened associations, from an eerily distant standpoint. With resigned despondency she mourns a

place I shall never see again, that I can never bear to see. Now they have violated it, now that its body has been put to the uses men from cities do to such places as these. Now Salterns is no more than a white house pulled down and built onto, its back broken, split up. [...] The cars that allow these people to run about the earth, and wherever they go to impoverish it. Driving out and abusing or exploiting something that is not their own; that unconsciously they resent—and might do well to fear [...].

I shall never see it again. Except from a long way off. From Purbeck, from the top of Nine Barrow Down, it is still possible to stand, and see, on a clear day, the maggot-knot of dwellings that was once my home. (CC 20)

What is most striking about this embittered rendering of a violated bucolic enclave with its secret history of patrician kudos almost erased by rapacious "men from cities" is how it prompts Butts to indulge a xenophobic perspective whose rhetoric feeds off narrow, exploitative and anti-Semitic stereotypes. Her dependence on what Ian Patterson rightly terms "a scapegoating politics" ("Anarcho-imperialism" 189) actually works against the sentiment voiced so frequently in her journals and correspondence, which affirms modernity's cosmopolitan and progressive verve, an excitement captured by her intensive scru-

tiny of Jane Harrison's classical scholarship. This was "the profoundest study" of Butts's "adolescence—mystery cults from Thrace to Eleusis. I remembered *The Bacchae*. There are my formulae, there my words of power" (*Journals* 149). Virginia Woolf's brisk 1922 summary of *Ashe of Rings* as a "book about the Greeks and the Downs" (Woolf, *Diary* 2: 209) implies Butts's ability to seamlessly weave the grand sweep and the utterly localised into the imaginative fabric of her fiction. The irony here is that Butts's explicit desire to "re-enter greek religion & carry on where Jane Harrison left off" (*Journals* 346) is made to serve a humourless and uneasy concept of racial memory. This formulation not only stifles the sense of Englishness as irretrievably mixed, as a synthetic product of "numerous" historical influences (Young 89); but also negates the vivid panoramic vistas of ancient civilisation afforded by Harrison's comparative mythology.

Butts's fictional recasting of her "homeland" conveys a scorn for democracy that distinguishes the shrill nationalist rhetoric against which Winifred Holtby rails in *Women and a Changing Civilisation* (1934): "[t]he nation is defended as a traditional, instinctive unit, something to which men feel themselves bound by blood and history [...] Its appeal is to the emotion rather than the intellect" (Holtby 159, 163). The ecological and archaeological saga underpinning Butts's oeuvre, with its justification of a "great gentry" (*DFT* 196), Celtic mysticism and purgative ceremonial ultimately promotes an illiberal, even paranoid ideology that flatly refuses to grant the "stranger" access to the august annals of Wessex lore.

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NOTES

¹Today, outside the academy, Butts is best known for her frequently anthologised short story, "Speed the Plough" (1921), which portrays a soldier with shell shock and traumatic amnesia. For a trenchant appraisal of Butts's complex depiction of war trauma see Patterson, "Mary Butts." Part of this chapter, which assesses *Death of Felicity Taverner*, appears as "'The Plan Behind the Plan.'"

²There are signs of a move to bring Mary Butts's work to a much wider audience after decades of unwarranted obscurity. Carcanet Press spearheaded the British revival of interest in her oeuvre when they republished her memoir *The Crystal Cabinet* in 1988 and *With and Without Buttons and Other Stories* in 1991. Nathalie Blondel has authored a meticulously researched biography *Mary Butts: Scenes from the Life* (1998) and seen into print, or reprint, many of her novels through McPherson & Company. *Armed with Madness* was reissued by Penguin Modern Classics in 2001. Butts's short story about Paris in the 1920s, "The Master's Last Dancing," was published in *The New Yorker* 30 March 1998: 109-13. In 2001 Butts featured on the cover of the *Times Literary Supplement*, accompanied by Laura Marcus's article "Mysterious Mary Butts," *Times Literary Supplement* 24 August 2001: 3-4. A selection of Butts's short stories are included in Lawrence Rainey's anthology *Modernism* (777-811). For a detailed overview of the author's career and fictional procedures, see Gariépy. Jane Garrity's *Step-Daughters of England* (2003) remains the most thorough and incisive treatment of Mary Butts's obsession with mysticism, anthropology, race science, gender and national identity.

³As Scylla Taverner remarks in *Armed with Madness*, "this country was given its first human character in the late stone age" (13).

⁴Patrick Wright documents how the "country" was being brought to "a newly abstract focus" in the art of Nash and Sutherland; in the imagery of mass advertising publicity (Shell's country campaigns, London Transport); in music (Elgar, Delius, Grainger, Vaughan Williams) with its manipulation of bucolic association and, in some instances, of actual "folk melodies" (*Old Country* 93-99).

⁵In a 1923 letter to Glenway Wescott, Butts remarked of her birthplace: "It's my native place and I worship it." Qtd. in "Three Letters" (Wagstaff 145).

⁶The Cambridge Ritualists, also known as "the myth and ritual school," were an acclaimed group of classical scholars and philologists, including Jane Ellen Harrison, Gilbert Murray, Francis M. Cornford and Arthur Bernard Cook. They earned this title because of their shared research interest in explicating myth and early forms of classical drama as originating in ritual seasonal killings. Butts's fascination with the classical world explored by these pioneering Hellenists dates back to her childhood. Butts's father, according to *The Crystal Cabinet*, had been a compelling storyteller and with "the tang of his irony [...] the cycles of antique storytelling [...] pleased me as they please all children, the first pleasing that never wears out, only deepens and re-quickens, like [...] a hidden source of loveliness and power" (CC 17-19). In addition to numerous references to Sir James Frazer's comparative mythology throughout her writing, Butts composed a short story called "The Golden Bough." First published in her collection *Speed the Plough* (1923), it has been reprinted twice since: in *Antaeus* 13/14 (1974): 88-97, and in *That Kind of Women: Stories from the Left Bank and Beyond*, ed. Bronte Adams and Trudi Tate (London: Virago, 1991) 16-28. For Butts, Harrison's *Prolegomena* and *Themis* were "immortal words" (Blondel 44). See also Schlesier 213-17.

⁷In the wake of the pogroms that began in the Tsarist Empire in 1881, almost two million Jews from Byelorussia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine fled into exile. The hundred thousand or so who arrived in England formed, according to Sherman Kadish, the largest population to relocate to the United Kingdom before the Second World War.

⁸This crude construction of the Jewish “speculator” is reminiscent of what G. K. Chesterton termed “the brute powers of modernity” (Chesterton 23).

⁹In 1936 Butts noted her consternation when, during a discussion about fascism and communism, her friend, the Scottish writer Angus Davidson, “riled me [by] calling me ‘anti-Semite,’ when I hate cruelty as much as he, & only want—not to repeat pious platitudes about how wicked it all is, patting myself on the back for being English—but want to understand *how & why* it all happens; why people like ourselves can concur at least in things, actions, which make him & me sick” (*Journals*, 14 November 1936, 461-62). As Nathalie Blondel indicates, Davidson’s reproach must have been especially hurtful to Butts, given her letter to him two years earlier, after Hitler had become Chancellor of Germany, explaining that she and Gabriel Atkin had agreed to assist a Jewish refugee, who was living in Sennen, from the Nazis. See Butts to Angus Davidson, 4 February 1934, Butts Papers. In *The Crystal Cabinet*, completed shortly before her death, she stated her position when remarking, “how easily, as in Nazi Germany, the liberties we now take for granted may be lost” (CC 180).

¹⁰Mary Butts’s biographer Nathalie Blondel carefully explores the degree to which Butts’s own feelings of dislocation from Salterns, the family estate in Dorset, imbues the plot of *Ashe of Rings*. Mary Butts’s great-grandfather, Isaac Butts, had been the patron of William Blake, and her father gave her regular lessons in observation in the Blake Room, which contained a substantial number of his watercolours, engravings, portraits and sketches (*Scenes* xv). In 1905 her father died and nine months later the contents of the Blake Room were sold to a private collector. For Mary Butts the sale represented a grievous loss. Her mother remarried and Butts was sent away to boarding school in Scotland. Butts’s *Journals* and unpublished diaries indicate that she despised her mother for the remainder of her life.

¹¹Given that Scylla’s work-in-progress debunks any distinction between official and unofficial documents, uncovering facets of the past that fall beyond the margins of historical records, she epitomises the modernist fascination with prioritising “subjectivity and perspectivalism at the base of historical knowledge” (See Keane 59-77).

¹²A copy of the third edition of Hutchins’s tome was in Hardy’s Max Gate library.

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Reinventing Isabelle Eberhardt: Rereading Timberlake Wertenbaker's *New Anatomies*

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New Anatomies (1981), Timberlake Wertenbaker's first play to be published (in 1984), chronicles the life of Isabelle Eberhardt, the European traveller and writer who lived in Algeria cross-dressed as an Arab man at the turn of the last century. Intrigued, in her own words, "by the mental liberation in the simple physical act of cross-dressing," Wertenbaker was originally planning to write a play about three cross-dressing women (novelist George Sand, Japanese poet and courtesan Ono Kamachi, and Isabelle Eberhardt), but she became fascinated with Isabelle Eberhardt (Wertenbaker vii). Her chief interest in *New Anatomies*, then, lies in Eberhardt's cross-dressing and its relation to the formation of sexual, gendered, and also religious and national identity.¹ Focusing on the fluidity of gender represented by cross-dressing and the fluidity of national boundaries represented by Eberhardt's (re)invention of her own identity, Wertenbaker's play remakes the historical *fin-de-siècle* Isabelle Eberhardt as a feminist icon for the early 1980s. In his important study of historical drama, *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre*, Freddie Rokem notes that by "performing history a double or even triple time register is frequently created: the time of the events and the time the play was written and in some cases also [...] the later time when it was performed" (19). A contemporary reading of *New Anatomies*, critical or especially theatrical, then, needs to rethink Eberhardt's experiences yet again to take account of audiences' quite different perspective on and fascination with relations between Westerners and Arabs at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In this essay, by examining Wertenbaker's use of her documentary sources, I

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will explore the aesthetic and ethical implications of Isabelle Eberhardt's historicity for the dramatist herself and for her audiences, particularly for those audiences who first encounter *New Anatomies* at the "later time" of the early twenty-first century. *New Anatomies* illuminates both the pleasures of history plays and the problems in reception that may arise from their "triple time register."

Isabelle Eberhardt was the illegitimate daughter of a German-Russian woman, Nathalie de Moerder (*née* Eberhardt), wife of a Russian officer, who had run away to Geneva with her children and their tutor, Alexander Trophimowsky. Born in Geneva in 1877, Eberhardt had an unusual upbringing. Even in Geneva she engaged in conventionally male occupations and dressed as a boy. Trophimowsky, an anarchist and nihilist who converted to Islam, taught his daughter history, geography, philosophy, classical and modern European languages, and Arabic. Influenced by romantic nineteenth-century Orientalism, Eberhardt was always fascinated by Arab lands and the desert. From 1897 on she lived variously in Algeria, Switzerland, and France. In 1900 she met Slimène Ehnni, an Algerian soldier with French citizenship, whom she eventually married. Having converted to Islam, Eberhardt joined the Qadria brotherhood of Sufis. In 1901 she was the victim of an attempted murder by a member of the Tidjanya brotherhood, at odds with the Qadria and supporters of the French. She left Algeria but returned for her attacker's trial. Eberhardt helped to support herself by writing for the newspaper *El Akhbar*. In 1903 she met General Lyautey, who, unlike previous French authorities who had seen Eberhardt as a troublemaker, saw her potential as an agent of French colonialism and, in effect, a spy. In Lyautey Eberhardt thought she saw a kinder face of colonialism. In any case, her liaison with him allowed her to travel freely. Ill from malaria and possibly syphilis and having lost all of her teeth, Eberhardt died at the age of 27, ironically by drowning in the desert, in a flash flood at Aïn-Sefra in 1904. In addition to her essays, Eberhardt wrote stories based on her experiences and diaries.

Eberhardt's overriding quest in her short life was for personal fulfillment, including success as a writer. In her diary, she observes that "truly superior people are those preoccupied with the quest for better selves" (Eberhardt 9). Though her biography seems to place her at the center of today's concerns about colonialism and gender, Eberhardt herself was uninterested in the politics of either. She supported the Arabs against the French in a personal way but was not actively opposed to colonialism. Indeed, like many middle- or upper-class European women who were able to pursue unconventional, non-female careers in Africa and the Middle East, she had the freedom and privilege to travel and behave as she did precisely because she was European. Eberhardt was not interested in women, about whom she sometimes makes disparaging remarks in her writings. And she chose male dress not to make a statement about gender roles but for pragmatic reasons (Rice 210). Her dress enabled her to live among Arab men as an equal. Arab courtesy called upon Eberhardt's Arab friends to accept Isabelle—or Si Mahmoud Saadi (her Arab name)—for who she said she was, even though they knew she was a woman. Her friendships with Arab men were personal relationships in which she sought sexual fulfillment through her many liaisons and the spiritual wisdom of Sufi mysticism through her membership in the Qadria brotherhood.²

"Isabelle Eberhardt" is an elusive figure because her biography is so multi-layered. Her life story has been subjected to numerous reconstructions, beginning with her own quest to forge an identity for herself that transcended conventional national and gendered definitions and the constructions placed upon her by contemporaries. The reinvention of Isabelle Eberhardt began shortly after her death. Victor Barrucand, the editor of *El Akhbar* who had befriended Eberhardt, "coauthored" selections from her writings under the title *Dans l'ombre chaude de l'Islam* (1905). Barrucand's sensational, almost pornographic, additions rendered an exotic Isabelle who appealed to readers' Orientalist fantasies (Kobak 241; Clancy-Smith 72). Responding angrily to Barrucand, another admirer, René-Louis Doyen, offered a more hu-

manly troubled, less heroic interpretation of Eberhardt (Kobak 243). Her life was subsequently fictionalized in two plays, *L'Esclave errante* (1924) and *Isabelle d'Afrique* (1939), as well as mulled over by scholars. In the 1950s Cecily Mackworth published a biography, and Lesley Blanch offered a romantic portrait of Isabelle in a volume titled *The Wilder Shores of Love*. In the last thirty years, Isabelle Eberhardt has become a minor industry with the publication of her stories and diaries and a renewal of serious scholarly interest in her life. Some more recent commentators have seen her as a "protonationalist" or a "protofeminist" (Clancy-Smith 62), while others are more critical of her role in turn-of-the-century Algeria. Rana Kabbani is especially severe. Kabbani, writing in the late 1980s, regards Eberhardt as a kind of hippie who used the East for her own hedonistic pleasure and at the same time served patriarchy and colonialism. Julia Clancy-Smith, too, in the context of a volume of essays titled *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (1992), sees Eberhardt as a (perhaps unintentional) collaborator in the construction of French Algeria, as marginal to both French and Algerian culture, and indeed as "emblematic" of the "colonial encounter" (62).

Wertenbaker's play contributes a further complex layer to the image of Isabelle Eberhardt constructed by historians, or the received Isabelle, though it is probably more accurate to say that the dramatist creates the only Isabelle most members of her audience are likely to know. *New Anatomies* participates in the feminist revisions of history, biography, and myth that characterize many of the plays written by women in Britain in the last quarter of the twentieth century. More specifically, Wertenbaker's admiring dramatization and theatricalization of the life of Isabelle Eberhardt, written before the major post-colonial revisions of her protagonist's significance appeared, is very much a product of the early 1980s. Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, the editors of *Western Women and Imperialism*, note the renewal of colonial nostalgia since 1970 and "its efforts to coopt feminist consciousness and activism," apparent in depictions of "'heroic' white women in colonial settings" (2). Wertenbaker's Isabelle—"a woman in

love with adventure, on a quest" (Wertenbaker vii)—may be regarded as such a portrait. While Wertenbaker does not romanticize Eberhardt, her admiring stance towards and focus on her central character at the expense of the play's other characters, both Western and Arab, do raise concerns about the reception of the play at this particular "later time" of the early twenty-first century. Since any consideration of the play today (in a post-9/11 world) inevitably participates in contemporary discourse on Western attitudes to Muslim people and societies and on relations between East and West, *New Anatomies*, while having a lot to offer an imaginative director, illuminates the difficulties of negotiating historical changes in the circumstances of reception.

The point is not simply that Western audiences' attitudes to Arabs have changed, as changing attitudes towards Jews have informed the reception of *The Merchant of Venice* over the last 410 years. Rather the whole center of gravity of *New Anatomies* would seem to have shifted over a relatively brief period of time. Audiences today (I offer the example of my students), while not unsympathetic towards Isabelle's personal quest for freedom from the constraints of gender and nationality, are likely to be struck, first of all, by the historical Eberhardt's relative freedom to negotiate political and gender relations between West and East, to exercise sexual and religious liberty in a community of Islamic men. Contemporary audiences have only to read the newspapers to be aware of the dangers that anyone who attempted to do today what Eberhardt did at the turn of the last century are likely to face. Our continuing academic interest in the politics of gender and the body ("new anatomies"), in transculturation, or in Orientalism and the construction of the "Other" is not invalidated by these new political circumstances, but anyone trying to understand what happens when *New Anatomies* is read or performed today should realize that these concepts are tangential to the pressing concerns of many audience members and readers. Timberlake Wertenbaker could not have anticipated the new kind of interest that her play would generate, and certainly not the reasons for that interest, a mere twenty-five years after it was written. The play's problematic and only partial

accommodation of the renewed interest in East-West relations is, however, attributable to the choices Wertenbaker makes in handling her documentary sources as well as to the limitations of the sources themselves. But the problem that *New Anatomies* illustrates is also endemic to history plays generally.

The perspective of history plays is always contemporary, as critics of British historical drama D. Keith Peacock and Richard H. Palmer both emphasize. Palmer asserts that “[a]ssumptions regarding history prevalent at the time that it is written have always shaped historical drama” (10). Such assumptions, rather than the always vexed question of historical accuracy, I would argue, produce problems in the reception of history plays. Peacock and Palmer situate *New Anatomies* within the context of revisionist feminist history plays written after 1970 that were designed to point out the victimization of women by men and to question conventional gender roles.³ Even apart from the play’s lack of attention to the broader political context of Eberhardt’s adventures, an absence that has, I argue, become problematic in the twenty-first century, the contemporary perspective of *New Anatomies* is that of a (now outdated) 1970s version of feminism. This is not simply to criticize the play for being outmoded. Such a criticism would be as impertinent and uninteresting as it is obvious; and, in any case, there is much in the play that is still fascinating and still relevant. Rather, I wish to point out that it is precisely because history plays are written from the perspective of their own time that they are particularly vulnerable—more so than other kinds of drama or than non-dramatic historical literature—to changes in their future audiences’ understanding of their subject matter. For a play in performance always takes place “now”; it always appears, therefore, to be contemporary with its most recent audience. Unlike non-historical drama, a play has to negotiate, not two, but, as Rokem observes, three time periods. The negotiation of this third time period often involves some very specific adjustments in theatrical interpretation. An example is the radical politics often mapped onto Shakespeare’s history plays in contemporary performances. Plays such as *New Anatomies*, whose

historical perspectives are of recent vintage, present a more subtle problem. Because so much of their ideology still overlaps with our own, discrepancies (though they could not have been foreseen) are the more disquieting.

New Anatomies was commissioned by the Women's Theatre Group at a time when Wertenbaker needed "a supportive women's environment for her writing" (Aston 8). That context helps to explain the focus of the work and its all-female casting (Roth, "Opening" 95). In *New Anatomies* Wertenbaker imaginatively recreates or at times makes up select formative experiences in her protagonist's life. She constructs Isabelle as an oppositional figure in every society in which she appears: middle-class Swiss, French colonial, Parisian feminist, and to a lesser extent Muslim Arab. It is in highlighting her oppositional individuality that Wertenbaker is perhaps most successful in reinventing Isabelle Eberhardt. But Wertenbaker's focus on Eberhardt's contrary life experiences leads her to offer little more than stereotypes, even caricatures (though often quite entertaining ones), of most of the other characters. Wertenbaker's choice of episodes from Eberhardt's life, as well as her major omission (there is no mention of Isabelle's husband—the "great love of my life" [Eberhardt 42]) and major addition (the scene in the Parisian salon), testifies to her concern with the fluidity of gender that inspired her play in the first place. The Brechtian-Churchillian dramaturgy of *New Anatomies*—its episodic structure, interspersal of turn-of-the-century music hall songs, and cross-casting—performs Wertenbaker's exploration of the construction of gender. All of the speaking parts are played by five actresses. Except for the actress playing Isabelle and her Arab self, Si Mahmoud, each actress plays a Western woman, an Arab man, and a Western man. While this casting choice foregrounds the performance of gender quite nicely, it can too easily deny autonomy to the Arab characters (four men and a silent woman) by folding the performance of national identity into the performance of gender identity.

New Anatomies begins shortly before Isabelle Eberhardt's death at Aïn-Sefra. Isabelle, sick, toothless, and almost hairless, enters de-

manding a cigarette and a “fuck” (5).⁴ She begins to tell her story to Séverine, a French journalist. This opening scene precludes any romantic expectations the audience might have had about Eberhardt’s experiences in the desert and introduces the rest of the play as the story of her life narrated by Isabelle herself. When Séverine questions the accuracy of what Isabelle is saying, Isabelle warns her, “Séverine, it is a courtesy in this country not to interrupt or ask questions of the storyteller... . When I pause, you may praise Allah for having given my tongue such vivid modulations” (8). This warning metatheatrically informs the audience’s reception of the story Wertenbaker herself is telling. Like Séverine, the audience of *New Anatomies* is asked to respond to the play’s “vivid modulations” rather than being concerned with the literal verifiability of its staged events. Wertenbaker thus incorporates into her play from its beginning one of the chief theoretical questions we ask of historical plays: what (to borrow the subtitle of Herbert Lindenberger’s *Historical Drama*) is the relation of literature and reality? Isabelle effectively dismisses this question as irrelevant and impertinent.

In her introduction to the first volume of her collected plays, Wertenbaker herself mentions the relation of *New Anatomies* to historical reality to explain “where my plays come from” (Wertenbaker vii), or in other words as a guide to her creative process. Such source study has long been a standard form of literary criticism. But a more interesting question today, especially given the pervasive skepticism among literary theorists about the recoverability of the past, is why the relationship between the play and the historical reality on which it is based matters. I shall return to this question below. Suffice it to say here that the two questions—the way in which an audience’s changed perceptions of the historical subject may inflect a play’s reception in unexpected ways and the issue of the dramatist’s respect for the documentary record—are intricately related, certainly in the case of *New Anatomies*, and, I believe, of other history plays as well.

Scenes two and three of the first act of *New Anatomies* take place in Geneva and depict the young Isabelle’s romantic imagination, her

close, possibly erotic, relationship with her “*feminine*” (8) brother Antoine, with whom she has imaginary Oriental adventures (“At last the silence descends on the darkening dunes” [14-15]), and her conflict with her practical bourgeois sister, Natalie, who wants her to marry and settle down. In scene four Isabelle and Natalie are visiting Antoine and his pregnant wife, Jenny, in Algiers. Wertenbaker uses Isabelle’s brother and especially sister-in-law, with whom Isabelle actually stayed in Marseilles, to depict the conservative, racist French colonial community in Algeria. In this scene, Wertenbaker criticizes also the exploitation of both commercial Orientalism (Natalie takes advantage of Arab generosity to obtain cheap “oriental” clothing to sell in Geneva) and sexual Orientalism (Jenny, trying on an Arab veil, teases Antoine, “I’m in your harem. You’re the sheikh” [23]). Meanwhile, Isabelle slowly, ritualistically, dresses herself in a jellaba. In the following scene, a monologue, she symbolically becomes Si Mahmoud, claiming that she will no longer answer as a woman: only if a voice calls,

you, you there, who need vast spaces and ask for nothing but to move, you, alone, free, seeking peace and a home in the desert, who wish only to obey the strange ciphers of your fate—yes, then I will turn around, then I’ll answer: I am here: Si Mahmoud. (26)

In scene six Isabelle seeks wisdom from her Arab friends, Saleh and Bou Saadi, and has a run-in with Captain Soubiel, representing the French authorities.

Act two opens with a scene in a Parisian salon, in which most of the women are for various personal reasons cross-dressed as men: Séverine, for example, is a lesbian who cross-dresses in order to go into public places with her girlfriends without being harrassed; singer Verda Miles makes her living as a male impersonator. None of the women, however, identifies herself as a man as Isabelle does. Wertenbaker uses the exchanges among the women in the salon to reflect on cross-dressing, gender roles, Orientalism (with which the women are fashionably obsessed), representation, and identity. For example,

Lydia's French servant, wearing "real" Arabic clothes "copied from the *Arabian Nights*," is said to be more "convincing" than a "genuine" Arab servant in another household (34-35). In contrast to such posing, Isabelle has to assert her identity as an Arab man. When Verda assumes that Isabelle's Arab dress is a "costume," Isabelle informs her, "It's not a costume, it's my clothes" (37), and in response to Séverine's expression of sexual interest in her, Isabelle insists: "I'm not a woman. I'm Si Mahmoud. I like men. They like me. As a boy, I mean" (40). Though the Parisian scene is Wertebaker's invention, it has a historical basis in that in some circles cross-dressing was accepted in *fin de siècle* Paris and there was a vogue for appropriating disguises from other cultures; Isabelle visited Paris several times in 1900 (Clancy-Smith 66).

The remainder of *New Anatomies* takes place in Algeria. Scene two of the second act condenses Isabelle's initiation into the Qadria brotherhood and the Tidjani Muslim's attempt to murder her. Isabelle is thus seen to be oppressed by both French and Arab cultures, as Wertebaker emphasizes when in the next scene the would-be Murderer turns into the Judge presiding over his trial, which becomes, in effect, Isabelle's trial. "I'm afraid we must ask you to refrain from visiting places where your presence might cause an unpleasant incident" (48), the Judge tells Isabelle. In scene four Isabelle meets Lyautey, who allows her to go to Morocco as his agent. Wertebaker protects Isabelle from appearing complicit with the French but makes Séverine comment on the colonial aggression implicit in Lyautey's proceedings, as she refers to the "conquest" or at least the "digestion" of Morocco (54). Scene five picks up from the play's first scene in Aïn-Sefra. In the brief final scene Séverine, Lyautey, and the Judge discuss Isabelle's death. The Judge thinks she should be forgotten, but Lyautey has found Isabelle's journals. As the play ends, Séverine and Lyautey walk off "arm in arm" (57) to view and presumably promulgate/use Isabelle's story for their own purposes. Commentators, including Wertebaker, as she herself clearly realizes, have similarly appropriated Eberhardt's story ever since.

Arguably, the best scenes in *New Anatomies*, certainly the most vivid and crisply written, are those dealing with gender and cross-dressing, reflecting Wertenbaker's original interests. Isabelle herself often speaks wittily and ironically on the topic. For example, when Séverine tells her to "stop playing," Isabelle replies: "Why? Travelling show: examine here the monstrous folds of uncorseted nature, the pervert seed that would not flourish on European manure" (52). By contrast, dialogue intended to convey a sense of Isabelle's Muslim friends, especially their quotations from Arabic poetry, can seem forced: "The warrior was brave. Alas the beautiful young man fell. He shone like silver. Now he is in Paradise, far from all troubles" (27). From a twenty-first-century perspective, the scenes involving Isabelle's Arab friends are the least satisfactory, probably because they are incidental (merely exemplifying Isabelle's progress) to Wertenbaker's design, though they seem central now, and because Wertenbaker herself had no access to the concerns of the Arab characters except through what Eberhardt chose to write about them. In her diaries, Eberhardt writes poetic descriptions of desert landscapes and skyscapes and much on her own feelings and financial problems, but she provides no very vivid portraits of her Arab friends, not even of her husband, Slimène. This lack of documentation in the play's ultimate source may well have encouraged Wertenbaker's almost exclusive focus on Eberhardt and resulted in the secondary figures in *New Anatomies* ending up as conventional stereotypes.

About Eberhardt herself, by contrast, there is a great deal of documentation (both her diaries and the writings of other commentators about her) on which Wertenbaker could draw. The numerous reinventions of Isabelle Eberhardt, selectively outlined above, should remind us that a creative writer who chooses to work with historical material may have to make her way through multiple, often contradictory, sources and interpretations. Freddie Rokem refers to the historical past as "a chaotic and frequently unmediated reality" (10). But there is no such thing as unmediated historical reality (except for those who live through it). The author of any source available to the creative

writer has already given the historical subject matter a form and an interpretation.⁵ The writer, of course, constructs her own form and interpretation based on her interests and the concerns of the time in which she is writing, creating a further intervention between history and the audience's reception of it.

That Wertenbaker acquired a great deal of information about Isabelle Eberhardt is apparent from her play. That she selects, condenses, and imaginatively reinvents significant experiences from Eberhardt's life to construct an intensely individualistic protagonist through whom she can explore the fluidities of gender and cultural/national identity that interest her is equally apparent. But though Wertenbaker reshapes the major incidents depicted in *New Anatomies* for her own purposes, a great many small details from Eberhardt's biography nonetheless find their way into the play. In function, Séverine is probably based on Victor Barrucand, but though Wertenbaker feels free to remake her journalist character as a woman, she chooses to name her after a real person at least marginally connected with Eberhardt: Séverine was the feminist editor of *La Fronde*, to which Eberhardt submitted a story (Kobak 110). The story about a stolen mare that Saleh tells Isabelle derives from a story told to the historical Isabelle Eberhardt by another person in another place (Kobak 172). The dramatic Isabelle's colorful rejection of Captain Soubiel's advances—"I'd rather kiss the open mouth of a Maccabean corpse dead of the Asiatic cholera" (31)—echoes her historical counterpart's recorded response to a different official (Randau, qtd. in Rice 217). While Wertenbaker felt free to make major interventions in Eberhardt's story (such as omitting Slimène or inventing Séverine), at the same time she seems to have wished to weave as many historical details (however rearranged) from her sources as possible into her imaginative design.

Why was it important for Wertenbaker to incorporate into her play details pertaining to Eberhardt's life that audience members, most likely not familiar with Isabelle Eberhardt at all, would not be able to recognize? The simple answer is that such details are the imaginative counters with which Wertenbaker creates her play; and, too, they help

her to produce a somewhat authentic sense of time and place. The more complicated answer has to do with the particular uses, pleasures, and problems of historical drama.

When a play dramatizes the life of a well-known person (Shaw's *Julius Caesar* or *St. Joan*, Osborne's *Luther*, Gems's *Piaf*), it is inevitable that most audience members will engage in some form of comparison between the dramatic figure and the historical figure as he or she is otherwise, however vaguely, known to them.⁶ Such comparison informs the audience's understanding of the contemporary significance of the play they are watching and is an important part of the pleasure of reception of a historical play. The audience may take pleasure in finding resemblances between the dramatic figure and what they had expected or, more piquantly, in observing meaningful, perhaps surprising, differences (though careless or pointless discrepancies, if noted, can also cause annoyance). In the case of a less familiar figure like Isabelle Eberhardt, however, the dramatic character is likely the only one many audience members will know. It should not, then, matter if such a protagonist is "real" or not. Yet it obviously does. No critic writes about *New Anatomies* without mentioning, however briefly, its historical genesis. Theatre companies, too, are at pains to ensure that their audiences know that the play is based on a "real" person. The internet publicity blurb for a recent production of *New Anatomies* in Chicago, for example, began, "Based on a true story ...," and the theatre company provided an account of the historical Isabelle Eberhardt's life on sheets of paper hanging on the lobby wall.⁷

Theatre directors assume, at least, that knowing that a play is historical will enhance the audience's pleasure in watching it and very possibly that the public will be more willing to see a new or little-known play if they are told that it is based on something that really happened. Producers of television docudramas certainly make such assumptions. Docudramas, indeed, while sometimes based on last year's headlines, often, like *New Anatomies*, dramatize unusual events in the lives of people the audience has otherwise never heard of ("The Jane Smith Story"). The appeal of such dramas is partly voyeuristic,

inviting particularly *Schadenfreude*, pity, or admiration. Their appeal seems to be partly attributable also to a distrust of fiction. Where Aristotle, stressing logical development in his discussion of both tragedy and epic, preferred “[p]robable impossibilities” to “improbable possibilities” (68), contemporary audiences accept sensational improbabilities in the plot of a docudrama (that they might well find unacceptable in a fictional drama) because they know that such improbable events occurred in real life (and, again as Aristotle reminds us, “what has happened is obviously possible” [44]). Documentation (that is, that the events of the play have been or can be documented from the historical record), rather than plausibility or dramatic necessity, satisfies the audience of the play’s verisimilitude and, concomitantly, of its truth as an interpretation of human experience.

The importance of the historicity of *New Anatomies* to Wertebaker herself, to critics, to theatre directors, and, putatively, to audiences, can be explained to some extent as I have attempted to explain the appeal of docudramas. Part of the fascination of *New Anatomies* is that a historical woman at the turn of the last century “really” engaged in adventures that question many of our definitions of self and that would seem to make her our contemporary, or actually able to do things that we can no longer do, to engage in adventures that turn our contemporary media-based assumptions about the role of women in Islam, for example, on their head. If Wertebaker had made up an Isabelle Eberhardt without benefit of a historical prototype, the character might well have seemed improbable and her story dismissable as both an Orientalist and a feminist fantasy. Knowing that Isabelle is a historical figure prevents this kind of skepticism and frees the audience to reflect in an open-minded way on the relevance of her experiences to their own lives and to the politics of the twenty-first century.

Knowing that Isabelle is historical might also, however, lead audiences unable to make the comparison to forget that the Isabelle they are watching is first and foremost a dramatic character and to accept Wertebaker’s version of her life too uncritically. Docudramas, such as *Saving Jessica Lynch* (about the American soldier rescued from an

Iraqi hospital during the recent war), in fact, typically employ a realistic dramaturgy that encourages such uncritical acceptance of the verisimilitude of their content. Wertenbaker avoids this kind of dishonesty to a great extent by employing a Brechtian dramaturgy common to avant-garde political-historical plays of the late-twentieth century. The dramaturgy of *New Anatomies* ostends the performedness of the history the audience is watching (for example, the actors remain on stage throughout the play, changing costumes in front of the audience) and the attitude adopted towards it by both dramatist and cross-dressed actresses.⁸

Nonetheless, an ethical question remains. And it is a question that takes on political significance as well, given the changed climate of reception for Wertenbaker's play. Though Wertenbaker remains fairly faithful to many of the circumstances of Isabelle Eberhardt's life and obviously has great admiration for her protagonist, like all previous and subsequent commentators, she, unsurprisingly, remakes Isabelle's story for her own purposes. But in doing so, she distorts Eberhardt's life in ways that her audience will not be able to evaluate, as they might in the case of a well-known historical figure. (Perhaps, to offer another answer to a question I asked earlier in this essay, Wertenbaker's incorporation of so many apparently insignificant details from Eberhardt's biography is a form of compensation for all that she has changed and omitted.) Ironically, Wertenbaker includes in *New Anatomies* a critique of just such forms of exploitative reconstruction. She shows how Isabelle's personal quest for sexual and spiritual fulfillment is constructed as political behavior by both the French authorities in Algeria (whether they oppose or wish to use her) and also by the radical cross-dressed women in the Parisian salon, who assume that her Arab "clothes" are a "costume." Even more critically, Séverine, presented in the play as Isabelle's biographer and in some sense standing in, as Ryan Claycomb points out, for Wertenbaker the biographical dramatist, is dangerously eager to make use of Isabelle's journals (538). Her exit "*arm in arm*" (57) with the colonialist officer Lyautey at the end of the play reinforces the parallel between the two

forms of exploitation. Like Lyautey, the Parisian women, and in particular Séverine, Wertebaker, too, though she recognizes the dangers, appropriates Isabelle Eberhardt, politicizing what was to Eberhardt herself intensely personal (her cross-dressing as an Arab man). In doing so, Wertebaker creates a play that speaks to Western feminist and nationalist concerns of the 1980s but fails to address some of the things that mattered most to Si Mahmoud—and that matter again even more urgently to audiences viewing her life in the twenty-first century.

Obviously Wertebaker was not clairvoyant. One can write even historical plays only in terms of the time in which one is living. The relative flatness of the scenes involving Isabelle's conventionally stereotyped Muslim friends may well be more disturbing today than when the play was first performed. For if there is no such thing as unmediated history, equally there is no such thing as an unmediated play text. The text is mediated through successive performances. And in the case of a history play, the dramatist's chosen interpretation of historical events or of a historical character is mediated, too, by the audience's own knowledge and understanding of history that may over time transcend or at least vary from the dramatist's own at the time of writing the play. Such a change has certainly occurred in audiences' understanding of European-Arab (or American-Arab) relations since Wertebaker wrote *New Anatomies*.

The play's first production by the Women's Theatre Group in 1981 was fairly favorably received by critics. Though one reviewer found the desert scenes the least satisfactory in the play, commenting that "[t]he dislocation between the mind of that [Arab] world and the mind of western civilisation is both the core of the drama and its principal weakness" (Carne 513), her objection was primarily aesthetic. The desert scenes received mixed reviews in a revival of the play by Man in the Moon Theatre in London in 1990. One critic found that, despite the Arab characters' "spaghetti-Western accents," the visual and olfactory effects (herbal cigarettes) of the desert scenes created "a plausible and exotic mystery" (Wright 325); another critic,

less complimentary, complained that "the turbans and jellabiyas give an impression of a group of children let loose on a dressing up box" (Bayley 324). Both assessments suggest that the director's efforts to enliven Wertenbaker's Arabic scenes were patronizing though not a cause for political alarm. In Foreground Theatre's production of *New Anatomies* in Chicago in 2003 the Arabic scenes seemed, to me at least, embarrassingly bland. In this recent production the blandness represented not only an aesthetic failure, but a missed opportunity to address contemporary concerns about relations between Westerners and Arabs, even though such concerns are only incidental to Wertenbaker's play.

The problem for any contemporary production certainly begins with the stereotypes of Arab characters in the play text. In her own writing Eberhardt fails to document her friends in any detail, but Wertenbaker goes even further towards erasing them by omitting from her play Eberhardt's husband (even though marrying someone from another culture is one of the most obvious and common forms of transcultural accommodation) and by her use of cross-casting, which emphasizes that the Arab characters are chiefly props in Isabelle's story. It is, however, possible to imagine a production of *New Anatomies* that reinvents Isabelle's Muslim friends in a way that is more meaningful for the twenty-first century. Such a production might draw on additional documentary sources, either from Eberhardt's own day or from our own, in order to comment in the manner of Brecht on the play's depiction of East-West relations; or it might extend Wertenbaker's use of Brechtian theatrical conventions in more pluralistic ways. For example, Maya Roth suggests that "appropriations and erasures of Arabic culture" might be avoided in performance by employing "a multiracial, multi-ethnic cast, visibly *different* (women) performers performing racial, cultural, and gendered crossings" ("Opening" 85).⁹ Such a production might take its cue from Bou Saadi's caricature of the European stereotype of himself. "It's best to pretend you're stupid and keep laughing" (33), he explains to Isabelle. Like Isabelle, Bou Saadi performs an identity. But where Isabelle seeks to perform what

she takes to be her true self, Bou Saadi's comic performance is an act of political resistance. The different kinds of performance in Wertebaker's play suggest a way forward for future theatrical reinventions of *New Anatomies* and, perhaps, a new way back to the historical Isabelle Eberhardt.

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NOTES

¹Carlson notes Wertebaker's concern in all of her plays with "the problems and triumphs of living in a world of porous cultures and shifting identities" (134).

²Information about Isabelle Eberhardt is taken from Clancy-Smith, Hamdy, Kobak, and Rice.

³Peacock, *Radical Stages* 164-67; Palmer, *The Contemporary British History Play* 152-54.

⁴Quotations from *New Anatomies* are taken from *Timberlake Wertebaker: Plays 1*.

⁵Neither Lindenberger nor Rokem in their important books on historical drama deal with the question of multiple sources available to the dramatist and the reconstructions that have already taken place in the historiography. Rokem does note that historiographical works may be governed by formal considerations of their own (12).

⁶Lindenberger comments on the "common-sense" approach to historical drama: "our first notion in reflecting about a history play is not to view it as an imaginative construct in its own right but to ask how it deals with its historical materials" (3). He does not, however, consider the case of a little-known protagonist whom the audience cannot compare with her historical counterpart.

⁷*New Anatomies* was performed by Foreground Theatre Company at the Athenaeum Theatre, Chicago, 3-31 May 2003. [Unfortunately, the website containing the publicity blurb on <<http://entertainment.metromix.chicagotribune.com>> is no longer available.]

⁸Both Lindenberger (17-18) and Rokem (8-9) note the importance of Brechtian dramaturgy for contemporary historical drama. See also Reinelt, *After Brecht: British Epic Theater*. Claycomb comments that "many staged feminist biographies show the process of representing a life while they present the life itself" (525-26).

⁹The first production of *New Anatomies* by the Women's Theatre Group at the Edinburgh Festival in 1981 gestured towards this kind of multiculturalism in that Isabelle was played by an Anglo-Arab actress (Roth, "Engaging Cultural Translations" 160).

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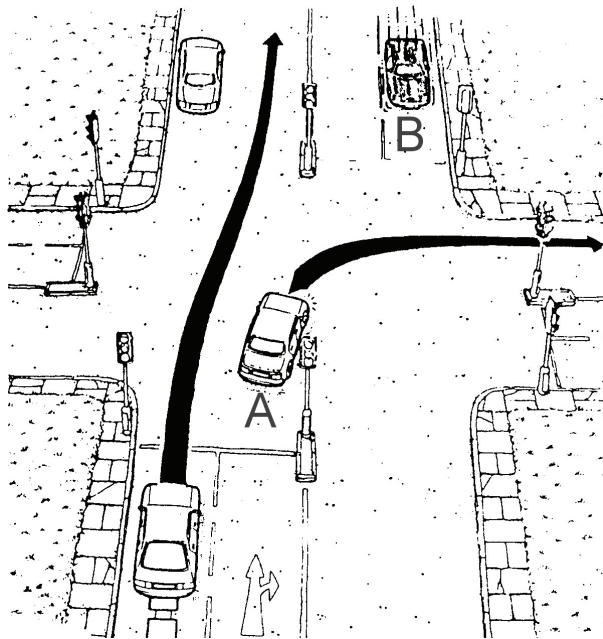
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