Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate



Volume 20 (2010/2011) Numbers 2-3
Waxmann Münster / New York

Editors' Note

For almost ten years, Uli Fries has been a member of our editorial staff. For more than seven years, he has made this journal his very own concern. As our secretary, he has been responsible for the layout and print production of *Connotations*; in addition, he has developed the new design of our online home (www.connotations.de and www.connotations-society.org) and has been in charge of making available online all the articles and responses that have been published in the first 20 years of *Connotations*. In particular, he has found ways of making it quite easy for our readers to pursue the threads of critical debate (see the "Debates," "Topics" and "Authors" sections on our webpage). Since his position has been partly funded by a temporary grant from the German Research Foundation (DFG), he has understandably accepted the recent offer of a permanent position in the administration of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Tübingen. My co-editors and I have vastly enjoyed working together with him, appreciating alike his reliability, ideas and communicative skills and would like to thank him for all those years of unflagging support.

Matthias Bauer
For the Editors of *Connotations*

Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate

Published by *Connotations: Society for Critical Debate*

EDITORS

Inge Leimberg (Münster), Matthias Bauer (Tübingen),
Burkhard Niederhoff (Bochum) and Angelika Zirker (Tübingen)

Secretary: Martina Bross
Editorial Assistants: Lena Moser and Elena Rein

EDITORIAL ADDRESS

Professor Matthias Bauer, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen,
Department of English, Wilhelmstr. 50, 72074 Tübingen, Germany
Email: editors@connotations.de http://www.connotations.de

EDITORIAL BOARD

M. H. Abrams, Cornell University
Åke Bergvall, University of Karlstad
Christiane Bimberg, Universität Dortmund
John Russell Brown, Middlesex University
Ursula Brumm, Freie Universität Berlin
Paul Budra, Simon Fraser University
Lothar Černý, Fachhochschule Köln
Eleanor Cook, University of Toronto
Elizabeth Story Donno, The Huntington Library
William E. Engel, The University of the South
Bernd Engler, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen
A. C. Hamilton, Queen's University, Ontario
John P. Hermann, University of Alabama
John Hollander, Yale University
Lothar Hönnighausen, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn
Arthur F. Kinney, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Frances M. Malpezzi, Arkansas State University
J. Hillis Miller, University of California, Irvine
Martin Procházka, Charles University, Prague
Dale B. J. Randall, Duke University
Alan Rudrum, Simon Fraser University
John M. Steadman, The Huntington Library
Michael Steppat, Universität Bayreuth
Leona Toker, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
John Whalen-Bridge, National University of Singapore
Joseph Wiesenfarth, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Waxmann Münster / New York



Connotations wants to encourage scholarly communication in the field of English Literature (from the Middle English period to the present), as well as American and other Literatures in English. It focuses on the semantic and stylistic energy of the language of literature in a historical perspective and aims to represent different approaches.
Each issue consists of articles and a forum for discussion. The forum presents, for instance, research in progress, critical hypotheses, responses to articles published in *Connotations* and elsewhere, as well as to recent books. As a rule, contributions will be published within six 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.

Connotations is published three times a year. Private subscribers are welcome to join the *Connotations Society for Critical Debate*. Members receive the journal as well as invitations to the *Connotations* symposia. The suggested annual fee is € 40; reduced rate (e.g. for students) € 20. Please write to: *Connotations*, Professor Matthias Bauer, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Department of English, Wilhelmstr. 50, 72074 Tübingen, Germany. Email: editors@connotations.de. Libraries and other institutional subscribers write to: Waxmann Verlag, Steinfurter Str. 555, 48159 Münster, Germany; or: Waxmann Publishing Co., P.O. Box 1318, New York, NY 10028, U.S.A. Email: connotations@waxmann.com. Annual subscriptions are in Europe € 40, in the U.S. and all other countries $ 60, including postage.
All contributions are also made freely available on the internet (http://www.connotations.de).

© Waxmann Verlag GmbH, Münster/New York 2011
(Unless indicated otherwise in individual articles)
All Rights Reserved
Printed in Germany
ISSN 0939-5482

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

Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate

Volume 20 (2010/2011) Numbers 2-3

Roads Not Taken (II)

"The road to happiness":
Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*
ANGELIKA ZIRKER 131

The Change of Hemingway's
Literary Style in the 1930s:
A Response to Silvia Ammary
KURT MÜLLER 155

Unlived Lives in Kazuo Ishiguro's
The Remains of the Day and
Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love*
BURKHARD NIEDERHOFF 164

Other ARTICLES and RESPONSES

Spenser as Prometheus:
A Response to Maik Goth
ANDREW HADFIELD 189

Spenser's Monsters:
A Response to Maik Goth
JOHN WATKINS 201

Elf-Fashioning Revisited:
A Response to Maik Goth
MATTHEW WOODCOCK 210

An Answer to Edmund Miller and
Anita Gilman Sherman
MARGRET FETZER 221

Worcestershirewards:
Wodehouse and the Baroque
LAWRENCE DUGAN 228

Lilies and an Olive Branch:
On Robert Lowell's *Lord Weary's Castle*
FRANK J. KEARFUL 248

Ambiguity and Ethics:
Fictions of Governance
in Geoffrey Hill's *Mercian Hymns*
RAJEEV S. PATKE 253

"The Jungles of International Bureaucracy":
Criminality and Detection in
Eric Ambler's *The Siege of the Villa Lipp*
ROBERT LANCE SNYDER 272

Written Sounds and Spoken Letters, but All in Print:
An Answer to Bärbel Höttges
HANNES BERGTHALLER 289

Can the Indigent Speak? Poverty Studies,
the Postcolonial and the Global Appeal of
Q & A and *The White Tiger*
BARBARA KORTE 293

Connotations
Vol. 20.2-3 (2010/2011)

"The road to happiness": Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*[*1]

ANGELIKA ZIRKER

At first glance, Jane Austen's novels seem to be fairly similar: at the end, after many trials and tribulations, the heroine finds the husband who suits her perfectly, according to the plot structure of comedy.[2] The obstacles she meets make her realize what she really wants in life, and she is eventually able to find happiness and fulfilment. But this configuration seems to undergo a characteristic variation in *Mansfield Park* (1814). At its centre, we find a heroine who is very consistent and does not need to change,[3] and who also knows whom she loves and would like to marry from very early on in the novel, namely her cousin Edmund Bertram.[4] But as Edmund falls in love with Mary Crawford, and Henry Crawford with Fanny, an alternative outcome suddenly seems possible despite the fact that, in Jane Austen's works, it seems generally out of the question that a heroine marry a 'minor' character—both in the sense of character constellations within the novel *and* in the sense of moral inferiority. The possibility of Fanny marrying Henry Crawford is, at least for some time, not entirely excluded from the novel: at some point he begins to improve and to develop into a man that might eventually deserve Fanny.[5] *Mansfield Park* therefore offers a plot structure that is seemingly paradoxical: it presents a heroine whose obvious constancy is juxtaposed with the suggestion of an alternative outcome that we do not find in any other of Jane Austen's novels.

The point that Henry might indeed marry Fanny is repeatedly emphasised in the course of the novel and linked to the imagery of find-

[*]For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debzirker02023.htm>.

ing the "road to happiness" (III.17.437).[6] For Henry Crawford, this road would have been to follow his development into a character who deserves to marry the heroine, which would have meant a new way of life. The topic of 'Roads Not Taken' in *Mansfield Park* therefore concerns both the options of the characters, with regard to their choices and decisions, and also of the author. In the last chapter, the narrator dwells on Henry Crawford's lost chance of marrying Fanny Price and paints a sketch of what might have been had Henry not taken the wrong road and eloped with Maria Rushworth, née Bertram. It is quite striking that in this very last chapter, a "way of happiness" (433) is mentioned, referring to Henry Crawford and his departing from this way. Towards the end of the chapter the narrator then comments on Edmund Bertram, who eventually finds himself on the "road to happiness" (437).[7]

As Henry Crawford leaves the path which would have led him towards happiness, the question is asked by critics whether he was ever meant to follow it at all?[8] Did the narrator, and for that matter Jane Austen, never really consider having Fanny agree to marry Henry Crawford—and likewise Edmund Bertram wed Mary Crawford? Does the novel itself offer any other possibility that would, however, be in accordance with the presentation of characters as well as with its overall setup? For the greater part of the action, Fanny thinks that she cannot marry Henry Crawford because she does not really love him and because they are so unlike each other. But then Henry Crawford starts to behave differently and becomes a more likeable character, and the narrator even comments on the possibility of a marriage between Henry and Fanny at the end of the novel. Therefore, the decision to have the novel end the way it does seems to be based mainly on the concepts of similarity and dissimilarity of character as well as of the stability of character. Henry has a choice between two ways of living: had he been constant in his improvement, he would have been able to marry the heroine and thus to determine her fate as well. On a narratological level, he is an open character, with traits both good and bad. For a long time in the course of the novel, its

ending is likewise open and depends entirely on his behaviour; but then he takes a turn away from this improvement, and events lead to the ending as we know it. Had he behaved differently, not only the ending would have had to be rewritten but the whole story of the romance between him and Fanny as well as between Edmund and Mary. Fanny, on the other hand, can choose either way; she can marry him or Edmund. It is Henry's choice of a particular way of life when he elopes with Maria Rushworth, and it is this eventual choice that does not conform to Fanny's character. Yet the choice as such is there in the novel.

Just before the novel closes, the narrator thus explicitly dwells on Henry Crawford's lost chance of marrying Fanny Price and paints a sketch of what might have been had Henry Crawford not taken the wrong road:

> Henry Crawford, ruined by early independence and bad domestic example, indulged in the freaks of a cold-blooded vanity a little too long. Once it had, by an opening undesigned and unmerited, led him into the way of happiness. Could he have been satisfied with the conquest of one amiable woman's affection, could he have found sufficient exultation in overcoming the reluctance, in working himself into the esteem and tenderness of Fanny Price, there would have been every probability of success and felicity for him. His affection had already done something. Her influence over him, had already given him some influence over her. Would he have deserved more, there can be no doubt that more would have been obtained; especially when that marriage had taken place, which would have given him the assistance of her conscience in subduing her first inclination, and brought them very often together. Would he have persevered, and uprightly, Fanny must have been his reward—and a reward very voluntarily bestowed—within a reasonable period from Edmund's marrying Mary. (III.17.433-34)

The narrator explicitly states: "Would he have persevered […] Fanny must have been his reward," and thus emphasises that there had been a real chance of Fanny and Henry getting married. What happened? This question can be answered with the help of several key concepts of the novel that are mentioned in the passage: independence, vanity, desert, i.e. merit, and perseverance.

Already the first sentence of this passage tells us a lot about Henry's character: the forces determining his eventual choice are both outward and inward; he is "ruined," but he is also the agent of this ruin as he himself "indulged in the freaks of cold-blooded vanity," which is dubbed as his "selfish vanity" (II.2.180) elsewhere in the novel, "too long." We also learn that basically his "early independence," a "bad domestic example"—referring to his uncle the Admiral who lives with his mistress—and his "cold-blooded vanity" are the reasons for his downfall. This passage recalls an earlier comment on Henry's attitude towards the Bertram sisters: "thoughtless and selfish from prosperity and bad example, he would not look beyond the present moment" (I.12.108). "Prosperity and bad example" are juxtaposed, similarly to the way in which the word "independence" combines the concepts of both money and moral value.[9]

The next sentence starts with the words: "Once it had." "It" refers to Henry Crawford's vanity, and it was this very vanity that, paradoxically, "by an opening undesigned and unmerited, led him into the way of happiness." This passage alludes to his earlier plan to make Fanny fall in love with him: "I cannot be satisfied without Fanny Price, without making a small hole in Fanny Price's heart" (II.6.212). His sister sees through him and recognizes that Fanny's attraction lies mainly in her being "the only girl in company for [him] to notice" (213) now that her two cousins are away, that his interest stems from nothing but his "own idleness and folly" (213). His vanity is at the beginning of his plan, but, he very soon falls seriously in love with her. Henry confides in his sister again, and we therefore can vouch for his sincerity when he says: "I am fairly caught. You know with what idle designs I began—but this is the end of them. I have (I flatter myself) made no inconsiderable progress in her affections; but my own are entirely fixed" (II.12.269). He subsequently proposes to Fanny: what began as an "idle" plan has now become his dearest wish.

This way of happiness, into which he is led by his vanity, is, however, both "undesigned" and "unmerited." He had neither thought

that it would lead to his falling in love, nor did he 'merit' this: "Would he have *deserved* more." Finding the right partner in life seems to evolve around these concepts of merit and desert.[10] A few more passages from the novel will illustrate this.

When Henry tells Mary that he has fallen in love with Fanny, her reaction is: "I approve your choice from my soul, and foresee your happiness as heartily as I wish and desire it. You will have a sweet little wife; all gratitude and devotion. Exactly what you deserve" (II.12.269).[11] Fanny thinks about Mary that "she might love, but she did not deserve Edmund" (III.6.340). In both cases, the one who says "deserve" evinces her personal attitude towards the person in question. When Henry tries to persuade Fanny that she should marry him, he says:

> "My conduct shall speak for me—absence, distance, time shall speak for me.—*They* shall prove, that as far as you can be deserved by any body, I do deserve you. You are infinitely my superior in merit; all *that* I know.—You have qualities which I had not before supposed to exist in such a degree in any human creature. You have some touches of the angel in you, beyond what—not merely beyond what one sees, because one never sees any thing like it—but beyond what one fancies might be. But still I am not frightened. It is not by equality of merit that you can be won. That is out of the question. It is he who sees and worships your merit the strongest, who loves you the most devotedly, that has the best right to a return. There I build my confidence. By that right I do and will deserve you." (III.3.318)

Henry repeats the words "merit" and "deserve" several times in this passage and sees the difference in "merit" between himself and Fanny. What he counts on, however, is his love and his devotion; he thinks that his constancy will finally make him deserve her, and we know that he fails by his own standards in the end. What is more: he falls victim to a misconception when he states that "[i]t is not by equality of merit that you can be won." This statement can be read in two ways: either he knows or assumes that he will never be her equal in merit and thereby also misjudges the meaning of this concept for her[12]; or what he says here testifies to his (newly found) modesty. And although one might say that Edmund likewise is not Fanny's equal

when it comes to moral worth, she loves Edmund especially because of his goodness and, according to her own standards and feelings, she has to marry a man who is her equal, not in the sense of money but of character.

When the narrator in the last chapter says, "Would he have deserved more," and when she explicitly states "[c]ould he have been satisfied with the conquest of one amiable woman's affection," we can see that Henry has not been constant and that, led by his vanity, he "worship[ped]" himself more "devotedly" than her; hence, he does not deserve her. True merit and true love are integral parts of the happiness of a married couple, as we can see at the end of the novel: "With so much true merit and true love, and no want of fortune and friends, the happiness of the married cousins must appear as secure as earthly happiness can be" (III.17.439).[13]

What then follows in the narrator's comment in the final chapter is a description of the road Henry has not taken, of where the "way of happiness" might have led him, had he behaved differently. There are a number of sentences starting with "could" and "would," and these modal verbs are repeated several times.[14] They all refer to conditions which might have been but can no longer be fulfilled; the consequence lies in the present time and also has effects on the future: Henry Crawford has foregone the possibility of "success and felicity." The problem is based especially on one of his character traits to which his sister had alluded earlier: he cannot be content with "the conquest of one amiable woman's affection." Fanny's dislike of Henry is actually grounded on this flaw: after the visit at Sotherton, Fanny thinks ill of him, and later, when she talks openly to Edmund about her lack of affection for Henry Crawford, she declares:

> "I must say […] that I cannot approve of his character. I have not thought well of him from the time of the play. I then saw him behaving, as it appeared to me, so very improperly and unfeelingly, I may speak of it now because it is all over—so improperly by poor Mr. Rushworth, not seeming to care how he exposed or hurt him, and paying attentions to my cousin Maria, which—in short, at the time of the play, I received an impression which will

> never be got over. […] I am persuaded that he does not think as he ought, on serious subjects." (III.4.324-25)

Actually, earlier in the course of events, Edmund himself had recognized the "way to Fanny's heart. She was not to be won by all that gallantry and wit, and good nature together, could do; or at least, she would not be won by them nearly so soon, without the assistance of sentiment and feeling, and seriousness on serious subjects" (III.3.315). Henry lacks seriousness "on serious subjects" generally and also in his perseverance of trying to win Fanny's affection: "could he have found sufficient exultation in overcoming the reluctance, in working himself in the esteem and tenderness of Fanny Price." The loss of this "esteem" is chiefly based on two incidents: the excursion to Sotherton and the theatricals at Mansfield Park during Sir Bertram's absence.[15]

Sotherton is the place where, within the "wilderness" adjacent to the park, several seductions take place. Firstly, Mary Crawford wants to talk Edmund out of taking orders—and her misjudging his vocation is one of the reasons why, in Fanny's eyes, she does "not deserve Edmund" (340):

> "I am just as much surprised now as I was at first that you should intend to take orders. You really are fit for something better. Come, do change your mind. It is not too late. Go into the law."
> "Go into the law! with as much ease as I was told to go into this wilderness."
> "Now you are going to say something about law being the worst wilderness of the two, but I forestall you; remember I have forestalled you." (88)

Mary doubts Edmund's choice of profession and wants him to change his mind. That he then picks up the imagery of the wilderness is reminiscent of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (apart from the Bible), when Christian states at the beginning that he "walked through the wilderness of this world" (11):

> "Oh! you do not consider how much we have wound about. We have taken such a very serpentine course; and the wood itself must be half a mile long in a straight line, for we have never seen the end of it yet, since we left the first great path."

> "But if you remember, before we left that first great path, we saw directly to the end of it. We looked down the whole vista, and saw it closed by iron gates, and it could not have been more than a furlong in length."
> "Oh! I know nothing of your furlongs, but I am sure it is a very long wood; and that we have been winding in and out ever since we came into it; and therefore when I say that we have walked a mile in it, I must speak within compass." (88-89)

The imagery in this passage is linked to the semantic field of seduction: Mary treads on a "serpentine course" with Edmund and Fanny; she is the seductress, which becomes even more emphasised as the narrator describes her "lawlessness" (88) immediately before this part of the dialogue sets in. They have left the "great path" under her guidance and have seen the "iron gates" that border on the park.[16] Mary literally (and metaphorically) tries to lead Edmund astray from his chosen path. But this is not the only attempted 'seduction' to take place during the outing.

It is the very iron gate that, shortly afterwards, stands in the way of Maria, Mr. Rushworth and Henry Crawford. While Rushworth 'rushes' back to the house to get the key, Henry persuades Maria to step around the gate, ignoring Fanny's pleading to wait for the key[17]:

> "But unluckily that iron gate, that ha-ha, give me a feeling of restraint and hardship. I cannot get out, as the starling said." As she spoke, and it was with expression, she walked to the gate; he followed her. "Mr. Rushworth is so long fetching this key!"
> "And for the world you would not get out without the key and without Mr. Rushworth's authority and protection, or I think you might with little difficulty pass round the edge of the gate, here, with my assistance; I think it might be done, if you really wished to be more at large, and could allow yourself to think it not prohibited." (93)

The scene prefigures their "final adultery—also a bypassing of the 'iron' codes of society" (Tanner 455). Maria here shows how little she respects her husband-to-be, a behaviour which is even more foregrounded during the theatricals and which culminates in her eventual elopement with her 'seducer.'

The ensuing theatrical project at Mansfield Park brings Henry and Maria even closer together. But the performance of *Lovers' Vows* is also a first instance of Henry Crawford being confronted with having to make a choice when the roles for the theatricals are being cast.[18] Both Maria and Julia Bertram want to be as close as possible to him and are therefore "determined to play the tragic role of Agatha" (Dingley 306), the mother of Frederick, the role played by Henry Crawford. He eventually tries to persuade Julia to play the comic role of Amelia: "Tragedy may be your choice, but it will certainly appear that comedy chuses [sic] *you*" (I.14.127). It has been suggested that this incident has a pictorial source, namely Sir Joshua Reynolds's portrait of *Garrick Between Tragedy and Comedy* (1761) with the famous actor drawn between the two genres. This portrayal has been read as "a variant upon the classical theme of the Choice of Hercules, in which the mythic hero makes the morally correct decision between personifications of Virtue and Pleasure" (Dingley 307).[19] Henry Crawford's manoeuvre to redirect Julia's choice of role, however, is unsuccessful and results in Julia's refusal to participate in the theatricals at all.[20]

It is because of his behaviour during the theatricals of *Lovers' Vows* that Fanny thinks even more ill of him than before. The narrator makes the point that "[s]he did not like him as a man, but must admit him to be the best actor" (I.18.153), and although Fanny admits his great talents in role-playing, it is this very ability of his that she shuns.[21] Fanny watches him on-stage as well as off stage—after all, she is 'only' an observer of the events—and becomes more determined in her rejection of Henry Crawford's behaviour and character.

This begins to change only very much later in the novel, when he first helps her brother William with his long-sought-for promotion (II.13) and during Henry's visit in Portsmouth. She sees that he makes an effort at improving his character, and she starts to warm towards him. The narrator makes very explicit—both in terms of form and content—that Henry Crawford, after all, really might have been successful in his pursuit of Fanny. The process was mutual, and "[h]is affection had already done something: Her influence over him, had

already given him some influence over her." The repetition of "influence" and the parallel syntax indicate that; furthermore, during his visit in Portsmouth she finds it

> pleasing to hear him speak so properly [about his performing his duties as a landowner]; here, he had been acting as he ought to do. […] She was willing to allow he might have more good qualities than she had been wont to suppose. She began to feel the possibility of his turning out well at last. (III.10.41)

He is now no longer an actor, but he is "acting as he ought to do" and no longer "idle" and playing a part.

There is still hope, both for his further improvement and his growing influence over her: A narratorial statement and two chapter endings during his Portsmouth visit make that clear. When Henry and Fanny take a walk after church, the narrator explains:

> The loveliness of the day, and of the view, he felt like herself. They often stopt with the same sentiment and taste, leaning against the wall, some minutes, to look and admire; and considering he was not Edmund, Fanny could not but allow that he was sufficiently open to the charms of nature, and very well able to express his admiration. (III.11.380)

They react to the landscape and the "loveliness of the day" in a similar way, and they share "sentiment and taste." And although Edmund still is (and always will be) Fanny's standard, she has to allow even Henry Crawford some openness for beauty in nature.

And it is thus that she comes to the conclusion that he has indeed changed:

> she was quite persuaded of his being astonishingly more gentle, and regardful of others, than formerly. And if in little things, must it not be so in great? So anxious for her health and comfort, so very feeling as he now expressed himself, and really seemed, might not it be fairly supposed, that he would not much longer persevere in a pursuit so distressing to her? (III.11.384)

Fanny hopes that his improvement will make him stop distressing her, i.e. she hopes that he will no longer court her; still, she realises a change in his character that she would have thought impossible. This

is even more evident at the end of the subsequent chapter when she thinks about having to leave Susan behind on her return to Mansfield:

> Were *she* likely to have a home to invite her to, what a blessing it would be!—And had it been possible for her to return Mr. Crawford's regard, the probability of his being very far from objecting to such a measure, would have been the greatest increase of all her own comforts. She thought he was really good-tempered, and could fancy his entering into a plan of that sort most pleasantly. (III.12.389)

Here, she goes so far as to think how he would act if they were married, and before her mind's eye, his action is based on his being "good-tempered." Fanny seems to soften in her judgment of him. It all seems to have depended on Henry's perseverance, and this is made explicit not only here but from the very moment his courtship of Fanny begins.

His lack of seriousness and perseverance make him lose Fanny, who would have been his "reward" (434), his prize, and there is certainly a pun on her name (Price) intended here. Fanny, as Mary Crawford recognizes in a "retrospect of what might have been," "would have fixed him, she would have made him happy for ever" (III.16.423). That the reward would have been "very voluntarily bestowed" is a further indication at "every probability of success" as to his marrying Fanny. "Fanny *must* have been his reward." This is not only Henry's wish (expressed in free indirect discourse), even more so in the case of a marriage between Edmund and Mary Crawford, but can also be read as a statement by the narrator who evidently pronounces a sort of obligation that she herself feels as to her narrative.

This seems to be the right place to discuss a few critical voices who claim that the novel does not "yield any conclusive evidence that Henry Crawford was ever meant to be anything but a villain: on the contrary, it is plain throughout that his final piece of folly is wholly consonant with the character that Jane Austen has drawn of him" (Wright 130). Nina Auerbach questions Henry's seriousness in regard to his love for Fanny: "Everything about Henry Crawford, that mobile and consummate actor, calls his sincerity into question. He stages his

love scenes before select audiences, all carefully chosen to put the greatest possible pressure on Fanny, only to humiliate her flamboyantly by his elopement with Maria once she has begun to respond. As Fanny and we know, his passion for her repeats more grandly his pattern of behaviour with her silly cousins, so that only the most sentimentally credulous reader could find this new performance credible" (31).

This borders on a genuine misreading if one considers the novel as a whole. The narrator makes a very explicit statement that the possibility of a union between Henry Crawford and Fanny is not excluded at all. Such a union, however, also depends very much on the behaviour of Maria Bertram, i.e., Mrs. Rushworth when Henry is in London after his Portsmouth visit and on his going there at all:

> Had he done as he intended, and as he knew he ought, by going down to Everingham after his return from Portsmouth, he might have been deciding his own happy destiny. But he was pressed to stay for Mrs. Fraser's party; his staying was made of flattering consequence, and he was to meet Mrs. Rushworth there. Curiosity and vanity were both engaged, and the temptation of *immediate pleasure* was too strong for a mind unused to make any sacrifice to right; he resolved to defer his Norfolk journey, resolved that writing should answer the purpose of it, or that its purpose was unimportant—and staid. He saw Mrs. Rushworth, was received by her with a coldness which ought to have been repulsive, and have established apparent indifference between them for ever; but he was mortified, he could not bear to be thrown off by the woman whose smiles had been so wholly at his command; he must exert himself to subdue so proud a display of resentment; it was anger on Fanny's account; he must get the better of it, and make Mrs. Rushworth Maria Bertram again in her treatment of himself. (III.17.434; my emphasis)

The paragraph pursues the mode of the conditional and also of obligation: "Had he done as he intended, and he knew he ought." He acts against his intention and his better knowledge and is, we can conclude, led mainly by his vanity again; unfortunately, he forgets his improved self. The passage also refers back to the preceding part in mentioning his "happy destiny." He neglects his duty because the prospect of "immediate pleasure" is stronger than his perseverance—once again this alludes to the earlier passage: "thoughtless and selfish

from prosperity and bad example, he would not look beyond the *present moment*" (I.12.108; my emphasis). He is being tempted but the decision to be tempted and to follow his whim is his entirely: he does not act and react as he "ought to." Yet, all the time, he does have a choice, and the road not taken is the one that would have secured his happiness.[22] That this is due to a weakness of character becomes particularly evident when the narrator emphasises that "the temptation […] was too strong for a mind unused to make any sacrifice to right." His self-love destroys everything.

In Portsmouth he had talked to Fanny about taking better care of his Norfolk estate, but when in London he first "resolved to defer his Norfolk journey," which is followed by the resolution that writing will do: the words "resolved" and "purpose" are both repeated twice in this sentence. He neglects his duty in declaring a purpose "unimportant" which was so important to Fanny; she had "thought he *would* go without delay" (III.12.387). The character who throughout the narrative has been represented as the master of "improvement" is not able to improve himself constantly.

Instead of leaving, he stays; we find a repetition of "stay" in this passage: "he was pressed to stay," "his staying was made of flattering consequence," and he "staid." As with the use of the word "improvement" this implicates another case of irony: although Henry Crawford stays, he is anything but 'staid' when he wavers from Fanny.[23]

A different purpose now replaces the one of travelling to Everingham: it is actually his sister who persuaded him to stay, as we learn from a letter by Mary to Fanny. When Fanny reflects on the content of this letter, she thinks: "That Miss Crawford should endeavour to secure a meeting between him and Mrs. Rushworth, was all in her worst line of conduct, and grossly unkind and ill-judged; but she hoped *he* would not be actuated by any such degrading curiosity" (III.12.387). Fanny still hopes for his better conduct from her experiencing his change during his visit in Portsmouth. However, he stays to meet Maria out of his very "curiosity and vanity [which] were both

engaged." He not only wants to know how she reacts when she sees him, but also wants his vanity satisfied. This, however, does not succeed, which is another reason for his downfall: his actual reaction when they meet is juxtaposed with how he should, "ought to," have reacted; her "coldness" should have resulted in his "indifference."[24] But his vanity gets the upper hand, which is emphasised by the repetition of "he": "*he* was mortified, *he* could not bear to be thrown off by the woman whose smiles had been so wholly at *his* command; *he* must exert himself to subdue so proud a display of resentment."

We can see that the use of "must" here is different from the one we encountered earlier: it is now not the narrator who feels an obligation but Henry himself in this clause of free indirect discourse. The narrative focalisation has shifted to him, and we participate in his thoughts and feelings. This emphasises the strength of his vanity as he feels that "he must exert himself […] [and] get the better of it"[25]; he feels obliged, forced to do something about this coldness and wants to transform the cold Mrs. Rushworth back into the infatuated Maria Bertram again—and the mentioning of her maiden name indicates that he ignores her being married (which he does also later, in their elopement); at the same time, this mirrors his own turning backwards to his earlier, un-improved self.[26] Finally he is successful: "He was entangled by his own vanity, with as little excuse of love as possible, and without the smallest inconstancy of mind towards her cousin" (434), and nevertheless he understands that Fanny must never know of this. But

> he went off with her at last, because he could not help it, regretting Fanny, even at the moment, but regretting her infinitely more, when all the bustle of the intrigue was over, and a very few months had taught him, by the force of contrast, to place a yet higher value on the sweetness of her temper, the purity of her mind, the excellence of her principles. […] we may fairly consider a man of sense, like Henry Crawford, to be providing for himself no small portion of vexation and regret—vexation that must rise sometimes to self-reproach, and regret to wretchedness—in having so requited hospitality, so injured family peace, so forfeited his best, most estimable and endeared acquaintance, and so lost the woman whom he had rationally, as well as passionately loved. (435)

"Regret" is the first and foremost emotion he now feels, regret and vexation.[27] He realises that he truly loved Fanny, whereas he treated Maria "with as little excuse of love as possible." And he also realises that the outcome of his behaviour is entirely his own fault. The "force of contrast" represents a juxtaposition of what he has and what he ought to have chosen.

This "force of contrast" is another guiding principle in the novel. Henry at last recognizes the "sweetness of her [Fanny's] temper, the purity of her mind, the excellence of her principles." Maria, on the other hand, follows only selfish motives, which can also be seen in her marrying Rushworth although she knows that she cannot love him. She follows her vanity, her pride and mercenary considerations—and this is actually a "road not taken" by Maria, namely when her father suggests that she break off the engagement with Rushworth (II.3.186)[28]:

> her mind became cool enough to seek all the comfort that pride and self-revenge could give. Henry Crawford had destroyed her happiness, but he should not know that he had done it; he should not destroy her credit, her appearance, her prosperity too. He should not have to think of her as pining in the retirement of Mansfield for *him*, rejecting Sotherton and London, independence and splendour for *his* sake. Independence was more needful than ever; the want of it at Mansfield more sensibly felt. She was less and less able to endure the restraint which her father imposed. The liberty which his absence had given was now become absolutely necessary. She must escape from him and Mansfield as soon as possible, and find consolation in fortune and consequence, bustle and the world, for a wounded spirit. (187-88)

Mary seeks "comfort" in "pride and self-revenge": she eventually marries Rushworth out of sheer spite, to 'punish' Henry Crawford, not seeing that, in consenting to a marriage that is not based on love and mutual respect, she punishes herself as she becomes utterly unhappy and eventually leaves her husband.

This passage also makes evident that Maria acts upon her vanity. She belongs to a whole group of characters who share this trait,[29] and this is one of the aspects that make Fanny and Henry so very unlike

each other. When Fanny talks to Edmund about her refusal of Henry Crawford, she states that "it would have been the extreme of vanity to be forming expectations on Mr. Crawford" (III.4.327)[30]: she thinks herself beneath him as to her social standing and probably also her whole appearance, knowing that he found her cousin Maria, who is so very different from herself, attractive. Fanny thus rejects the very notion of being vain,[31] while others indulge in their vanity.

She is everything that Henry Crawford is not—which he recognizes, and which makes her all the more attractive to him. During her conversation with Edmund, Fanny mentions this very dissimilarity as one of the reasons for her refusal (and we note that this is previous to Henry's Portsmouth visit):

> "We are so totally unlike," said Fanny, avoiding a direct answer [to his remark that she "must be sorry for [her] indifference"], "we are so very, very different in all our inclinations and ways, that I consider it as quite impossible we should ever be tolerably happy together, even if I could like him. There never were two people more dissimilar. We have not one taste in common. We should be miserable." (III.4.323)

Because of this dissimilarity in "inclinations and ways" she thinks happiness is impossible between them. But Edmund thinks quite the contrary—and he has to, considering his own infatuation with Mary Crawford:

> "You are mistaken, Fanny. The dissimilarity is not so strong. You are quite enough alike. You have tastes in common. You have moral and literary tastes in common. You have both warm hearts and benevolent feelings; and Fanny, who that heard him read, and saw you listen to Shakespeare the other night, will think you unfitted as companions? You forget yourself: there is a decided difference in your tempers, I allow. He is lively, you are serious; but so much the better; his spirits will support yours. It is your disposition to be easily dejected, and to fancy difficulties greater than they are. His cheerfulness will counteract this. He sees difficulties no where; and his pleasantness and gaiety will be a constant support to you. Your being so far unlike, Fanny, does not in the smallest degree make against the probability of your happiness together: do not imagine it. I am myself convinced that it is rather a favourable circumstance. I am perfectly persuaded that the tempers had better be unlike; I mean unlike in the flow of the spirits, in the

> manners, in the inclination for much or little company, in the propensity to talk or to be silent, to be grave or to be gay. Some opposition here is, I am thoroughly convinced, friendly to matrimonial happiness. I exclude extremes of course; and a very close resemblance in all those points would be the likeliest way to produce an extreme. A counteraction, gentle and continual, is the best safeguard of manners and conduct." (III.4.323)

Fanny feels "Miss Crawford's power […] returning" in this speech. She does not seem to believe in the power of counteraction but more in the likeness of disposition to secure happiness. What Edmund here presents as a virtue, she regards as a vice.

It is only in the final chapter that Edmund changes his opinion; eventually the unhappy account of Henry Crawford's 'Road Not Taken' is followed by Edmund's choice of the "road of happiness":

> Having once set out, and felt that he had done so, on this road to happiness, there was nothing on the side of prudence to stop him or make his progress slow; no doubts of her deserving, no fears from opposition of taste, no need of drawing new hopes of happiness from dissimilarity of temper. Her mind, disposition, opinions, and habits wanted no half concealment, no self deception on the present, no reliance on future improvement. (III.17.437)

After his disappointment in Mary Crawford, who could not understand his moral evaluation of her brother's elopement, Edmund has learnt to appreciate similarity in judgment and disposition and reverses his earlier opinion. After his final conversation and quarrel with Mary, she calls him back: "I resisted […]. I have since—sometimes—for a moment—regretted that I did not go back; but I know I was right" (III.16.426). He chooses not to go back as he recognizes that he has been "deceived" (426) in her and that he "had never understood her before" (425). It is this lack of understanding as well as the "force of contrast" that make him recognize Fanny's value and redirect him towards her. He chooses the "road to happiness" and marries her after a short detour which seems to have been necessary to make him recognize the right way.[32]

Yet, another outcome would have been possible. To have Henry Crawford marry Fanny (and Edmund Mary Crawford) is a road the author might have taken. But she chooses a different road and has the

cousins marry, although, at the beginning of the novel, this love relationship was out of the question. As soon as the possibility of Fanny moving to Mansfield Park is mentioned, Sir Thomas thinks "of his own four children—of his two sons—of cousins in love, &c" (I.1.7). His objections, however, are done away with by Mrs. Norris.[33] That eventually "there were no difficulties […], no drawback of poverty or parent" (III.17.437) draws the reader's attention to the comedy ending of the novel:

> It was a match which Sir Thomas's wishes had even forestalled. Sick of ambitious and mercenary connections, prizing more and more the sterling good of principle and temper, and chiefly anxious to bind by the strongest securities all that remained to him of domestic felicity, he had pondered with genuine satisfaction on the more than possibility of the two young friends finding their mutual consolation in each other for all that had occurred of disappointment to either […]. (III.17.437-38)

Sir Thomas has learned to "prize" the right things: Fanny is this 'Price' of "principle and temper" that represents the security of "domestic felicity" to everyone around her. Everybody is "restored […] to tolerable comfort,"[34] and it turns out that Fanny Price, the heroine, is simply not determined to marry a minor character—minor in terms of moral value, however, not necessarily in terms of character constellation. Although she does at some point begin to consider marriage to a man she does not love spontaneously but has some qualities that make him appear more agreeable, such as money and intellect as well as his love for her, she turns out to be different from Charlotte Lucas or Jane Fairfax, who will spend the rest of her life being the paragon for her husband, Frank Churchill.[35] She is to have a partner in life who is her equal and whom she can marry for love, and for love only.

Eberhard Karls Universität
Tübingen

NOTES

[1]This is a revised version of a paper presented at the 10th International *Connotations* Symposium "Roads Not Taken" in Freudenstadt (August 2-6, 2009). I would like to thank Matthias Bauer, Inge Leimberg and Burkhard Niederhoff as well as the participants of the symposium for their critical and helpful comments.

[2]Cf. Černý 81: "Die Beobachtung, daß Jane Austen am Ende ihrer Romane die Protagonisten belohnt oder beschenkt, ist vorwiegend als Moment der komödienhaften Handlungsstruktur betrachtet worden" (81).—One might say that *Mansfield Park* also follows the pattern of fairy tales: the dependent and poor relative marries the rich son of the family (cf. Nabokov 9-10; Tanner 442).

[3]This stability has often been a point of criticism, especially regarding Fanny Price; see, e.g., Auerbach and Wright.—"Die Hindernisse, die in Unkenntnis, Eitelkeit, Egozentrik liegen, werden schließlich überwunden, so dass der geläuterte Charakter am Ende zu sich selbst findet, nachdem er sich im Spiegel des anderen überhaupt erst richtig erkannt hat" (Černý 81). Černý mainly refers to the character of Anne Elliot who does not change in the course of the novel (see n4); this, however, is a trait that she shares with Fanny Price. Fanny is the moral centrepiece and "touchstone" (Banfield 21) in the novel—everybody around her needs "improvement," one of the central concepts of *Mansfield Park*.

[4]Another case in point is Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* (first published in 1818), who is also unwavering, consistent in her affections, and who does not regret her decision not to marry Captain Wentworth earlier in her life. She then also decides against marrying Mr. Elliot because he does not deserve her and who eventually turns out to be a bad character. From the beginning, she is somehow 'meant to' marry Captain Wentworth and, despite her stability in character, has to undergo some trials and tribulations to achieve that end. It is particularly in this respect that she differs from Fanny Price.

[5]I therefore hesitate to agree with Inge Leimberg, who writes that Fanny cannot marry Henry Crawford *because* he is a minor character (and not a romantic hero like Edmund): "Fanny Price, als Heldin [ist] eben nicht dazu ausersehen, Mr. Crawford zu heiraten" ("Diktat der Wirklichkeit" 319). In my opinion, Henry does indeed have the potential to become a romantic hero but foregoes this opportunity through his wrong choices, as will be pointed out below.

[6]All quotations refer to the Penguin classics edition of the novel.

[7]The overall destination of the characters seems to be "happiness," which is mentioned 46 times in the course of the novel, mainly in the context of courtship and marriage.

[8]For critics who deem the marriage between Fanny Price and Henry Crawford impossible see, e.g., Leimberg, "Diktat der Wirklichkeit" 319; Auerbach 31; Banfield 16. Those who argue in favour of their marriage include Wright 130; Nabokov 49; Kaye-Smith and Stern 49; Cecil 19. See also below.

[9]Cf. Leimberg who elaborates on this notion of the term "independence" as a fitting image for the overlap of morals and economy: "Jane Austen […] gebraucht

auch gern den Ausdruck 'independence,' der gleichzeitig mit dem pekuniären auch einen sozialen und moralischen Wert bezeichnet […] und der insofern eine passende Chiffre darstellt für Überschneidungen auf den Gebieten von Moral, Sozietät und Ökonomie, von Liebe und Geld" ("Humble Independence" 395).

[10]Both terms, "merit" and "desert," are ambiguous. See *OED* "desert" *n.*[1]: "Deserving: the becoming worthy of recompense, i.e. of reward or punishment, according to the good or ill of character or conduct; worthiness of recompense, merit or demerit"; "merit, *n.*": "I. †2. The condition or fact of deserving reward or punishment"; "II. †5. That which is deserved or has been earned, whether good or evil; due reward or punishment." These denotations of merit are now obsolete but were still common in the eighteenth century. The effect of this ambiguity is that these terms may receive a profoundly ironic note, depending on who uses them, as shall become obvious below.

[11]Cf. also Edmund's comment: "He has chosen his partner, indeed, with rare felicity. He will make you happy, Fanny, I know he will; but you will make him every thing" (III.4.325).

[12]Fanny never mentions the concept of "merit," probably because of its religious connotations; but she refers to 'desert' when she thinks that Mary does "not deserve Edmund."

[13]In this comment, the narrator draws a clear distinction between "true merit" and illusory deserts; on the ambiguity of these terms see n10.

[14]"Could" is repeated twice; "would" five times. Perkins speaks of "precautionary modal devices" (n.p.).

[15]Although, as Wright points out, she "disapproves of him from the very beginning […]: she sees him flirt overtly with Maria Bertram, whose engagement to James Rushworth is a matter of common knowledge" (127), her dislike is confirmed and hardened by these incidents.

[16]When Christian sets out on his pilgrimage, he also comes to the wicket-gate and has to pass through it; he is warned by Good Will of the "turnings […]or windings" and the "crooked" ways (27); and he is almost led astray by By-ends (87-90). Černý points to a further analogy, namely with *Paradise Lost* (92-93), especially IV.131-37: "So on he fares, and to the border comes, / Of Eden, where delicious Paradise, / Now nearer, Crowns with her enclosure green, / As with a rural mound the champain head / Of a steep wilderness, whose hairie sides / With thicket overgrown, grottesque and wilde, / Access deni'd"; see also II.943 and IX.942, and the mention of "serpent error" in VII.302..

[17]Černý refers to the allegorical readings of this scene by A. Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate* (25) and to Tanner's "Introduction" (455-56).

[18]See Burlin and Dingley.

[19]Dingley goes on: "However, […] Garrick is not, unlike his antique prototype, choosing between the two women, for although 'his head is turned toward Tragedy, his smile shows that his thoughts are on Comedy.' And such equivocation is fully appropriate, for Garrick's greatness as an actor consists very largely in his

ability to play both comic and tragic roles with equal virtuosity" (307). See also Burlin for other examples of the topos in contemporary fiction and for her reading of *Mansfield Park* in this context: "The novel's hero, Edmund Bertram, is Hercules choosing between the heroine, Fanny Price, the goddess of Virtue, and her rival, Mary Crawford, the goddess of Pleasure or Vice. The villain or cad, Henry Crawford, a superb actor who can perform Garrick's best roles, is Reynolds's Hercules, choosing between Fanny's two cousins, Julia Bertram as Comedy and Maria Bertram as Tragedy. But he is also Shaftesbury's Hercules, choosing between Virtue (Fanny) and Vice (Maria)" (Burlin 73). Burlin here refers to Shaftesbury's *A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules, according to Prodicus, Lib. II* (London, 1718).—For another depiction of the topos see, e.g., Paolo Veronese's *The Choice between Virtue and Vice* (The Frick Collection, New York).

[20]Julia thus becomes one of the "roads not taken" by Henry Crawford, although this choice would have been the fulfilment of her aunt Norris's wishes.

[21]"The point is […] that these talents [in role-playing] stray out of the theatre and into real life: off stage he is 'at treacherous play' with the feelings of Julia and Maria" (Tanner 457).

[22]Hilary P. Dannenberg comments on this as a "counterfactual path" in *Mansfield Park* and "maps the one actual and two virtual courses of events created by embedded counterfactual speculations in the closing chapters […]. In the actual course of events, Edmund eventually marries Fanny; in a counterfactual constructed by Mary Crawford, Fanny accepts Henry's proposal of marriage, which in turn leads to the marriage of Edmund and Mary; in a counterfactual constructed by the narrator herself, the deviation from actuality comes later [in III.17] and centers on Henry's not remaining in London to flirt and then elope with Mrs. Rushworth" (68). See also her 'map' of "actual and counterfactual paths of time in Austen's *Mansfield Park*" (69; fig. 4).

[23]Another reading might be that he stays what he has always been and does *not* improve.

[24]Henry Crawford is eventually seduced by Mrs. Rushworth's "coldness which ought to have been repulsive" mainly *because* it is directed against him; she is not cold because she loves her husband but for the reason that Henry wounded her spirit.

[25]This statement also contains some irony as to the notion of getting "better" and of improvement.

[26]See, e.g., Cecil's commentary on Henry's character: "Henry Crawford comes to life as a sympathetic character; and under the pressure of his personality the plot takes a turn, of which the only logical conclusion is his marriage with the heroine, Fanny. […] In the last three chapters she [Jane Austen] violently wrenches the story back into its original course: but only at the cost of making Henry act in a manner wholly inconsistent with the rest of the character" (19).

[27]This notion of "regret" is one of the major differences between *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*: whereas Henry regrets his choice, such a pang is not felt by Anne Elliot because she know that, at the time, hers was the right decision. When she

reflects her past choice of not marrying Wentworth, she tells him: "I have been thinking over the past, and trying impartially to judge of the right and wrong, I mean with regard to myself; and I must believe that I was right, much as I suffered from it, that I was perfectly right in being guided by the friend whom you will love better than you do now. […] I was right in submitting to her, and that if I had done otherwise, I should have suffered more in continuing the engagement that I did even in giving it up, because I should have suffered in my conscience" (248). The road chosen by Anne is the right one because she followed her conscience as a guiding instance; cf. Černý 84-85. See also Niederhoff's essay "Unlived Lives in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love*" in this volume (185n5).

[28]"Sir Thomas resolved to speak seriously to her. Advantageous as would be the alliance, and long standing and public as was the engagement, her happiness must not be sacrificed to it. […] With solemn kindness Sir Thomas addressed her; told her his fears, inquired into her wishes, entreated her to be open and sincere, and assured her that every inconvenience should be braved, and the connection entirely given up, if she felt herself unhappy in the prospect of it. He would act for her and release her. Maria had a moment's struggle as she listened, and only a moment's: when her father ceased, she was able to give her answer immediately, decidedly, and with no apparent agitation. She thanked him for his great attention, his paternal kindness, but he was quite mistaken in supposing she had the smallest desire of breaking through her engagement, or was sensible of any change of opinion or inclination since her forming it. She had the highest esteem for Mr. Rushworth's character and disposition, and could not have a doubt of her happiness with him" (186-87). Again, everything turns around "happiness."

[29]It is attributed to Mary Crawford—Mary's "selfishness and vanity" (III.14); "Mary had enough of vanity, ambition, love, and disappointment" (III.17)—and Maria Bertram—"Their [the sisters'] vanity was in such good order" (I.4); Maria's "vanity and pride" when they approach Sotherton (I.8)—twice in the course of events, and to Henry Crawford eight times, cf. I.12; II.2, III.2 (twice), III.14; III.15; III.17 (twice).—This passage also illustrates the damaging influence of "independence" on characters.

[30]"Fanny's quiet assertion of her right of refusal when she is pressurized to marry the man whom she dislikes is presented as a rebellion not against the *order* of her social environment but against its *disorder*: the rural gentry is implicitly criticized when it seems to be giving up its ideal of companionate marriage for the sake of socio-economic alliances or marriages of conveniences" (Toker 95).

[31]Likewise Edmund's "vanity was not of a strength to fight long against reason" (III.16.426). His reason is important; cf. Shaftesbury's notion of the importance of reason when it comes to making the right choice (7).—Austen here plays on the ambiguity of the word "vanity"; cf. *OED* "vanity" 1.a and 3.a.

[32]"Bei Jane Austen ertragen die […] Vorbildfiguren ihren Lebensweg nicht nur, sondern erkennen vor allem die 'krummen Wege' der Providenz als Bedingung für das gute Ende" (Černý 90).—Interestingly, it is not the heroine who develops

in the course of this novel, but it is Edmund who has to find himself and to learn what he really wants.

[33]"You are thinking of your sons—but do not you know that of all things upon earth *that* is the least likely to happen; brought up, as they would be, always together like brothers and sisters? It is morally impossible. […] It is, in fact, the only sure way of providing against the connection. Suppose her a pretty girl, and seen by Tom or Edmund for the first time seven years hence, and I dare say there would be mischief. The very idea of her having been suffered to grow up at a distance from us all in poverty and neglect, would be enough to make either of the dear sweet-tempered boys in love with her. But breed her up with them from this time […], and she will never be more to either than a sister" (I.1.8).

[34]At the very beginning of the last chapter, the narrator formulates her objective: "Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore every body, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort, and to have done with all the rest" (429).

[35]Cf. Leimberg, "Diktat der Wirklichkeit" 319.

WORKS CITED

Auerbach, Nina. "Jane Austen's Dangerous Charm: Feeling as One Ought About Fanny Price." *Romantic Imprisonment: Women and Glorified Outcasts.* New York: Columbia UP, 1986. 22-37.

Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park*. 1814. Ed and intr. Kathryn Sutherland; orig. intr. Tony Tanner. London: Penguin, 2003.

——. *Mansfield Park*. Ed. John Wiltshire. Cambridge: CUP, 2005.

——. *Persuasion*. 1818. Ed. and intr. D. W. Harding. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.

Banfield, Ann. "The Moral Landscape of *Mansfield Park*." *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 26.1 (1971): 1-24.

Bunyan, John. *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Ed. and intr. Roger Sharrock. London: Penguin, 1987.

Burlin, Katrin R. "'At the Crossroads': Sister Authors and the Sister Arts." *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*. Ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski. Athens, OH: Ohio UP, 1986. 60-84.

Cecil, David. *Jane Austen*. Cambridge: CUP, 1935.

Černý, Lothar. "Das gute Ende des Romans: Jane Austens *Persuasion*." *Anglia* 102 (1984): 80-100.

Dannenberg, Hilary P. *Coincidence and Counterfactuality: Plotting Time and Space in Narrative Fiction.* Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2008.

Dingley, R. J. "Henry Crawford Between Tragedy and Comedy in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*." *Studies in Iconography* 14 (1995): 306-08.

Duckworth, Alistair M. *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1971.

Kaye-Smith, Sheila, and Gladys Bronwyn Stern. *Talking of Jane Austen*. London: Cassell, 1943.

Leimberg, Inge. "'Humble Independence': Das Thema und seine dichterische Verwirklichung in Jane Austens *Emma*." *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 30 (1980): 395-422.

——. "Jane Austen und das Diktat der Wirklichkeit: Anmerkungen zu einer literatursoziologischen These und ihrer Durchführung." *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen* 219.2 (1982): 313-23.

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Ed. John Leonard. London: Penguin, 2003.

Nabokov, Vladimir. "Mansfield Park (1814)." *Lectures on Literature*. Ed. Fredson Bowers; intr. John Updike. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980. 9-61.

Niederhoff, Burkhard. "Unlived Lives in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love*." *Connotations* 20.2-3 (2010/2011): 164-88.

Perkins, Moreland. "Henry Crawford's Reform." *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal On-Line* 27.1 (Winter 2006). *Jane Austen Society of North America*. 10 June 2011 <http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol27no1/perkins.htm.>.

Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper. *A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules, according to Prodicus, Lib. II*. London, 1718.

Tanner, Tony. "Original Penguin Classics Introduction." *Mansfield Park*. Ed. Kathryn Sutherland. London: Penguin, 2003. 440-64.

Toker, Leona. "The Semiological Model in the Teaching of Literature: Discussing the Title of Austen's *Mansfield Park*." *Literatūra* 50.5 (2008): 91-97.

Wright, Andrew H. *Jane Austen's Novels: A Study in Structure*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1961.

Connotations
Vol. 20.2-3 (2010/2011)

The Change of Hemingway's Literary Style in the 1930s: A Response to Silvia Ammary*

KURT MÜLLER

Silvia Ammary's article is a valuable contribution to the critical debate about Hemingway's highly self-reflexive portrait of the artist as a failure. It aptly grasps the nostalgic tone of much of the author's writing, it takes a commendably corrective stance against earlier readings which give a negative view of the female character or take her portrait as proof of the author's male chauvinism, and it argues convincingly against such earlier readings which have seen the ending of the story in a positive light, regarding it as a triumphant, epiphany-like moment in which the soul of the dying artist finally reaches a moment of transcendent perfection. In the face of an overwhelming amount of scholarship which looks at the story from a biographical angle, the article represents a laudable attempt to refocus our attention in new-critical fashion on the text itself, thus following the principle to D. H. Lawrence's famous dictum that we should never "trust the artist" but the "tale." I would argue, however, that in the present case a radically intrinsic approach is apt to unduly limit the perspective on the text.

Before coming to that point, I would like to refer to other parts of the article's argument which I would hesitate to agree with. For one thing, this concerns the connection between Frost's poem and Hemingway's story. I agree that in both texts the theme of nostalgia is predominant, and it makes sense to argue that for the lyrical I of "The Road Not Taken" the "other path remains simply an illusion, an

*Reference: Silvia Ammary, "'The Road Not Taken' in Hemingway's 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro,'" *Connotations* 18.1-3 (2008/2009): 123-38.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debammary01813.htm>.

abstraction" (124) because the speaker has indeed no idea whatsoever of the "unlived life" he would have lived had he taken the other road. With the writer-figure in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," however, the case is different in so far as he has actually lived the life he remembers in fragmentary form in the italicized passages of the text. We can imagine these passages as imaginative writing exercises which dramatize the dying Harry in his failing attempts to activate once more his lost potential of artistic creativity. These writing exercises are indeed marked as pathetically autistic attempts as they are no longer able to reach a real audience, but rather than talking of "scenes of the unlived life" (131), it would be more adequate to talk of an 'unwritten life.' In contrast to a character such as, for example, John Marcher in Henry James's "The Beast in the Jungle" who simply forgot to live while he was continuously expecting some terrible thing to happen, the protagonist in Hemingway's story has actually gone through the experiences he remembers, but failed to make the right use of them, which—according to Hemingway's self-proclaimed artistic ideal—should have been "to put down what really happened in action" (*Death in the Afternoon* 2).

A related point concerns the article's argument about Harry's role as an "unreliable narrator" (130; in fact, Harry is not the narrator of the story but a reflector figure). Here again, one can agree that Harry is "projecting his frustrations and regrets on his wife" (130), but the matter appears to be more complex, as Harry is shown as constantly wavering between projection and self-insight. Looking at the dynamics of the interior conflict enacted here, it is also questionable if one can really argue, as the article does, "that Harry never really had any talent as a writer" (130). Granted that Harry is indeed an unreliable reflector figure, his unreliability has its limits, which is the case, for example, when he reflects on how "he had traded away what remained of his old life" ("The Snows of Kilimanjaro" 62). The overall image which emerges throughout is indeed that of a person whose "old life" had a quality of "real" and "true" experience (key concepts in Hemingway's idea of artistic authenticity) which was lost at a

certain point of his life. As Tino Müller aptly puts it in a recent study: "We gather that his career has been marked by an ever-growing discrepancy between his ideal of writing things 'well' and his tendency to squander his talent for quick financial success" (247). It is here where I think that at least a brief glance at the biographical context would have been in order. Without falling into the biographical fallacy of identifying the protagonist and the author, there seems to be ample evidence that "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" is a highly self-reflective exploration of the dilemma in which Hemingway found himself at the time when he wrote the story in his double role as public celebrity on the one hand and literary artist on the other.

My final and most important point concerns the article's statements about Hemingway's literary style. While it is accurate to characterize the style of the story under discussion as heavily introspective, the assertion that this is a feature that opposes "the typical Hemingway style" (130) rests on a one-sided view of the author's methods of literary production. The terse, laconic style, marked by a strict economy of language and following the "rule of objectivity" (130) and the particular way of handling the 'iceberg technique' are indeed characteristic of much (though not all) of the author's early work of the 1920s, yet the facts are that "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," along with other works of the same period, indicates a remarkable change in Hemingway's literary style which began in the 1930s. From that time on, the author's style became increasingly lengthy, introspective, self-reflexive and wordy. Both "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," the two most famous stories Hemingway wrote in the 1930s, are considerably longer than those he wrote in the 1920s, and both feature protagonists which are engaged in elaborate reflections and self-reflections.

In "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," the white hunter Wilson functions in a similar way as Harry in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" as an unreliable reflector figure. Hemingway's technique of privileging the perspective of that figure while withholding any inside view into the thoughts and emotions of the female character is also

reminiscent of the point-of-view technique in Henry James's "Daisy Miller" (1878). Rather than representing the reflector figure as the mouthpiece of the authorial message, both stories expose that figure as a phoney, self-complacent and self-righteous character. In Hemingway's story, this trait shows itself, for example, in Wilson's stereotyped male chauvinist 'recipe knowledge' about American upper class women:

> They are, he thought, the hardest in the world; the hardest, the cruelest, the most predatory and the most attractive and their men have softened or gone to pieces nervously as they have hardened. Or is it that they pick men they can handle? […] He was grateful that he had gone through his education on American women before now because this was a very attractive one. ("Francis Macomber" 8)

As a more detailed analysis could show, Wilson's numerous reflections and self-reflections, like Winterbourne's in James's "Daisy Miller," can be read as attempts to rationalize the self-doubts caused by the encounter with a woman who threatens his sense of male superiority.[1] Like James, Hemingway leaves it to the reader to detect the self-justifying tone in an introspective passage such as the following:

> He, Robert Wilson, […] had hunted for a certain clientele, the international, fast, sporting set, where the women did not feel they were getting their money's worth unless they had shared a cot with the white hunter. He despised them when he was away from them although he liked some of them well enough at the time, but he made his living by them; and their standards were his standards as long as they were hiring him.
>
> They were his standards in all except the shooting. He had his own standards about the killing and they could live up to them or get some one else to hunt them. He knew, too, that they all respected him for this. (26)

By the end of the 1930s, Hemingway's fictions also focus more and more upon the constructive potential of language. In sharp contrast to the earlier work, where the word 'talking' was regularly used as a signifier of non-authentic forms of self-expression, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950), and *The Old Man*

and the Sea (1952) are narratives in which the act of talking, both in its monological and its dialogical forms, is fore-grounded as a life-sustaining and self-stabilizing force.

This radical shift in Hemingway's conception of language is most conspicuous in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. With Robert Jordan, the novel features a character who during the three days of his life undergoes a veritable 'talking cure.'[2] In that process, the storytelling activities of the mother figure Pilar are of particular importance. By her storytelling, she encourages others to tell their stories and thus helps them to overcome the traumas of their repressed memories. Thus, her elaborate eye-witness account of a massacre committed by the Republicans against their Fascist enemies enables Robert Jordan to articulate his repressed memory of a lynching ritual he once witnessed in his early childhood. The therapeutic function of talking is further underlined by numerous scenes in which the protagonist talks to himself, sometimes even rendered in the form of an internal dialogue between two inner voices ("him" and "himself"). That way, the novel dramatizes an inner development in which Robert Jordan is finally able to overcome his sense of self-alienation.

In a similar way, *Across the River and into the Trees* features the last days of Colonel Cantwell, an aging war veteran suffering from a severe heart condition. The actions of the protagonist appear as parts of an elaborate ritual in preparation of his death, and in that ritual the talks he has with his lover Renata, with himself or with his lover's portrait in her absence play a significant role. These talk rituals can be seen as stations of a 'journey into the interior,' resulting in a 'catharsis' which prepares for the death journey indicated by the title motif.

In *The Old Man and the Sea*, it is Manolin who plays a similar role as Renata in *Across the River and into the Trees*. Here, it is the talk rituals with his disciple and younger alter ego which give the title hero Santiago the energy to live on in the face of failing luck. In his lonely fight with the swordfish and the sharks it is the talks with himself or with Manolin and other imaginary listeners, but also certain formulas repeated in a litany-like fashion such as "'A man can be destroyed but

not defeated'" (103) by which he motivates himself to keep on fighting. And when he returns to the village in a mood of total defeat it is once more the 'talking cure' of the boy which gives him new hope: "'*He* didn't beat you. Not the fish.' […] 'Now we must make our plans about the other things'" (124). And by repeatedly appealing to the old man's responsibility as his mentor, he provides him with an additional reason to live on: "'[…] we will fish together now for I still have much to learn.' […] 'You must get well fast for there is much that I can learn and you can teach me everything. […]'" (125-26). While the reader may even suspect that such words are mere fictions, what the story nevertheless celebrates is their life-sustaining power.

A further indication of the fundamental change in Hemingway's literary method is that since the 1930s more and more of Hemingway's works make use of writer or artist figures as a meta-fictional device to reflect upon the problematic of artistic creation. This begins with "Fathers and Sons" (1933), the final story in the Nick Adams-cycle, which features the middle-aged Nick Adams driving around in his car in the company of his son and reflecting on his problem of being as yet unable to write about his own father; and it continues with the figure of the writer *manqué* in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and with Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), a teacher of Spanish who goes to Spain among others with the intention to write a book about his experiences in that country. Of Hemingway's posthumously published works,[3] *Islands in the Stream* (1970) returns to the motif of the artist *manqué* in the character of Thomas Hudson, a once successful and famous painter now suffering from a painful loss of artistic creativity. In *The Garden of Eden* (1986), which features a writer-figure (David Bourne) obsessively searching for the psychological depths of artistic creativity, this self-reflexive tendency reaches a new level. Other than in *Islands in the Stream* and similar to "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," the process of artistic reflection and creation is directly dramatized. Furthermore, the action of the novel and the inlaid story are thematically linked in *mise-en-abyme* fashion (cf. Nagel). With its pointedly meta-fictional narrative structure as well as with its anti-

essentialist, (de-)constructive concept of identity which finds its expression in the gender- and race-related games of identity-metamorphosis, *The Garden of Eden* can even be said to anticipate a postmodernist sensibility.

Why then do critics still continue to talk about "typical Hemingway style," disregarding the evidence of the author's late work? I would argue that this is partly Hemingway's own fault. With his rigid economy of language and representation, manifested in a technique of radical reduction of abstract formulas and the concentration on significant concrete objects functioning as indirect indicators of unspoken inner feelings or states of mind, he developed in his early work an artistic technique which was in line with the most prestigious artistic conceptions of early modernism such as T. S. Eliot's theory of the "objective correlative" and the imagist notion of "making it new" (Ezra Pound) and was thus able to establish himself in a prominent position in the literary field of the time. Once established in that position, he started to capitalize on his earlier success by a strategy of inflationary self-marketing, using, for example, non-fiction works such as *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) and *Green Hills of Africa* (1935) to propagate a method which he could no longer follow in his literary practice.[4] Yet encouraged by the author's self-explications, critics continued to look at his work in the light of the theoretical standards he had set up by his programmatic pronouncements, with the result that they either overlooked the conceptual changes of his writing method or became disaffected with what they saw as a widening gap between the 'theory' and the 'practice.'

In other words, it seems that Hemingway's strategy of literary self-marketing brought him into a self-imposed dilemma. It may be that with the change toward a more introspective, self-reflexive and meta-fictional mode of writing Hemingway responded—consciously or unconsciously—to a gradual change in the literary climate, represented perhaps most pointedly by the Jewish Renaissance writers of the post-war years. This change announces itself, for example, in a diary novel such as Saul Bellow's apprentice work *Dangling Man*

(1944), whose first person narrator, a self-alienated intellectual waiting to be drafted, begins his journal with a manifesto-like attack upon the kind of fiction of which Hemingway had made the claim of being its most prototypical representative:

> […] to keep a journal nowadays is considered a kind of self-indulgence, a weakness, and in poor taste. For this is an era of hardboileddom. Today, the code of the athlete, of the tough boy […] is stronger than ever. Do you have feelings? There are correct and incorrect ways of indicating them. Do you have an inner life? It is nobody's business but your own. Do you have emotions? Strangle them. To a degree, everyone obeys this code. And it does admit of a limited kind of candor, a closemouthed straightforwardness. But on the truest candor, it has an inhibitory effect. Most serious matters are closed to the hardboiled. They are unpracticed in introspection, and therefore badly equipped to deal with opponents whom they cannot shoot like big game or outdo in daring.
>
> If you have difficulties, grapple with them silently, goes one of their commandments. To hell with that! I intend to talk about mine […]—and I do not feel guilty of self-indulgence in the least. (Bellow 7)

Ironically, Bellow's first-person narrator is here celebrating the kind of fiction which Hemingway, as yet unrecognized by his contemporaries, had already started to write. Seeing him on the monument he had set up for himself by his strategy of self-marketing, many readers and critics remained fixed on looking at the figure on the monument instead of judging the author's later work against the background of the changing trends within the literary field. It can be assumed that this fixation ultimately had a detrimental effect to a fair and adequate evaluation of that part of Hemingway's *oeuvre*.

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität
Jena

NOTES

[1]For 'revisionist' readings along this line cf. Hutton; Baym; and my Hemingway monograph (110-121).

[2]Cf. my Hemingway monograph (132-160) and my article "Psychodrama und 'Talking Cure,'" which focuses on that particular aspect.

[3]For a detailed analysis of Hemingway's posthumous writings cf. Burwell.

[4]I have outlined these ideas in a more elaborate way in my monograph on Hemingway and in a more condensed form in my article "Zur Selbstdekonstruktion der Moderne. Das Beispiel Ernest Hemingways in den dreißiger Jahren."

WORKS CITED

Baym, Nina. "Actually, I Felt Sorry for the Lion." *New Critical Approaches to the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*. Ed. Jackson J. Benson. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1990. 112-20; 467-68.

Bellow, Saul. *Dangling Man*. 1944. New York: Signet, 1965.

Burwell, Rose Marie. *Hemingway: The Postwar Years and the Posthumous Novels.* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge UP, 1996.

Hemingway, Ernest. *Death in the Afternoon*. 1932. New York: Scribner's, 1955.

——. *The Old Man and the Sea*. 1952. New York: Scribner's, 1955.

——. "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*. 1938. New York: Scribner's, 1966. 3-37.

——. "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." 1938. *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*. New York: Scribner's, 1966. 52-77.

Hutton, Virgil. "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: Critical Essay*s. Ed. Jackson J. Benson. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1975. 239-50.

Müller, Kurt. *Ernest Hemingway: Der Mensch, der Schriftsteller, das Werk*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999.

——. "Psychodrama und 'Talking Cure': Gespräch und Selbstgespräch in Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*." *Seelengespräche*. Ed. Béatrice Jacobs and Volker Kapp. Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 2008. 183-99.

——. "Zur Selbstdekonstruktion der Moderne: Das Beispiel Ernest Hemingways in den dreißiger Jahren." *Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 32 (1999): 237-51.

Müller, Tino. *The Self as Object in Modernist Fiction: James, Joyce, Hemingway*. Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2010.

Nagel, James. "The Hunting Story in *The Garden of Eden*." *Hemingway's Neglected Short Fiction: New Perspectives*. Ed. Susan F. Beegel. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1989. 329-38.

Connotations
Vol. 20.2-3 (2010/2011)

Unlived Lives in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* and Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love*[*1]

BURKHARD NIEDERHOFF

1. Introduction

In Alice Munro's short story "Walker Brothers Cowboy," a travelling salesman takes his two children on a sales tour in rural Ontario. When one of his prospective clients, instead of opening the door, empties a chamber pot from a window, missing the salesman only by a few inches, he decides to give up work for the day. He drives to a farm to visit a former acquaintance, Nora Cronin, whom he has not seen for years. In the course of the visit, it dawns on the reader that the salesman and Nora were lovers and that they might have married each other if it had not been for her Catholicism. The intimacy that develops between them almost immediately suggests that they would have had a more rewarding relationship than the rather loveless marriage that the salesman has with the children's mother. On the way home, the older of the two children, a girl, also suspects that there are areas in her father's life that she is not aware of; she begins to sense alternatives to the familiar version of his life that she has taken for granted:

> So my father drives and my brother watches the road for rabbits and I feel my father's life flowing back from our car in the last of the afternoon, darkening and turning strange, like a landscape that has an enchantment on it, making it kindly, ordinary and familiar while you are looking at it, but changing it, once your back is turned, into something you will never know, with all kinds of weathers, and distances you cannot imagine. (15)

[*]For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debniederhoff02023.htm>.

"Walker Brothers Cowboy" is a good example of the motif of the unlived life as I would like to define it for the purposes of the present essay. In my view, a fully-fledged treatment of the motif requires the presence of four criteria. The first is a *counterfactual course of events*, a road that the action might have taken but has not, in the case of Munro's short story a marriage between the girl's father and Nora Cronin. The second criterion is a *retrospective focus* on the counterfactual course of events. This criterion is crucial because otherwise the motif would be ubiquitous. Most narratives feature roads not taken by the actual plot, but usually these are anticipated by the characters in the form of guesses, speculations or strategies while they are pondering the future and trying to make decisions.[2] Once a narrative has moved beyond such a moment of decision or crisis, a "kernel" in narratologist terminology,[3] this moment and the alternative roads branching off from it are no longer heeded. The few cases in which they are, in which a character looks back on a decision and an alternative road, are significant exceptions. The retrospective criterion also entails the advanced age of the protagonists in works dealing with the unlived life; they tend to be somewhere between middle age and their deathbed.

The third criterion, a *sustained focus* on the unlived life, should be included to rule out the many cases in which a character and / or narrator casts no more than a fleeting glance at a road not taken. Consider the following passage from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, in which the narrator Jim Hawkins comments on the apple barrel to which he owes the discovery of the pirates' conspiracy: "But good did come of the apple barrel, as you shall hear; for if it had not been for that, we should have had no note of warning, and might all have perished by the hand of treachery" (56). This remark opens a window on an alternative course of events. However, the window is closed almost as soon as it is opened. As the narrative moves on at its brisk pace, neither the narrator nor the characters have much time for dwelling on what might have been. *Treasure Island* is first and foremost about the here and now of the action, about the life actually

lived. The fourth criterion consists in the *involvement of the character or characters*. These have to be affected by, perhaps even suffering from, an awareness of the life that they did not live. The alternative life has to be so powerful and intriguing that it becomes the subject of regret or, at the very least, of a sustained preoccupation or contemplation.[4]

Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* or Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (the protagonist's unrealised relationship with Peter Walsh) may be cited as fully-fledged examples of the motif in addition to Munro's short story. An interesting approximation is provided by Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. For the first one hundred pages or so, Anne Elliott is preoccupied with the rewarding marriage she might have enjoyed had she only accepted Captain Wentworth's proposal. After these initial chapters, however, she begins to hope that he might ask her again. In other words, the novel changes from the retrospective focus on a life not lived and an opportunity not seized to the more common prospective focus on an opportunity and a life still to be had.[5] Approximations of a different kind are afforded by Robert Louis Stevenson in "Will o' the Mill" and Henry James in *The Beast in the Jungle*; these tales cover almost the entire life span of protagonists who fail to walk down various roads. Thus, there is a gradual shift from a prospective focus on a choice to be made to a retrospective focus on a choice no longer available.

The texts mentioned in the preceding paragraph suggest that the motif came into being in the nineteenth century and that it flourished in the twentieth. One reason for this may be the pessimistic bias inherent in the motif, its connections with waste, failure and loss of purpose, themes that figure prominently in twentieth-century literature. Characters who are happy with their lives will not become obsessed with the roads they did not take. Conversely, characters will become preoccupied with these alternative roads if they sense that the lives they actually live are unrewarding and devoid of purpose.[6] A second reason is the weakening of plot in the texts in question, another movement associated with twentieth-century literature, especially such avant-garde works as *Ulysses* or *Waiting for Godot*. The

unlived life takes place in the mind of the characters or is indicated in symbolic or implicit ways (which will be described in greater detail below). Conflicts and crises lie in the past; they are reflected, not acted on.

In the present essay, I will analyse two fully-fledged examples of the motif that follow the characteristic pattern of the elderly character reviewing his or her life: Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *The Remains of the Day* (1989) and Tom Stoppard's play *The Invention of Love* (1997).[7] Ishiguro's protagonist is Mr Stevens, a long-time butler at an English country house, which was formerly owned by Lord Darlington and is now, in 1956, the property of an American, Mr Faraday. Stoppard's protagonist is A. E. Housman, author of *A Shropshire Lad* and classical scholar; he is lying on his deathbed in a London nursing home in 1936. Both of these characters go on a journey. Having received a letter from Mrs Benn, a former housekeeper at Darlington Hall, Mr Stevens travels by car to Cornwall, where Mrs Benn now lives. The aim of this trip is, or so he believes, a professional one. Faced with a shortage of staff, Stevens intends to persuade Mrs Benn to return to her old position at Darlington Hall. Housman's journey is a boat trip in the company of Charon, the ferryman who ships the souls of the dead across the Styx to Hades. Evidently, this journey takes place entirely in the mind; it consists of memories and imaginings that take Housman back to earlier stages of his life, in particular to his undergraduate days at Oxford. Both Housman's and Stevens's thoughts revolve around a life they did not have, particularly around a relationship that did not come to fruition. In the case of Stevens, this is a relationship with Mrs Benn, who would have become Mrs Stevens had he responded to one of her many attempts to establish greater intimacy between them.[8] In the case of Housman, it is a homosexual relationship with his university friend Moses Jackson, which was precluded primarily by the latter's heterosexuality but also by Housman's reticent and inhibited personality.

In my reading of Stoppard's play and Ishiguro's novel, I will first analyse how the unlived life is represented. What are the literary

modes and techniques used to evoke the lives that the characters did not have? Some answers to this question will be given in the second part. Another question, to be dealt with in the third and final part, concerns the gains which characters (as well as audiences) may reap from a preoccupation with unlived lives. One such gain is the self-knowledge that both Stevens and Housman attain. In addition to this common feature, however, there are also significant differences, which will be pointed out in the concluding paragraphs. Thus, the final part will do justice to the unique character of each text, while the following part will emphasise similarities rather than differences, treating both texts as representative examples that showcase typical techniques of evoking the unlived life.

2. Representing the Unlived Life

A first distinction that needs to be made is between *explicit* and *implicit* modes of representing the unlived life. An example of the explicit mode occurs in the climactic scene of Ishiguro's novel in which Stevens and Mrs Benn finally meet. It is Mrs Benn who openly refers to the life they might have shared:

> 'But that doesn't mean to say, of course, there aren't occasions now and then—extremely desolate occasions—when you think to yourself: "What a terrible mistake I've made with my life." And you get to thinking about a different life, a *better* life you might have had. For instance, I get to thinking about a life I may have had with you, Mr Stevens. [...].' (239; italics in the original)

An example of the implicit mode occurs in the final speech of Act I in Stoppard's play. Housman is teaching a Latin class at London University College: he is giving a translation and an analysis of Horace's ode 4.1, welcoming latecomers with sarcastic politeness ("good morning, you'll forgive us for starting without you" [48]) and pouring ridicule on the students' translations. The impression we get is that of a deeply embittered scholar who takes out his frustrations on

others. But towards the end of the speech the tone suddenly changes. What starts out as a sarcastic humiliation of the students turns into a moving evocation of love:

> [*N*]*ec vincire novis tempora floribus*, rendered by Mr Howard as to tie new flowers to my head, Tennyson would hang himself—never mind, here is Horace not minding: I take no pleasure in woman or boy, nor the trusting hope of love returned, nor matching drink for drink, nor binding fresh-cut flowers around my brow—*but—sed—cur heu, Ligurine, cur—*
>
> *Jackson is seen as a runner running towards us from the dark, getting no closer.*
>
> —but why, Ligurinus, alas why this unaccustomed tear trickling down my cheek?—why does my glib tongue stumble to silence as I speak? At night I hold you fast in my dreams, I run after you across the Field of Mars, I follow you into the tumbling waters, and you show no pity.
>
> *Blackout.* (49)

While giving a free translation of the final three stanzas of Horace's ode, Housman is also talking about himself. Like the speaker of the poem, who, at the age of fifty, is surprised by his passion for Ligurinus, the elderly Housman is overwhelmed by a powerful memory of the man he is still in love with. The image of Jackson, who is running towards us without getting closer, expresses the intensity of Housman's love but also its futility; the relationship with Jackson is imaginary, a life not lived.[9]

For reasons that will be explained below, implicit representations of the unlived life are much more frequent and characteristic than explicit ones. In the following pages, I will thus focus on the former, distinguishing six typical techniques or methods, which may be labelled as follows (in a list that is not exhaustive and only semi-systematic): *duality or division of character, metonymic memory, excessive repetition, foil character, projection,* and *symbolic analogue*.

A *duality or division of character* is pertinent in this context because a preoccupation with an unlived life often results from a choice or development that has allowed a character to develop only one of the two or more facets of his personality. The roads he or she did not take correspond to the facets that have been neglected or suppressed. Interestingly, Henry James's novella "The Jolly Corner," an intriguing

example of the unlived life, is also one of the classic examples of the doppelgänger motif; the double here represents the man the protagonist would have become had he stayed in New York instead of spending his life in Europe.[10] The duality of Stoppard's protagonist is highlighted in a scene in which the undergraduate Housman talks to "AEH," his seventy-seven-year-old self, a scene that is a moving encounter between innocence and experience.[11] The duality is also alluded to in the opening exchange with Charon, who is waiting for a second passenger:

> *Charon.* A poet and a scholar is what I was told.
> *AEH.* I think that must be me.
> *Charon.* Both of them?
> *AEH.* I'm afraid so.
> *Charon.* It sounded like two different people.
> *AEH.* I know. (2)

The scholar Housman is associated with the lived life: a solitary life characterised by academic work and an almost pathological contempt for other human beings, in particular for students who cannot translate Horace and for fellow textual critics who do not meet his exacting scholarly standards. The poet Housman is associated with the unlived life. In his paraphrases of Latin love lyrics and in his own poems, he obliquely expresses his continuing love for Moses Jackson. Furthermore, the poet is born precisely at the fork in the road where Housman's and Jackson's ways part. The first of the many quotations from Housman's poems occurs after Jackson has realised that his friend is homosexual and after Housman has offered to move out of their common flat:

> *Housman.*
> He would not stay for me; and who can wonder?
> He would not stay for me to stand and gaze.
> I shook his hand and tore my heart in sunder.
> *Light on AEH.*
> And went with half my life about my ways. (78)[12]

Housman and his life are divided. The half actually lived is the one that turns him into the old and embittered AEH, singled out by the stage lighting at this crucial moment; the other half, which must remain in the imagination, will stay with Jackson.

The method of *metonymic memory* takes the protagonist back to the time when the unlived life was still an option, when he or she was close to the fork in the road but had not yet chosen one of the two options. Such memories focus on episodes that reveal the potential for the unlived life, that show the character leaning very strongly in the direction of the road he or she failed to take. (The term *metonymic* has been chosen because the unlived life is a temporal, spatial or psychological extension of these memories, a chain of probable, if unrealised, consequences following from the remembered episode.) Ishiguro's Stevens, for instance, recalls an episode from the mid-thirties when Miss Kenton, the housekeeper who later becomes Mrs Benn, enters his office while he is immersed in a book. She asks him what he is reading, does not heed his repeated refusals to tell her, and eventually pries the book from his hand, getting so close to him that he feels as if "the two of us had been suddenly thrust on to some other plane of being altogether" (167). She then finds out that the book is nothing but a sentimental love story. After expressing his disapproval of Miss Kenton's behaviour, the narrator Stevens explains his choice of reading matter, as he explains everything else, along professional lines. He claims that it allows him to combine relaxation with a lesson in elegant English, thus enabling him to use appropriate diction when he converses with ladies and gentlemen. The reader, however, interprets the episode differently: it reveals Stevens's longing for love in general and his desire for Miss Kenton in particular; her proximity triggers an erotic response whose true nature he does not seem to be aware of. The episode also reveals Miss Kenton's love for Stevens; it contains one of her many attempts to pierce his professional armour and to find the man inside the butler.

The episode is about reading in the literal sense and also about reading in a metaphorical sense. It shows how Stevens the narrator reads

Stevens the character. He consistently misinterprets himself, giving professional reasons for actions whose real motives are quite different. This is one of the reasons for his unreliability as a narrator, a topic that has received much attention in the critical studies of *The Remains of the Day*.[13] It is also one of the reasons why the unlived life is represented implicitly rather than explicitly. As a character, Stevens rigorously represses any thought or feeling that goes against his role as a dignified butler. As a narrator, Stevens likewise resists any interpretation of his actions that might call his adherence to this role into question. In the words of Deborah Guth, "the text enacts memory as an ongoing act of repression, repeating in recall the same erasure of emotion that characterised the relationship [between Stevens and Miss Kenton] itself" (131). It is due to this ongoing act of repression and erasure that the narrator Stevens cannot dwell openly and explicitly on the relationship he did not have with Miss Kenton. The same forces that worked against the unlived life in the story are also present in the narrator's discourse, diverting the representation of the unlived life into the spaces between the lines. The unlived life is also an unspoken life and thus rendered implicitly rather than explicitly.

In connection with the role of repression in the representation of the unlived life, one should remember the Freudian commonplace that the repressed has a way of returning. This is the key to another method of hinting at the unlived life, the *excessive repetition* of references associated with it. Since the unlived life is frequently the object of a desire that remains repressed or at least unfulfilled, the desire will continue to exist, seeking some sort of outlet or expression. Repetition here indicates an excess of desire, an overflow of feeling that has never been translated into action. Thus, Stevens refers to Mrs Benn's letter time and again—one can almost see the butler holding it in his hands and cherishing the object that physically connects him with the woman he loves and with his past, constantly rereading her words and worrying about their precise meaning.

The best example of this kind of excessive repetition from Stoppard's play is, at the same time, an example of a metonymic memory

(Stoppard here combines two of the techniques that I have distinguished). While crossing the Styx, Housman and Charon come across three Oxford undergraduates: Housman's younger self, Moses Jackson and their friend Pollard. The three students have gone on a boating trip on the Thames and are having a very good time, especially Housman, who falls in love with Jackson on this very day, as we learn later on: "After that day, everything else seemed futile and ridiculous" (77). The boating trip is re-enacted time and again on the stage, with the three young men rowing in and out of the dying Housman's thoughts and memories, a poignant image of carefree camaraderie and happiness. The enormous significance that the trip has for Housman is pointed out by the discrepancy between his memory of the trip and that of the other two participants. Only a few years after the event, Housman has already persuaded himself that it occurred on a regular basis: "The three of us used to take a boat down to Hades, with a picnic" (66). Pollard, however, states that it happened only once, and the beloved Jackson seems to have forgotten the outing altogether (77).[14]

A fourth method of indicating the unlived life is to create *foil characters* who find themselves in a situation similar to that of the protagonist. Unlike the protagonist, however, the foil characters seize the day and take the plunge. Henry James's "Diary of a Man of Fifty," the first fully-fledged example of the motif that I am aware of, relies primarily on this method. The narrator, an elderly English general, is staying in Florence, where he befriends a young man, also English, who is courting a Florentine lady. This reminds the general of his own situation a generation ago, when he fell in love with the lady's mother but could not make up his mind to marry her. The general advises his countryman to follow his own example and renounce the lady, but the young man acts against this advice and marries her. The ending of the story suggests that the marriage is a happy one, which provides the general with a lot of food for second thoughts about his own decision and the life he missed.

Ishiguro creates a foil character of this kind in a young maid who, under Miss Kenton's supervision and guidance, develops her talents and seems to be headed for a housekeeper position when she suddenly elopes with the second footman, thus sacrificing her career prospects to a relationship (154-59). The foil character in *The Invention of Love* is Oscar Wilde. Housman and he are similar in many respects. Both are undergraduates at Oxford in the same period and brilliant classicists. Both write poems and have a talent for biting wit and satire. Both are painstaking searchers for the *mot juste* and even for the right punctuation mark: "Oh, I have worked hard all day—in the morning I put in a comma, and in the afternoon I took it out again!" (47). When this remark of Wilde's is quoted to him, Housman fails to see the joke; as a textual critic, he considers caring about commas utterly normal. Wilde, however, is also very different from Housman in that he dares to live out the longings and desires for other men that the latter bottles up within himself. Wilde's tragedy is not the tragedy of an unlived life, but of a life lived to the full. The contrast between the two characters is encapsulated in the following exchange from the final moments of the play when Wilde and Housman finally meet:

> *Wilde*. [...] I had genius, brilliancy, daring, I took charge of my own myth. I dipped my staff into the comb of wild honey. I tasted forbidden sweetness and drank the stolen waters. I lived at the turning point of the world where everything was waking up new—the New Drama, the New Novel, New Journalism, New Hedonism, New Paganism, even the New Woman. Where were you when all this was happening?
> *AEH*. At home. (96-97)

The fifth method resembles the preceding one in that it involves other characters whose representation throws light on the protagonist and his or her unlived life. The method consists in the *projection* of one's regrets for an unlived life onto another person. This is what Stevens is doing in one of his many comments on Mrs Benn's letter. After perusing it yet again, he gives the following interpretation of her state of mind:

> It is of course tragic that her marriage is now ending in failure. At this very moment, no doubt, she is *pondering with regret decisions made in the far-off past* that have now left her, deep in middle age, so alone and desolate. [...] Of course, Miss Kenton *cannot hope by returning at this stage ever to retrieve those lost years* [...]. But then Miss Kenton is an intelligent woman and she will have already realized these things. Indeed, all in all, I cannot see why the option of her returning to Darlington Hall and seeing out her working years there should not offer a very genuine consolation to *a life that has come to be so dominated by a sense of waste*. (48; my italics)

Stevens may not be entirely off the mark in his assumptions about Mrs Benn. From the quotation given at the beginning of section 2, we know that she sometimes thinks "about a different life, a *better* life [she] might have had" (239). But whatever their applicability to Mrs Benn, Stevens's comments, in particular the italicised phrases, definitely have a bearing on himself and his unlived life. Incidentally, the fact that here and elsewhere he refers to Mrs Benn as "Miss Kenton" shows his vain "hope [...] to retrieve those lost years." He thinks of her not as the woman who married Mr Benn, but as the woman who might have become Mrs Stevens.

Symbolic analogue, the sixth method, is not easily distinguished from the other five. All of these, being implicit or indirect renderings of the unlived life, are "symbolic" in a loose sense, especially a metonymic memory like the scene in Stevens's office which evokes the potential for an unlived life without showing this life directly. The difference between the methods lies in the type of symbolism. In the case of metonymic memories this is based on contiguity; the unlived life is a hypothetical extension or effect of the remembered episode. In the case of symbolic analogues, the symbolism relies, as the term indicates, on analogy or similarity. Many of these analogues are related to the metaphor of life as a road or journey. On the first day of his trip to Cornwall, for instance, Stevens is taking a break when a stranger recommends that he walk up a footpath that branches off from the road and leads to a lookout. Significantly, the time span for taking this path is limited; the stranger himself is too old to manage the climb. Stevens is reluctant to deviate from his itinerary, but a remark made

by the stranger goads him into walking up the path, reaching the promised lookout and getting, for the first time, into the spirit of travelling and feeling liberated from the constraints and routines of Darlington Hall. What he also finds at the end of the path is the hope of renewing his relationship with "Miss Kenton"—a hope that is disguised, to be sure, as the solution of a professional problem: "And indeed, it was then that I felt a new resolve not to be daunted in respect of the one professional task I have entrusted myself with on this trip; that is to say, regarding Miss Kenton and our present staffing problems" (26).

A similarly symbolic incident does not involve a path or road but an unopened door. It occurs on an evening on which two important events coincide: Miss Kenton accepts Mr Benn's proposal, and Lord Darlington hosts a secret meeting between the British prime minister and the German ambassador. When Stevens is taking a bottle of port to the gentlemen, he stops before the door to Miss Kenton's room, convinced that she is crying. Stevens is "transfixed by indecision as to whether or not [he] should knock" (212). Is she really crying, regretting her rash decision to accept Mr Benn's proposal, or is Stevens only attributing his own regrets to her? There is no definite answer to this question. At any rate, the image of Mr Stevens standing, tray in hand, before a door to a different life is an emblem of his failure to seize the moment and of his future life after this moment, which he spends thinking about what was actually going on behind that door and what knocking on it might have led to.[15]

Another symbolic analogue is centered around Stevens's father, who, in his old age, has been hired as an under-butler at Darlington Hall. Like his son, he is deeply and exclusively devoted to his work and thus plunged into a deep crisis when he begins to fail in his professional tasks. His most dramatic failure occurs when he falls while carrying a heavily laden tray to the summerhouse, an incident that leads to a change in his duties. After this demotion, Stevens senior revisits the site of his fall and retraces his steps while his son and Miss Kenton are watching him from a window:

> [T]he sun was still lighting up the far corner where the grass sloped up to the summerhouse. My father could be seen standing by those four stone steps, deep in thought. A breeze was slightly disturbing his hair. Then, as we watched, he walked very slowly up the steps. At the top, he turned and came back down, a little faster. Turning once more, my father became still again for several seconds, contemplating the steps before him. Eventually, he climbed them a second time, very deliberately. This time he continued on across the grass until he had almost reached the summerhouse, then turned and came walking slowly back, his eyes never leaving the ground. In fact, I can describe his manner at that moment no better than the way Miss Kenton puts it in her letter; it was indeed 'as though he hoped to find some precious jewel he had dropped there.' (67)

The passage conveys the pitiable spectacle of a man who stubbornly refuses to accept his age and his physical decline. It also provides a symbolic analogue to what his son will be doing some thirty years later. Stevens will also retrace his steps, rehearse the past and search for a lost jewel—a life with the woman who is now watching this very scene with him.[16]

In *The Invention of Love*, the symbolic analogue centres on the ferry trip to Hades. Usually, this is a one-way journey, but Stoppard focuses on the rare cases in which someone goes down to the underworld to bring a beloved person back to the land of the living. On their boating trip, Housman claims that he has brought his two comrades up from Hades (14). Moreover, he repeatedly quotes from Horace's ode 4.7 (5, 39), which alludes to Theseus' vain attempt to reclaim his friend Pirithous:

> *AEH*. My greatest friend and comrade Moses Jackson. '*Nec Lethea valet Theseus abrumpere caro vincula Pirithoo*.'
> *Charon*. That's right, I remember him—Theseus—trying to break the chains that held fast his friend, to take him back with him from the Underworld. But it can't be done, sir. It can't be done. (5)

In a way, the entire play is based on this conceit. Like Theseus, who tries to bring back his comrade Pirithous from Hades, Housman travels through the underworld of his mind and his memories to resurrect his friend and to recover a missed life. Ultimately, this at-

tempt proves to be futile. When AEH, the seventy-seven-year-old Housman, addresses the young Jackson across the gap of time, exclaiming "Mo!" (4, 46), he receives no answer. Transforming the unlived life into a lived life is as impossible as bringing a dead human being back to the realm of the living.

On occasion, Stoppard also seems to use textual criticism as a symbolic analogue. In connection with Housman's editorial work on Latin texts, it is frequently pointed out how the extant works (or the extant versions of works) differ from those that might have, but did not, come down to us—just as the lived life differs from its hypothetical alternatives. When Pollard remarks that "the best survives because it is the best," suggesting that the roads taken by the history of textual transmission are always superior to the roads not taken, Housman gives an eloquent plea for the works that might have survived but did not:

> Have you ever seen a cornfield after the reaping? Laid flat to stubble, and here and there, unaccountably, miraculously spared, a few stalks still upright. Why those? There is no reason. Ovid's Medea, the Thyestes of Varius who was Virgil's friend and considered by some his equal, the lost Aeschylus trilogy of the Trojan war … gathered to oblivion in *sheaves*, along with hundreds of Greek and Roman authors known only for fragments or their names alone—and here and there a cornstalk, a thistle, a poppy, still standing, but as to purpose, signifying nothing. (71-72; italics in the original)

In a related dialogue, Housman learns that Charon is familiar with Aeschylus' *Myrmidones*, a play that has been lost except for the title and a few fragments. Fired up with excitement, he begs Charon to recall some of the actual words, to bring a lost play back to life. But like the retrieval of Pirithous or the recovery of the unlived life, this "can't be done." As a figment of Housman's imagination, Charon can remember no more than the fragments that Housman already knows. The variants of textual criticism are also mapped on to the roads taken and not taken in life in the dialogue between AEH and his younger self, in which AEH expresses a deep skepticism about the hypothetical alternatives to the lived life: "You think there is an answer: the lost

autograph copy of life's meaning, which we might recover from the corruptions that have made it nonsense. But there is no such copy, really and truly there is no answer" (41).[17]

3. Finding Meaning in the Unlived Life

To go by the protagonists of *The Remains of the Day* and *The Invention of Love*, the preoccupation with an unlived life is not exactly conducive to happiness. On the contrary, it would appear to be a backward-looking, unproductive and unhealthy activity. Instead of looking forward to the future, one becomes obsessed with the past; instead of embracing and shaping one's life, one succumbs to passivity and despair. Thus, the case against the preoccupation with an unlived life is easily made. However, can one also make a case *for* this preoccupation? Can characters gain anything from contemplating a hypothetical past?

One benefit that characters may reap is self-knowledge. Comparing the road they have taken with its hypothetical alternatives, they may arrive at a more complex and honest assessment of their lives. In the case of Stevens, the mere realisation that there was an alternative road is a huge step forward in his progress towards self-awareness. It seems that he comes to this realisation only in the course of his final meeting with Mrs Benn. Only when she openly refers to "a different life, a *better* life […] I may have had with you, Mr Stevens" (239), does he become fully aware of the opportunity that he missed. This anagnorisis leads to a thorough self-examination. Stevens is beginning to have doubts about his ideals and about his identity, doubts that he expresses in the following words addressed to a fellow butler on the pier at Weymouth:

> 'Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man. He wasn't a bad man at all. And at least he had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he made his own mistakes. [...] As for myself, I cannot even claim that. You see, I *trusted*. I trusted in his lordship's wisdom. All those years I served him, I

> trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really—one has to ask oneself—what dignity is there in that?' (243)

Stevens here questions his core values: loyalty to one's employer and professional dignity. He begins to realise that he has made himself in the image of others, primarily of his father and of his employer. His unlived life, the one that he has denied himself, is a life of his own.

In addition to increased self-knowledge, Stevens also reaps an emotional benefit from his realisation of an unlived life, a kind of catharsis that allows him—and also Mrs Benn—to release the repressed emotions of a lifetime. This occurs at the end of their meeting in Cornwall, in the course of which Stevens realises that Mrs Benn does not intend to leave her husband and that she will not return to Darlington Hall. At the end of the meeting, they are waiting for the bus which will take her back to Mr Benn. Thus they have only a few minutes together before they will part, presumably forever. Because of the crossroads associations of the bus stop, the scene is a highly symbolic one, a re-enactment of the parting that took place some twenty years ago. In one important respect, however, the scene deviates from the former parting. Stevens brings himself to ask whether Mrs Benn is mistreated in any way by her husband and why she has been, at least on occasion, unhappy in her marriage. For the first time in their relationship, Stevens transcends his professional role and shows an interest in her feelings. Mrs Benn interprets Stevens's questions as what they actually are, a declaration of love, and responds with her own declaration of love: the statement, already quoted, that she sometimes thinks about a life she might have had with him. The emotional release created by this mutual declaration of love is indicated by the tears in Mrs Benn's eyes when she steps onto the bus. Stevens describes his own feelings in his characteristically stilted manner, but at the end of the usual hesitations, qualifications and circumlocutions we find a statement that is as extraordinary by his standards as his questions about Mrs Benn's happiness: "[I]t took me a moment or two to fully digest these words of Miss Kenton. Moreover, as you might appreci-

ate, their implications were such as to provoke a certain degree of sorrow within me. Indeed—why should I not admit it?—at that moment, *my heart was breaking*" (239; my italics).

The confession of love is, however, retrospective. Coming twenty years too late, minutes before the final parting, it is exclusively a statement of feelings, not of a commitment. The feelings will not be translated into a shared life, and thus become all the more poignant and intense. This pattern—overwhelming emotion divorced from action—is reminiscent of eighteenth-century sensibility. Henry Mackenzie's novel *The Man of Feeling*, published in the heyday of sensibility in 1771, provides an illuminating parallel to the scene at the bus stop. Harley, the man of feeling referred to in the title, is in love with a neighbour, a woman of feeling by the name of Miss Walton. But he declares his love for her, and she responds with an admission of hers for him, only when he is at death's door. His declaration of love is made in his last words:

> "I am in such a state as calls for sincerity [...] To love Miss Walton could not be a crime;—if to declare it is one—the expiation will be made."—Her tears were now flowing without control.—"Let me intreat you," said she, "to have better hopes—Let not life be so indifferent to you; if my wishes can put any value on it—I will not pretend to misunderstand you—I know your worth—I have known it long—I have esteemed it—What would you have me say?—I have loved it as it deserved."—He seized her hand—a languid colour reddened his cheek—a smile brightened faintly in his eye. As he gazed on her, it grew dim, it fixed, it closed—He sighed and fell back on his seat—Miss Walton screamed at the sight [...]. Every art was tried to recover them—With Miss Walton they succeeded—But Harley was gone for ever. (92)

It is obvious that this scene has been constructed for maximum emotional release, on the part of the characters as well as on the part of the readers. We share the joy of Harley and Miss Walton, the immense gratification of a long-delayed declaration of mutual love. At the same time, we also feel the pleasurable pain of pity and mourning, the emotions most cultivated by the sensibility movement. We mourn not just a character but also a relationship that is cut off precisely at the moment of its inception.

Obviously, Mackenzie's engineering of emotions does not seem altogether credible and sincere. Tears, the epitome of the natural and the spontaneous, are all too visibly and artificially fabricated. Moreover, the complete divorce of emotion from action runs counter to the original impulse of the sensibility movement, which is ethical and altruistic. Although Ishiguro renders the parting of the lovers in a much more restrained manner than Mackenzie,[18] he, too, lays himself open to criticism by using a rather contrived situation to create an emotional climax. He allows his character, to a certain extent at least, to undo the past and to recover the unlived life. Admittedly, Stevens and Mrs Benn cannot recuperate the relationship they did not have, but at least they can speak the words they did not speak. Other writers who have dealt with the unlived life have not allowed themselves such retrospective declarations of love, feeling, like Stoppard's Charon, that "it can't be done."

Like Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*, Housman in *The Invention of Love* also gains self-knowledge. What he primarily learns in his imaginary journeys down the roads he did not take is to understand and to accept his love for men. Thus, AEH rejects pejorative or euphemistic terms for this love in his conversation with his younger self: "Love will not be deflected from its mischief by being called comradeship or anything else" (43). The growth in Housman's self-awareness and self-acceptance is also shown by his changing attitude to Oscar Wilde. At one point in their undergraduate days, Pollard reports Wilde's newest *bon mot*, while Housman hardly listens, intent as he is on a boat race in which Jackson is participating (15-16). In a later conversation, he misunderstands the introduction of Wilde as a topic ("the fellow isn't worth the fuss" [55]), thinking the reference is to Horace and textual criticism. Thus, initially, Housman rejects or ignores Wilde, following the example of the homophobic Jackson, who considers Wilde an effeminate poser with suspicious sexual leanings (18, 55-57). Later on, however, Housman introduces Wilde as a topic into a discussion after the latter has been arrested (81-82). He also sends him

a copy of *A Shropshire Lad* (91) and has a long conversation with him towards the end of the play, imaginary of course (92-97).

In addition to helping Housman to know and to accept himself, the unlived life also strengthens him as an artist. Matthias Bauer points out precisely this aesthetic dimension of the motif in his introduction to a previous volume of this journal: "[A]ny imaginative or fictional literary representation is a 'road not taken' in that it shows us not what is but what might have been, or, in the words of Aristotle: 'it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen [...]' [*Poetics* section 9]" (2). Stoppard's Housman is a case in point. As the play is set entirely in the theatre of his mind, he has the role of the Aristotelian poet, staging not only the events that happened, but also those that might have happened. In his final speech, Housman describes himself in precisely these terms, not as a character talking to another character but as a poet or director addressing the audience: "You should have been here last night when I did Hades properly—Furies, Harpies, Gorgons, and the snake-haired Medusa, to say nothing of the Dog" (102). As I pointed out above, Housman's poems are intimately bound up with the unlived life in that the first quotation from the poems occurs precisely at the moment when Housman moves out of the flat that he has shared with Jackson. In other words, the poet Housman is born when the unlived life with Jackson begins.

If, as the title of the play implies, love may be invented, life may be invented, too. The eloquent spokesman of such self-inventing and self-fashioning in Stoppard's play is Oscar Wilde. In a characteristic series of paradoxes, he inverts the hierarchy between the lived life and the unlived life; values such as truth, reality and importance, which are generally associated with the former, are attributed to the latter. What emerges is a poetics of the unlived life in which it figures as the source of aesthetic freedom and creativity. Thus, Wilde argues in his exchange with Housman that "*biography is the mesh through which our real life escapes*. I was said to have walked down Piccadilly with a lily in my hand. There was no need. To do it is nothing, to be said to have

done it is everything. It is the truth about me" (93; my italics). In his final words in the play, he asserts that "[n]othing that actually occurs is of the smallest importance" (102). Thus, it hardly matters which road we actually choose. The road taken may be less significant than the road not taken. The life lived may be less real than the life not lived, the life that needs to be invented and imagined.

Ruhr-Universität Bochum

NOTES

[1]This essay was originally presented as a paper at the 10th International *Connotations* Symposium "Roads Not Taken," which took place in Freudenstadt in 2009. I would like to express my gratitude to Matthias Bauer and Angelika Zirker for organising this event, and to the participants for their responses to my paper. Thanks are also due to Sandra Lee, Lena Linne, Henrike Vahldieck, Sven Wagner and the *Connotations* reviewer for their comments on drafts of this essay.

[2]See Marie-Laure Ryan, who shows that such counterfactual plans or visions form an integral part of narrative plot; she also uses the category of counterfactuality to tackle the difficult question of what precisely the term *fiction* means.

[3]Seymour Chatman defines kernels as "branching points which force a movement into one of two (or more) possible paths" (53). Chatman's term is based on Roland Barthes' "noyau"; see the latter's classic article "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits" (9).

[4]Edward Engelberg's *Elegiac Fictions: The Motif of the Unlived Life*, the only study of the motif that I am aware of, defines it much more broadly than I do. In addition to missed opportunities and alternative pasts, Engelberg also includes wasted, empty or meaningless lives. A second difference between his approach and mine results from his emphasis on psychology and philosophy; he shows no interest in the forms and techniques of representing the unlived life which will be discussed in the second part of this essay. Another relevant study is Hilary Dannenberg's *Coincidence and Counterfactuality: Plotting Time and Space in Narrative Fiction*, which draws on narratological research as well as on philosophical and psychological contributions to possible-worlds theory. See in particular chapter 5, a theory of counterfactuality in fiction, and chapter 7, a history of counterfactuality from Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* to Philip Roth's *The Plot against America.* As these titles indicate, Dannenberg's scope is much broader than my own; she includes brief references to an alternative course of events, "parahistories" or "uchronies" such as Roth's novel (i.e. works that chart an alternative course for real-world history) and also science fiction narratives that juggle with a plurality of alternative worlds. In another sense, Dannenberg is more restrictive; she limits her analysis to explicit references to counterfactuality, while I also acknowledge

implicit modes of representing the unlived life, which will be discussed at length in the second part of this essay. For a concise introduction to Dannenberg's ideas on counterfactuality and to the theory of possible worlds in narratology, psychology and philosophy, see her article published in 2000.

[5]At the *Connotations* Symposium in Freudenstadt (see n1) a discussion erupted about the respective merits of *Persuasion* and *Mansfield Park*. Which of these two novels by Jane Austen is more relevant to the motif of the unlived life? To my mind, the answer depends on which aspect of the motif one is interested in. The plot of *Mansfield Park* differs from that of other novels by Austen in that it offers a greater degree of openness and contingency. The road not taken (Fanny Price marries Henry Crawford) is just as or almost as likely as the road taken (Fanny Price marries Edmund Bertram). However, my interest is not in how probable an unlived life is, how close to becoming a lived life. My interest is rather in how prominently it figures in the narrative—hence the four criteria outlined above. A counterfactual plot development that is the subject of a character's sustained retrospective preoccupation will have a prominent place in the narrative, regardless of its likelihood. If one thinks of the motif in these terms, then *Persuasion* is the more rewarding text. The case for the relevance of *Mansfield Park* is made by Angelika Zirker in her contribution to the present volume.

[6]However, it is not inevitable that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, that the road not taken offers a more pleasant prospect than the road taken. In *Mrs Dalloway*, for instance, the eponymous protagonist is preoccupied with the life she has not had with Peter Walsh; nevertheless, she thinks that she made the right choice in becoming Mrs Dalloway rather than Mrs Walsh, and the novel as a whole seems to support her opinion. See Dannenberg 112 for a related distinction, derived from psychological studies, between upward counterfactuals, which improve on the actual course of events, and downward counterfactuals, which are worse.

[7]Stoppard's interest in the motif of the unlived life is also shown by one of his (as yet) unrealised projects, which is pointed out by Ira Nadel in "Tom Stoppard and the Invention of Biography": "The one autobiographical play he considered writing was about the life he did not have: a fantasy autobiography about a Tomas who stayed in Czechoslovakia" (166).

[8]Despite its promising title, "Inside (Counter-)Factuality," Silvia Bigliazzi's article about Ishiguro's novel does not deal with the motif of the unlived life. Instead, it presents a rather dense argument on the unreliability of the narrator, which I touch upon below (see n13).

[9]For a reading of this scene along similar lines, see Hans Ulrich Seeber 376-77 and Kenneth Reckford 130-31; Reckford, a classicist, provides a thorough analysis of Stoppard's use of motifs and texts from classical literature.

[10]On "The Jolly Corner" and the unlived life, see the essays by Elena Anastasaki and Edward Lobb in *Connotations* 18.1-3.

[11]On the duality of Stoppard's protagonist, see Borgmeier 155-56, Mader 70-74, and Südkamp 214-20.

[12]The poem is No. VII in the "Additional Poems" published by Housman's brother one year after his death; see Housman 222.

[13]See, for instance, Kathleen Wall, whose article on *The Remains of the Day* helped to ignite the current discussion of unreliability among narratologists; a recent, very thorough contribution to this debate and to the analysis of Stevens in Ishiguro's novel is made by James Phelan 31-65.

[14]The outing of the three undergraduates is curiously similar to another literary evocation of a road not taken. In Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, the most powerful image of the unlived life is also a metonymic memory of a boating trip. Furthermore, the memory recurs more than once because Krapp repeatedly rewinds the tape to hear the passage describing the scene in the boat.

[15]The incident is referred to several times in the novel. At first, Stevens states that it occurred after the death of Miss Kenton's aunt, but later he changes his mind and tells us that it took place on the evening on which she had accepted Mr Benn's proposal, thus sealing her decision to leave Darlington Hall and Stevens (176, 212, 226). The different reasons that Stevens gives for Miss Kenton's grief in his two accounts of the incident create a connection, also present in the previous episode of the death of Stevens's father, between mourning for a deceased person and regretting an unlived life. This connection is also drawn, with regard to other texts, by Engelberg, who, in the title of his book about the motif of the unlived life, refers to works dealing with this motif as "elegiac."

[16]See also Deborah Guth, who considers the entire narrative a "mirror image" of this scene (133).

[17]For a related reading of the passages on textual criticism, see Südkamp, who connects Housman's search for the true text with the questioning of biographical truth in the play (227-33).

[18]Stevens's tears come as a delayed reaction, in his talk with the fellow butler at Weymouth, as his tears did in earlier episodes (105, 243). In the scene at the bus stop, Stevens does not reveal to Mrs Benn that his heart is breaking. Instead, he maintains his usual self-restraint and advises her, "'You really mustn't let any more foolish ideas come between yourself and the happiness you deserve'" (240). For an appraisal of different views of Stevens's behaviour in this scene, see Phelan 53-65: the butler's self-restraint may be viewed as a relapse into wrong-headed pretence or, alternatively, as an act of unselfishness that allows Mrs Benn to move on in her life without feelings of guilt or regret.

WORKS CITED

Anastasaki, Elena. "Henry James's Double-Bind: Chasing Possibilities in 'The Jolly Corner.'" *Connotations* 18.1-3 (2008/2009): 82-103.

Barthes, Roland. "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits." *Communications* 8.1 (1966): 4-27.

Bauer, Matthias. "Roads Not Taken." *Connotations* 18.1-3 (2008/2009): 1-5.

Bigliazzi, Silvia. "Inside (Counter-)Factuality: Reassessing the Narrator's Discourse in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*." *Rivista di letterature moderne e comparate* 60 (2007): 219-44.

Borgmeier, Raimund. "'Convergences of different threads': Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love* (1997)." *Anglistik und Englischunterricht* 64 (2002): 149-63.

Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1978.

Dannenberg, Hilary P. *Coincidence and Counterfactuality: Plotting Time and Space in Narrative Fiction*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2008.

——. "Divergent Plot Patterns in Narrative Fiction from Sir Philip Sidney to Peter Ackroyd." *Anglistentag 1999 Mainz: Proceedings*. Ed. Bernhard Reitz and Sigrid Rieuwerts. Trier: WVT, 2000. 415-27.

Engelberg, Edward. *Elegiac Fictions: The Motif of the Unlived Life*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1989.

Guth, Deborah. "Submerged Narratives in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 35.2 (1999): 126-37.

Housman, A. E. *Collected Poems*. London: Penguin, 1956.

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *The Remains of the Day*. New York: Vintage International, 1989.

Lobb, Edward. "*The Family Reunion:* Eliot, James, and the Buried Life." *Connotations* 18.1-3 (2008/2009): 104-22.

Mackenzie, Henry. *The Man of Feeling*. Ed. Kenneth C. Slagle. New York: Norton, 1958.

Mader, Doris. "Inversion (in) der Zeit: Sterben als Kaleidoskop des Lebens in Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love*." *Anglia* 121 (2003): 58-86.

Munro, Alice. "Walker Brothers Cowboy." *Selected Stories*. New York: Knopf, 1996. 3-15.

Nadel, Ira B. "Tom Stoppard and the Invention of Biography." *Modern Drama* 43 (2000): 157-70.

Phelan, James. *Living to Tell about It: A Rhetoric and Ethics of Character Narration*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2005.

Reckford, Kenneth. "Stoppard's Housman." *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 9 (2001): 108-49.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. *Possible Worlds: Artificial Intelligence and Narrative Theory*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991.

Seeber, Ulrich. "*The Invention of Love*: Stoppard's Dramatic Elegy for A. E. Housman." *Twentieth Century Theatre and Drama: Festschrift for Heinz Kosok on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*. Ed. Jürgen Kamm. Trier: WVT, 1999. 363-79.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Treasure Island*. 1883. Ed. Emma Letley. Oxford: OUP, 1985.

Stoppard, Tom. *The Invention of Love*. London: Faber and Faber, 1997.

Südkamp, Holger. *Tom Stoppard's Biographical Drama*. Trier: WVT, 2008.

Wall, Kathleen. "*The Remains of the Day* and Its Challenges to Theories of Unreliable Narration." *Journal of Narrative Technique* 24 (1994): 18-42.

Zirker, Angelika. "'The road to happiness'": Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*." *Connotations* 20.2-3 (2010/2011): 131-54.

Connotations
Vol. 20.2-3 (2010/2011)

Spenser as Prometheus: A Response to Maik Goth*

ANDREW HADFIELD

I enjoyed Maik Goth's thoughtful piece on Spenser as Prometheus. Goth explored the representation of monstrous creations in *The Faerie Queene* in terms of Sir Philip Sidney's characterisation of the poet as a "maker" in his *Apology for Poetry*. He argued that for Spenser "the monstrous becomes an integral part of poetic creation" (183). In the Castle of Alma Spenser represents the mind as a chamber of three parts, the first of which is cast as Phantastes, "the personification of fantasy" (186); the second as judgment; and the third, as Eumnestes, the personification of memory. In one of the tapestries hanging in the third chamber the story of Prometheus is told, but with a characteristically Spenserian twist, as Prometheus is shown creating an elf. From this Goth concludes, reasonably enough, that Spenser, like George Chapman, thought of his own intellectual and creative labour as a poet in similar terms: "it could be argued that Prometheus's transgression is constituted by the pursuit of his own creative designs" (189). If we make this link, then we can see that Spenser's poem is full of similarly monstrous, unsettling and potentially unnatural creations, such as the often cited description of the repulsive nether parts of the disrobed Duessa, a foul combination of different animal parts, and the equally disgusting description of Geryoneo's dragon. For Goth, Spenser is a poet advertising his own ability to create what he likes, however monstrous it might be, casting himself as "an early modern Prometheus" and asserting that the poet acts as a creator who be-

*Reference: Maik Goth, "Spenser as Prometheus: The Monstrous and the Idea of Poetic Creation," *Connotations* 18.1-3 (2008/2009): 183-207.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debgoth01813.htm>.

comes "a rightful secondary god if foresight and forethought guide his steps" (198).

There is a great deal to commend in this perceptive and lucidly written essay. I am more concerned to try and push Goth's insights further than to resist them, although I think some points do need to be contextualised and qualified. One of the dangers of reading Spenser is that he is such a slippery and elusive writer. Just when you imagine that you have reached a point where he is stating what he believes, you find that he is merely reaching an interim conclusion that will be modified later on. Moreover, one of Spenser's favourite narrative devices is to rewrite and refigure earlier sections of the poem, citing lines or recycling images, so that we have to go back and reread and rethink earlier episodes. As Goth demonstrates, Spenser clearly does think of the imagination in terms of the myth of Prometheus and the monstrous, but is this the point where his analysis concludes? Is there more to be said?

In the first chamber of the mind we witness a new version of the myth of Prometheus, as Goth states. I need to quote these verses again because they are as crucial to my argument as they were to that of Maik Goth:

> But *Guyon* all this while his booke did read,
> Ne yet has ended: for it was a great
> And ample volume, that doth far excead
> My leasure, so long leaues here to repeat:
> It told, how first *Prometheus* did create
> A man, of many parts from beasts deryu'd,
> And then stole fire from heuen, to animate
> His worke, for which he was by *Ioue* depryu'd
> Of life him self, and hart-strings of an Aegle ryu'd.
>
> That man so made, he called *Elfe*, to weet
> Quick, the first author of all Elfin kynd:
> Who wandring through the world with wearie feet,
> Did in the gardins of *Adonis* fynd
> A goodly creature, whom he deemd in mynd
> To be no earthly wight, but either Spright,

> Or Angell, th'authour of all woman kynd;
> Therefore a *Fay* he her according hight,
> Of whom all *Faryes* spring, and fetch their lignage right. (II.x.70-71)

Goth concludes that "Prometheus's […] pursuit of his own creative designs" (189) is a model adopted by Spenser himself. Spenser indeed suggests that there are connections between Prometheus's creation of the elves and the creative process but I am not sure that they are represented in quite so positive a manner as Maik Goth argues. The first point I would note is that in the first half of verse 70, omitted from Goth's essay, we learn that Guyon cannot finish the book he finds in the chamber. Such omissions are always a warning sign in Spenser, showing us that we do not have the full picture. The implication is that his contemporary readers did not know enough to understand the mind or brain and, therefore, would not be able to follow the creative process. Furthermore, the representation of Prometheus's act of creation is ambivalent, to say the least. We learn that the elf created by Prometheus discovers a creature in the garden of Adonis, but he cannot be sure whether she is a sprite or an angel. We are immediately reminded of the Redcrosse Knight's dreams in the first canto of the poem, one of the key reference points throughout the text. Here sprites are conjured up by Archimago, making them akin to incubi or even demons. Sprites are delusive figures who enter dreams in order to lead humans astray. In fact the word is used nine times in the first two cantos of the poem, and with great frequency thereafter, showing how important the concept of the "sprite" is in *The Faerie Queene*.

The point can be taken further: the description of the union of the elf and the faerie appears also to suggest a forbidden union, such as that between the fallen angels and women, an apocryphal tradition which expanded Genesis 6:4. The note provided in A. C. Hamilton's edition of the poem leads the reader to equate the Garden of Adonis with Eden, but the description of elves uniting with faeries who are either sprites or angels leads the reader to a much darker interpretation (cf.

259n). In short, Spenser's characteristic use of ambiguous syntax and reference warns us not to take this account at face value.

I would suggest that we were already given pause for thought in the elaborate description of the three chambers of the mind. Early modern conceptions of the imagination were invariably guarded or even hostile. Montaigne's essay on the subject, "Of the Force of the Imagination," represents the faculty as powerful and delusive, undermining the reason of good men. Imagination was generally seen as a quality associated with women rather than men, and a key element of the significance of Spenser's representation of the divisions of the mind seems to be that in a country ruled by a queen, imagination has usurped the role of reason. The question generally asked was: did this different balance of mental capacities preclude women from being successful rulers? Were women monarchs exceptions that proved the rule or had they been unfairly excluded from government (cf. Maclean 63)? Indeed, later in the same book Spenser appears to be praising Alma as a wise ruler, like his own virgin queen:

> But in a body, which doth freely yeeld
> His partes to reasons rule obedient,
> And letteth her that ought the scepter weeld,
> All happy peace and goodly gouernment
> Is setled there in sure establishment,
> There *Alma* like a virgin Queene most bright,
> Doth florish in all beautie excellent:
> And to her guestes doth bounteous banket dight,
> Attempred goodly well for health and for delight. (II.xi.2)

This stanza reads like a celebration of the wisdom of Elizabeth, who appears temperate, moderate and judicious. But, as so often in Spenser, such words are a starting point rather than a conclusion, written as a deliberate allusion to the complex debates about female sovereignty, rationality and temperance, especially as we have seen Alma hurrying through the chamber of reason in her castle (see below). Alma is *like* a virgin queen, which makes her one of the many types of Elizabeth who appear in the poem.[1] But we need to remember

that figures such as Lucifera were also types and forms of the queen.[2] The reader is asked to think whether Alma functions like Elizabeth and, if so, how? As a straightforward allegory of her? Or as a pointed figure of what the queen might be or not be? By the end of the book, I would like to argue, we are certainly sceptical about Elizabeth's ability to act rationally and need to ask whether this is her fault or that of her sex. Either way, Spenser appears to be arguing, her subjects suffer, as she fails to live up to the ideals of queenship, a message developed later in the poem by means of other representations of Elizabeth, such as Mercilla, who has to be persuaded of her duty to execute Duessa (Mary Queen of Scots), as her death is in the interests of the people.[3]

The knights are particularly impressed with the second chamber where they witness the "goodly reason" (II.ix.54.7) of the sage who sits amidst frescoes "Of Magistrates, of courts, of tribunals, / Of commen wealthes, of states, of pollicy, / Of lawes, of iudgementes, and of decretals; / All artes, all science, all Philosophy" (II.ix.53.5-8), but they are hurried along, a sign that learning is not taken seriously in a castle—and by implication, a state—ruled by a woman.[4] As Goth rightly points out, the chamber of imagination is represented as a room buzzing with flies, a description worth quoting in full:

> And all the chamber filled was with flyes,
> Which buzzed all about, and made such sound,
> That they encombred all mens eares and eyes,
> Like many swarmes of Bees assembled round,
> After their hiues with honny do abound:
> All those were idle thoughtes and fantasies,
> Deuices, dreames, opinions vnsound,
> Shewes, visions, sooth-sayes, and prophesies;
> And all that fained is, as leasings, tales, and lies. (II.ix.51)

Again, we note the reference to dreams as delusive, linking this stanza to the forces that overwhelm the hapless Redcrosse Knight, and so to the account of Prometheus's creation of man as elf who mates with a sprite. The imagination, as in Montaigne's essay, is powerful and overwhelming, but not to be trusted.

The final chamber, that of memory and history, is also portrayed in problematic terms. Significantly enough, it is represented as a library of ancient books and manuscripts, one that is useful but does not function perfectly:

> His chamber all was hangd about with rolls,
> And old records from auncient times deriud,
> Some made in books, some in long parchment scrolles,
> That were all worm-eaten, and full of canker holes.
>
> Amidst them all he in a chaire was sett,
> Tossing and turning them withouten end;
> But for he was vnhable them to fett,
> A litle boy did on him still attend,
> To reach, when euer he for ought did send;
> And oft when thinges were lost, or laid amis,
> That boy them sought, and vnto him did lend.
> Therefore he *Anamnestes* cleped is,
> And that old man *Eumnestes*, by their propertis. (II.ix.57.6-9-58)

The function of memory is represented as an impressive collection of texts, but it cannot be relied upon to enable its owner to recall, order, process and reproduce what is contained with unfailing accuracy. Things often get lost somewhere along the way showing that one cannot place absolute confidence in the faculty. The body and mind that make up the Castle of Alma are invariably described by critics as if they form an ideal to be imitated. Walter R. Davies concludes his entry in *The Spenser Encyclopedia* with the statement that "Alma's castle is the image of achieved temperance figured as the fitting together of parts (L[atin] *temperare* to mix equally): harmony among parts of the body, among parts of the soul, between body and soul, and between human and divine" (25). This simply is not true. The mind of the supposedly ideal body is represented as limited and unbalanced. Flies buzz uncontrolled in the chamber of imagination and the recall of valuable information is limited and faulty in the chamber of memory. What is lacking is a dominant chamber of reason and government to control, order and utilise the other two chambers.

However, Alma leads the knights on quickly to the chamber of Eumnestes, even though they are most interested in the middle chamber, the implication being that she is not interested enough in the chamber of reason:

> Of those that rowme was full, and them among
> There sate a man of ripe and perfect age,
> Who did them meditate all his life long,
> That through continuall practise and vsage,
> He now was growne right wise, and wondrous sage.
> Great pleasure had those straunger knightes, to see
> His goodly reason, and graue personage,
> That his disciples both desyrd to bee;
> But *Alma* thence them led to th'hindmost rowme of three. (II.ix.54)

Alma hurries through the chamber of reason, spending more time in the chambers of fantasy and memory. This clearly suggests that she is not fully in control of the castle over which she rules, probably because she fails to understand, or neglects, the masculine offices of reason and government which should be the highest faculties. Instead imagination and memory, valuable faculties, of course, have become excessively powerful and so distort the mind that should govern the body. The Castle of Alma can be read as another negative representation of Elizabeth and her court, to go alongside such images as the House of Pride in Book I and the Court of Mercilla in Book V.[5] After all, Elizabeth, as the virgin queen, was nothing if not temperate. Unfortunately, for critics like Spenser, this precluded her from producing an heir and so consigned her subjects to a state of perpetual uncertainty and her realm to the possibility of future civil war after her death.[6] Alma's desire to lead the knights out of the chamber in which they show the greatest interest is a sign of the lack of masculine principles in her court, as advisers to steer her government properly, and in her life, as a husband to control the unruly and destructive passions and lapses of female rule.[7]

It is important that we try to understand the context within the poem out of which Guyon's reading the British and Elfin chronicles

has developed. As Goth rightly argues, Spenser does place great emphasis on the value of the imagination in poetic creation. However, we are reminded that imagination on its own is never enough to sustain an argument or, more importantly, the work of a "Poet […] historicall" ("Letter to Raleigh" 715). The myth of Prometheus as represented in *The Faerie Queene* needs to be carefully analysed and decoded in terms of the poem's larger narrative structures and thematic concerns. First, we need to note that the myth of Prometheus is not complete in itself, but part of a longer book to which we do not have complete access as it is far too long for Guyon to finish. Already we have the sense that there is more to the story here than meets the eye. Prometheus creates a fairy out of the many parts of beasts and then uses the fire he steals from heaven to animate his work. What he does bears a number of resemblances to Spenser's description of Archimago's construction of the false Una out of a "Spright," as I have already indicated. While Prometheus brings down fire from heaven to manufacture his creature, Archimago calls up spirits and demons to aid him:

> And forth he cald out of deepe darknes dredd
> Legions of Sprights, the which like litle flyes
> Fluttring about his euerdamned hedd,
> A waite whereto their seruice he applyes,
> To aide his friendes, or fray his enimies:
> Of those he chose out two, the falsest twoo,
> And fittest for to forge true-seeming lyes;
> The one of them he gaue a message too,
> The other by him selfe staide other worke to doo. (I.i.38)

The sprites surround Archimago like a swarm of flies, here making the demonic state of the creatures as familiars of Beelzebub, Lord of the Flies, absolutely clear. Prometheus's act of creation is therefore bound to that of Archimago. But the connection between the two cuts both ways, which is why Goth's article contains such a valuable insight into Spenser's conception of poetic creation. Although Prometheus's art can never be perceived as free from the taint of demonic

activity, this does not mean that it is *necessarily* wrong and has to be condemned by the reader.

Spenser was a poet invariably eager to push the boundaries of what was possible, experimenting "with a wider range of metres, dialects, and stanza-structures than any English poet prior to John Donne" (McCabe, "Edmund Spenser" 53). He was always eager, I think, to demonstrate that poetic creation had to take risks and try out new ideas and new forms of writing. At the most basic level this meant writing what Ben Jonson later described as "no Language," a pseudo-archaic vocabulary and style that created an imaginary past that had never existed (qtd. in R. M. Cummings 294). At a much more profound level it meant exploring subjects that were complicated, difficult and dangerous. It is no accident that Spenser appears to have offended Elizabeth's chief minister, Lord Burghley, as well as his son, Sir Robert Cecil, who played a similar role after his father's death; her favourite and possible husband, the earl of Leicester; his erstwhile patron, Sir Walter Raleigh; and James VI, King of Scotland, an impressive list.[8] As Brian Cummings has pointed out, most religious literature after the Reformation ran the risk of flirting with heresy just through citing words and phrases with theological significance. Spenser's first work, *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579), contains a considerable amount of religious poetry at an especially sensitive time in the wake of the papal bull, *Regnans in Excelsis*, issued on 25 February 1570, which urged Catholics to assassinate their heretical ruler.[9] Throughout his writing career Spenser was prepared to challenge received notions and he appears to have seen one of his chief duties as a poet to say what others feared to say and to forge new forms of writing. It is not surprising that his output is so varied and diverse, nor that he fell out so often with the good and the great.

Spenser's representation of the creative act as Promethean in Book II is shrouded in ironies and is a subject worthy of further analysis, as Goth has recognised. Despite a considerable amount of thinking and research and some fine books, we are still not sure who the elves are or what role they play in *The Faerie Queene*: in particular, their rela-

tionship to the Britons whose dynastic genealogies they shadow in the book Guyon reads.[10] The act of Promethean creation also makes it hard to distinguish between elves and fairies. However, Matthew Woodcock has made essentially the same point as Goth, in arguing that "Prometheus's seminal act of 'elf-fashioning' […] mirrors what takes place in the production of *The Faerie Queene* itself in Spenser's own construction of his fairies from 'many parts,' from many different textual sources" (Woodcock 130). In reading the chronicle, Guyon, as an elf, a creature invented in a book by Spenser, is witnessing his own origins, although he shows no sign of realising his relationship to the material he eagerly consumes. The connection makes the reader aware that Guyon's temperance is not a virtue that humans can easily imitate, or that would necessarily benefit many if they could. Accordingly, readers might conclude that the queen's virginity was especially perverse, as her control over her body led to a lack of control over the nation and her people through her inability to produce an heir. Spenser, famous as a poet of marriage, appears to be suggesting that those on earth need to follow a different path, one about to be outlined in Britomart's quest towards marriage in Book III.

In the opening sonnet of his sequence, *Astrophil and Stella*, Sir Philip Sidney compared writing poetry to giving birth:

> Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
> That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain.
> Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
> Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain.
> I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
> Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain.
> Oft turning other's leaves, to see if thence would flow
> Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sun-burnd brain.
> But words came halting forth, wanting invention's stay,
> Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's blows,
> And other's feet still seemed but strangers in my way.
> Thus, great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
> Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite,
> "Fool," said my Muse to me, "looke in thy heart and write." (1)

Spenser, I would argue, has a similar notion of poetic creation. *The Faerie Queene* shows us images of cunning, dangerous and blasphemous creation in Books I and II. We also witness Guyon reading the chronicles which he finds in Eumnestes's chamber. Each type of action, poetic creation and the recall of history, are qualified in Book III, as Britomart undertakes her quest. When Merlin reads her the chronicles in canto three we see the history that should have taken place had Elizabeth married and secured her dynasty, connecting the past to the future. And when she enviously witnesses Amoret and Scudamore entwined as a hermaphrodite, once Britomart has released Amoret from Busirane's chamber of sterile and unsatisfied desire, we realise where the real future lies and how poetic and natural creation are in harmony.[11] What Prometheus does leads to the creation of elves like Guyon; what Britomart does leads to a glorious future for England represented in poetry like *The Faerie Queene*. While men write, women have babies.

University of Sussex
Brighton

NOTES

[1]For analysis, see Sheila T. Cavanagh.

[2]See Paul Suttie's essay "Edmund Spenser's Political Pragmatism."

[3]Richard A. McCabe makes this point in his essay on "The Masks of Duessa."

[4]For discussion see Amanda Shephard; and Maclean.

[5]See Suttie, *Self-Interpretation in* The Faerie Queene 98; and McCabe, "The Masks of Duessa."

[6]See ch. 6 of my *Literature, Politics and National Identity*.

[7]More generally, see Anne McLaren.

[8]Fuller details will be provided in my biography of Spenser, forthcoming from Oxford University Press in 2012.

[9]See Adrian Morey, *The Catholic Subjects of Elizabeth I*, chs. 4-5.

[10]See, in particular, Isabel E. Rathborne, *The Meaning of Spenser's Fairyland*; Matthew Woodcock, *Fairy in* The Faerie Queene.

[11]For further analysis see Andrew Hadfield, "Spenser."

WORKS CITED

Cavanagh, Sheila. *Wanton Eyes and Chaste Desires: Female Sexuality in* The Faerie Queene. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994.

Cummings, Brian. *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace*. Oxford: OUP, 2002.

Cummings, R. M. *Spenser: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 1971.

Davies, Walter R. "Alma, Castle of." *The Spenser Encyclopedia*. Ed. A. C. Hamilton. London: Routledge, 1990. 24-25.

Hadfield, Andrew. *Literature, Politics and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance*. Cambridge: CUP, 1994.

——. "Spenser." *The Cambridge History of English Poetry*. Ed. Michael O'Neill. Cambridge: CUP, 2010. 136-53.

McCabe, Richard A. "Edmund Spenser." *The Cambridge Companion to English Poets*. Ed. Claude Rawson. Cambridge: CUP, 2011. 53-71.

——. "The Masks of Duessa: Spenser, Mary Queen of Scots, and James VI." *English Literary Renaissance* 17 (1987): 224-42.

McLaren, Anne. *Political Culture in the Reign of Elizabeth I: Queen and Commonwealth, 1558-1585*. Cambridge: CUP, 1999.

Maclean, Ian. *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life*. Cambridge: CUP, 1980.

Montaigne, Michel Eyquem de. "Of the Force of the Imagination." *The Essayes of Michel Lord of Montaigne*. Trans. John Florio. 1603. 3 vols. London: Everyman, 1910. 1: 92-104.

Morey, Adrian. *The Catholic Subjects of Elizabeth I*. London: Unwin, 1978.

Rathborne, Isabel E. *The Meaning of Spenser's Fairyland*. New York: Columbia UP, 1937.

Shephard, Amanda. *Gender and Authority in Sixteenth-Century England*. Keele: Keele UP, 1994.

Sidney, Philip. *Sir Philip Sidney's* An Apology for Poetry *and* Astrophil and Stella: *Texts and Contexts.* Ed. Peter C. Herman. Glen Allen: College Publishing, 2001.

Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene*. Ed. A. C. Hamilton, Hiroshi Yamashita, Toshiyuki Suzuki. 2nd ed. London: Longman, 2007.

——. "Letter to Raleigh." Hamilton, *The Faerie Queene* 714-18.

Suttie, Paul. "Edmund Spenser's Political Pragmatism." *Studies in Philology* 95 (1998): 56-76.

——. *Self-Interpretation in* The Faerie Queene. Cambridge: Brewer, 2006.

Woodcock, Matthew. *Fairy in* The Faerie Queene*: Renaissance Elf-Fashioning and Elizabethan Myth-Making*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

Connotations
Vol. 20.2-3 (2010/2011)

Spenser's Monsters: A Response to Maik Goth*

JOHN WATKINS

Maik Goth's essay "Spenser as Prometheus: The Monstrous and the Idea of Poetic Creation" argues that Spenser associated poetic creation in general, and his own craftsmanship in particular, with monstrosity and an open defiance of the principles of nature so revered by neo-classical critics. As Goth reminds us, Spenser filled *The Faerie Queene* with accounts of monstrous creation that shadow the poet's own creative enterprise. Archimago—whose name reveals him etymologically to be a great crafter of images—fashions a false Una to deceive the Redcrosse Knight. An unnamed witch creates a simulacrum of the beautiful Florimell to appease her son's desires from the same natural elements that Petrarchan poets transformed into metaphors: snow, vermillion, golden wires, and burning lamps. Goth compares these moments in Spenser to Philip Sidney's evocations of the poet's capacity to make "things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like" (Sidney 64).

For Goth, the primary Spenserian focus of that Sidneyan confidence in human creativity is Prometheus's fashioning of the first Elf in Book II, Canto X of *The Faerie Queene*. There the faerie Guyon discovers the history of his own Elfin race inscribed in a chronicle:

> It told, how first *Prometheus* did create
> A man, of many parts from beasts deryu'd,

*Reference: Maik Goth, "Spenser as Prometheus: The Monstrous and the Idea of Poetic Creation," *Connotations* 18.1-3 (2008/2009): 183-207.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debgoth01813.htm>.

> And then stole fire from heuen, to animate
> His worke, for which he was by *Ioue* depryu'd
> Of life him self, and hart-strings of an Aegle ryu'd. (II.x.70.5-9)

Goth correctly locates sources for this passage in Horace and Natale Conti (cf. 188). There may be yet another important humanist source, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Oratio de hominis dignitate*. In the opening paragraphs, Pico relates how God made Man after he had already created everything else in the universe and assigned it its proper place. Having nothing distinctive left with which to endow him, God gave him the power to choose his destiny:

> We have given you, O Adam, no visage proper to yourself, nor endowment properly your own, in order that whatever place, whatever form, whatever gifts you may, with premeditation, select, these same you may have and possess through your own judgement and decision. The nature of all other creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature. I have placed you at the very center of the world, so that from that vantage point you may with greater ease glance round about you on all that the world contains. We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior orders whose life is divine. (8-9)

As in Spenser, the human creature exhibits both bestial and divine aspects. Neither wholly one nor the other, he alone enjoys the ability to "fashion yourself in the form you may prefer." In a sense, God creates humanity to create itself. Man's creative capacity is the surest sign of his divine origin. But depending on how he uses that capacity, he may either ascend to the angels or descend to the animal creation.

Pico's retelling of the creation story, with its several points of analogy to the Prometheus myth, would have intrigued Spenser because of its emphasis on humanity's moral self-fashioning. After all, Spenser tells us in the "Letter to Raleigh," appended to the 1590 *Faerie Queene*,

that "[t]he generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" (714). For all writers in the high humanist tradition, the belief that humanity can be schooled in "vertuous and gentle discipline" justifies the writing of poetry. The poet not only creates verse, but that verse in turn transforms its readership into moral beings. Poetry ultimately completes their creation as beings capable of rising "to the superior orders whose life is divine." Like Prometheus in the mythographic tradition that Goth relates, the poet fosters civilization.

In contrast to Pico, Conti, and the other writers on which they drew, however, Sidney and Spenser were not only humanists. They were also Protestants. Sidney and Spenser's shared Protestantism may explain one puzzling aspect of their concept of poetic genesis that Goth never fully addresses: why, in thinking about the poets' power to create a golden world independent of quotidian experience, did they fill it with monsters? To some extent, the giants, dragons, and gorgons in *The Faerie Queene* contribute to its didactic agenda by allegorizing the vices it urges its readers to resist. But that is not the whole story. The fact that most of the poem's interior poets are sorcerers or contrivers of horror may signal flagging confidence in the whole humanist enterprise both Sidney and Spenser ostensibly espouse. In short, it may signal a Protestant sense that humanity is finally incapable of bettering its moral condition outside a state of Grace. As Spenser puts it in Book I of *The Faerie Queene*, just before Redcrosse's apocalyptic encounter with the Dragon, "If any strength we haue, it is to ill" (I.x.1.8).

The crux of Sidney and Spenser's predicament is the Protestant theology of the Fall. The reformers' emphasis on predestination and the bondage of the will shortcircuited the humanist education program.[1] From the perspective of Luther, Calvin, and their many English followers, human beings were not free to fashion themselves in any way they wished. They might aspire to the nature of the angels, but their fallen will made them worse than beasts. The glimmerings of a lost capacity for good made them all the more monstrous. In *On the*

Bondage of the Will, Luther repeatedly used the word "monstrous" to refer to humanity's moral blindness and incapacity for good:

> And what can be more monstrous! "The light (saith Christ) shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not," John i.! Who could believe this? Who hath heard the like—that the light should shine in darkness, and yet, the darkness still remain darkness, and not be enlightened! (102)

> "Free-will" is defined to be of that impotency, 'that it cannot will any thing good without grace, but is compelled into the service of sin; though it has an endeavour, which, nevertheless, is not to be ascribed to its own powers.'—A monster truly! which, at the same time, can do nothing by its own power, and yet, has an endeavour within its own power: and thus, stands upon the basis of a most manifest contradiction! (164-65)

In *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin famously declared that "Wherefore, although we grant that the image of God was not utterly effaced and destroyed in him, it was, however, so corrupted, that any thing which remains is fearful deformity […]" (107). He makes the same point in similar language in his *Commentary on Genesis*: "But now, although some obscure lineaments of that image are found remaining in us; yet are they so vitiated and maimed, that they may truly be said to be destroyed. For besides the deformity which everywhere appears unsightly, this evil also is added, that no part is free from the infection of sin" (49).

This pessimistic view of humanity's bondage to sin limits Sidney's confidence in poetry's capacity to improve the moral lives of its readers.[2] His Protestant misgivings surface only a few sentences after the passage that Goth quotes:

> Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man's wit with the efficacy of nature, but rather give right honor to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who, having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature. Which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth surpassing her doings, with no small argument to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of Adam, since our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it. (65-66)

This passage begins with the standard, humanist tribute to the imagination's capacity to outstrip nature. Almost as if fearing that such claims might sound hubristic, Sidney reframes them not just as a compliment to human ingenuity, but to the God who first endowed humanity with an element of His own creative power. God has not only given people dominion over nature, but also blessed them with an imagination that can even surpass the works of nature by envisioning "heroes, demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like." For Sidney, our capacity to create is the ultimate proof of our creation in the image of our divine Creator.

But if our creative powers attest to divine creation, they also remind us of our present depravity. Just at the point when his exhilaration over the imagination's power to overgo nature brings Sidney to an almost blasphemous identification with God, he integrates it into a classically Protestant lament on the bondage of the will. Humanity's poetic powers signal not only the exalted beginning of Adam's story but also its tragic conclusion. Fallen humanity can imagine a golden world, but lacks the purity and freedom of will to bring it into concrete existence. In the classic humanist paradigm, the poet can bring a better world into being by inspiring his or her readers to live more moral lives. Sidney trumpets that message throughout the *Apology*, but he finally doubts its applicability to a fallen world. Despite all the talk about golden worlds glimpsed by the imagination, Sidney believes as a Protestant that the world he inhabits is brazen in the extreme, so hardened in sin that it can only be redeemed by grace. Poetry finally occupies a position in Sidney's aesthetic parallel to the Law in Luther's theology. It serves first and foremost as an indictment of our fallen state rather than as a sufficient means to amelioration.

The contrast with Pico is striking. In the *Oratio*, Pico retold the creation story without any reference to a fall. Endowed with a free will, humanity can rise to the angelic or degenerate into the bestial. In Sidney's *Apology*, that choice is tragically limited. People can never redeem themselves from the depravity that Protestant writers insisted made them worse than beasts in the sight of God. As in Luther and

Calvin, they are monstrously divided beings, glimpsing an angelic perfection they can never attain. It is no wonder that Sidney's catalogue of what the human mind can conjure up—"heroes, demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies"—rapidly descends into variations on monstrosity.

Numerous critics have commented on the fundamentally Protestant character of Book I of *The Faerie Queene*.[3] At its simplest level, Redcrosse's career unfolds as a series of tragic lapses and rescues by forces outside himself that betoken grace: Una, Arthur, and the providential accident of collapsing beside the Well and Tree of Life. Every episode emphasizes the limits of his abilities and knowledge. Redcrosse stands about as far as you can get from Pico's humanist hero who chooses the path of virtue through sheer force of will. Singularly incapable of learning, he makes the same mistakes over and over. As an early anti-hero in English literary history, however, he does have something in common with Sidney, grasping for virtue but prevented by his "infected will" from ever achieving it. He is less an Aeneas or a Cyrus than a Protestant Everyman whose story every reader will eventually reenact not by choice but through tragic necessity.

Critics should be wary of applying Book I's more confessional lessons to *The Faerie Queene's* later books, which focus more on the moral victories humanity can achieve within the limited order of nature. But even in the later books, the monsters tend to figure aspects of the individual or social character that can never be fully dispelled. The moment you kill one monster, another one pops up to take its place. Regardless of all the poem's niceties of ethical distinction, there is a sense in which all the monsters are finally one monster, the "infected will" that so defines human character in the Protestant tradition. The poem's proliferation and iteration of monsters underlies the virulence of the corpse-like Maleger, who recovers strength whenever he falls to the ground. Only Arthur, who figures a more-than-mortal agency throughout the poem, can defeat him by throwing him into a lake. Scholars have long recognized that moment as an allegory of human-

ity's dependence on baptismal grace to overcome the bondage of the old Adam, the corruption of morality that Maleger embodies.[4]

Goth has identified several humanist subtexts for the Elfin chronicle that Guyon reads only a canto before Maleger's appearance. I have added Pico to the mix. The more we read that episode in the context of other actions in Book II, however, the more difficult it is to accept it solely as an affirmation of the humanist confidence in poetry's power to restrain vice and inspire virtue. There is something disturbingly necrophilic about the fact that Prometheus stitches the first Elf together out of the parts of beasts. As Goth correctly notes, Spenser literalizes those parts in a rather queasy-making opposition to Conti, who allegorized them as character traits that people share with various animals. That necrophilic tendency to play with body parts eerily foreshadows Maleger, who not only looks like an animated corpse himself but sports "an Helmet light, / Made of a dead mans skull" (II.xi.22.8-9). With its bifurcated identity as an amalgamation of animal part ensouled by heavenly fire, the first Elf glances back to Luther's and Calvin's characterization of humanity suspended between virtuous aspirations and the limits of a mortal, fallen will.

The "*Antiquitee* of *Faery*" (II.ix.60.2) in which Guyon discovers the story of the first Elf is only one of the books in Eumnestes's cell. While Guyon is reading it, Arthur discovers his racial origins in "*Briton moniments*" (II.ix.59.6). The fairy chronicle presents a brief and idealized account of recent Tudor history in which the "mightie *Oberon*" (Henry VIII; II.x.75.8) bequeaths his throne to "the fairest *Tanaquill*" (76.4) or Gloriana (Elizabeth I). The allegory excludes Henry VIII's other children, Edward VI's untimely death, the enmity between Elizabeth and her sister Mary, and whatever else that might make the Tudor past seem less-than-glorious. "*Briton moniments*," on the other hand, is much truer to history, at least as Geoffrey of Monmouth, Spenser's principal source, portrayed it. Its title alone, with its echo of the Latin "*monere*," opens the possibility that it serves more as a warning than as a commemorative celebration of the British past. There is very little heroism here. The chronicle includes so many instances of

betrayal, infighting, and meaningless violence that it leaves Spenser's reader wondering why it fills Arthur with so much patriotic pride.

This is one of the few places in *The Faerie Queene* where the distinction between fairies and human beings seems to matter. By pairing the two chronicles, Spenser brackets aside any confidence in the ameliorative force of poetry that might still linger around the story of Prometheus. The Elfen history is indeed progressive, with one moment of national glory succeeding the next until they all culminate in the glorious reign of Tanaquill. But this is finally a history of fairies, not human beings. The human past, commemorated in "*Briton moniments*" is a saga of unremitting, shapeless brutality underscored by yet another pun in the title. The brutishness of the Britons reminds us again of a primal darkness in humanity that resists the most lofty educational programs.

Maik Goth's essay on the figure of Prometheus reminds us of the powerful connection between form and ideology in Spenser and other writers. The humanist belief that poetry participated in the divine ordering of the world underlay Spenser's sense of his vocation. The monsters that seem to proliferate so endlessly in *The Faerie Queene* attest to the fecundity of the human imagination. But humanism was not the only force shaping the poem, nor were writers like Conti the only ones thinking hard about the category of the monstrous. Monstrosity also figured in the Protestant worlds of Luther and Calvin, where it signaled the quintessential predicament of humans once created in the divine image but now cursed with an "infected will." Spenser's distinctive poetic arose from the collision between these radically different ways of imagining humanity's relationship to the creation.

University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN

NOTES

[1]See Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning*.

[2]See Weiner, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Protestantism*. My own thinking about Sidney in this response is profoundly indebted to Weiner.

[3]See, e.g., King 183-232; Hume 72-106.

[4]See Philip B. Rollinson's entry on "Maleger" in *The Spenser Encyclopedia* 449-50.

WORKS CITED

Calvin, John. *Calvin's Bible Commentaries: Genesis, Part I.* Trans. John King. London: 1847.

——. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Trans. Henry Beveridge. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2008.

Hume, Anthea. *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet*. Cambridge: CUP, 1984.

King, John N. *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990.

Luther, Martin. *On the Bondage of the Will.* Trans. Henry Cole. London: T. Bensley, 1823.

Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni. *On the Dignity of Man*. 1965. Trans. Charles Glenn Wallis. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998. 1-34.

Rollinson, Philip B. "Maleger." *The Spenser Encyclopedia*. Ed. A. C. Hamilton. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1990. 449-50.

Sidney, Philip. *Sir Philip Sidney's* An Apology for Poetry *and* Astrophil and Stella: *Texts and Contexts.* Ed. Peter C. Herman. Glen Allen: College Publishing, 2001.

Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene*. Ed. A. C. Hamilton, Hiroshi Yamashita, Toshiyuki Suzuki. 2nd ed. London: Longman, 2007.

——. "Letter to Raleigh." Hamilton, *The Faerie Queene* 714-18.

Strauss, Gerald. *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978.

Weiner, Andrew D. *Sir Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Protestantism: A Study of Contexts*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1978.

Connotations
Vol. 20.2-3 (2010/2011)

Elf-Fashioning Revisited: A Response to Maik Goth*

MATTHEW WOODCOCK

Taking a cue from Sir Philip Sidney's famous formulation of the poet as a "maker" possessed of the ability to bring forth "forms such as never were in nature, as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like" (Sidney, *Major Works* 216), Maik Goth has explored the important role that the monstrous has in early modern literary theory in exemplifying a poet's creative powers. Goth argues that the poet's capacity to fashion an "other nature" through his writing, and to take on a god-like role in creating a "second nature" that is superior to that of the real world, is epitomised by Sidney as the distinct ability to represent fantastic monstrous creatures. For Sidney, the one-eyed Cyclops and theriomorphic Chimera offer a taste of what a poet can offer when he is limited only by the bounds and constraints of his imagination, and freed from any form of external strictures imposed by a need to accurately present the world as it really is, rather than as it *could* be. The god-like ability of the poet to make monsters is compared by Goth to that of Prometheus, the figure found widely in classical mythology and its medieval and early modern reworkings who created mankind from clay, which is then animated (depending on which source we read) either by divine spirit or stolen heavenly fire. Goth characterises poetic creation as an essentially Promethean act, though exactly how we are conceiving the different facets of what constitutes a Promethean act is an issue to which we will return below. Indeed, one of the things that will be called for in

*Reference: Maik Goth, "Spenser as Prometheus: The Monstrous and the Idea of Poetic Creation," *Connotations* 18.1-3 (2008/2009): 183-207.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debgoth01813.htm>.

this response essay is a more nuanced conception of how we define and understand Promethean poetic creation in relation to Sidney and Spenser.

The Promethean connotations of Sidney's description of poetic creation are of great significance to Spenser in book two of *The Faerie Queene* during the extended building-as-body conceit used throughout the House of Alma episode. In II.ix-x, he presents the three mental faculties of imagination, reason, and memory as three linked chambers in the castle's turret or "head."[1] Spenser certainly appears to have had Sidney's *Defence of Poesy* in mind when describing the occupants of the chambers. The depiction of Eumnestes (memory) at work surrounded by "worm-eaten" books and scrolls (II.ix.57) echoes the similarly corrupt "mouse-eaten records" mentioned in Sidney's description of the hypothetical historian in the *Defence* (*Major Works* 220). It is in Eumnestes's chamber that Guyon first learns of the creation of the fairy race from the "Antiquitee of Faery lond," and reads how

> first *Prometheus* did create
> A man, of many parts from beasts deryu'd,
> And then stole fire from heuen, to animate
> His worke, for which he was by *Ioue* depryu'd
> Of life him self, and hart-strings of an Aegle ryu'd. (II.x.70.5-9)

The fairies of Spenser's fairyland are thus brought forth through the seminal act of elf-fashioning by Prometheus, the transgressive artificer. Goth has outlined some of the classical and early modern sources that Spenser may have drawn on here, though we might also look to the studies by Olga Raggio and Ernst Cassirer for an even wider appreciation of the rich mythological and intellectual traditions with which Spenser could have been working with in this passage.[2] For Cassirer, during the early modern period Prometheus fuses with the figure of Adam:

> The first man becomes an expression of the spiritual man, the *homo spiritualis*, and thus, all the spiritual tendencies of the epoch that are directed towards a renewal, rebirth, and regeneration of man come to be concentrated in his form. (Cassirer 93)

Although medieval thinkers seized primarily upon the negative aspects of the Prometheus figure, early modern writers came to celebrate him as a man-making artist, a "human hero of culture, the bringer of wisdom and of political and moral culture" (Cassirer 95). Prometheus, in such a view, thus embodies the spirit of the "renaissance" itself. The implications of such an interpretation of the myth both for Spenser and for early modern thought and literature as a whole is obviously matter for a much larger, more wide-ranging analysis than is offered here. My present focus is restricted primarily to Spenser's use of Prometheus in the fairy chronicle "Antiquitee of Faery lond." I have already examined the different stages of the fairy chronicle elsewhere when discussing how Spenser combines his dominant mythological conceit for Queen Elizabeth I with the panegyric topos of mythical genealogy to produce the "Antiquitee of Faery lond." Goth notes that my earlier study did not fully elaborate upon the Promethean aspect of the fairy creation myth, and I welcome the opportunity to try and address this particular point here.

Perhaps the most obvious place to begin is the description of how Spenser's Prometheus first fashions the fairy race. As Goth himself observes, we are presented with a creation story that is analogous or parallel to that of human creation; Prometheus makes *a* man rather than "Man" or mankind as a whole (cf. Goth 187). Prometheus works by forming together man "of many parts from beasts deryu'd" and assembles Elfe from already extant elements. Adam may have been formed by God from "dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7), but his fairy analogue seems to have been made in a far more piecemeal and workmanlike fashion, with Prometheus operating in a manner more akin to his latter-day imitator, Victor Frankenstein. Elfe is not created *ex nihilo*. Spenser presents several different creation myths during the course of *The Faerie Queene*. There is the spontaneous generation of the river Nilus (I.i.21), and that of the Garden of Adonis (wherein Elfe also encounters his mate Fay, "th'author of all woman kynd"; II.x.71). The Edenic creation story looms large in book one, and it is implied that Una's parents are in fact Adam and Eve (cf. I.vii.43; I.xii.26). But it

is the Promethean model of constructing a new creature from existing parts or elements that appears to be the closest to Spenser's own method of composition in *The Faerie Queene*.[3] Indeed, the creation myth of Spenser's fairies as expounded in the "Antiquitee of Faery lond" is actually a microcosm of the self-conscious elf-fashioning process that is modelled with increasing anxiety throughout *The Faerie Queene*.[4]

David Williams argues that the fundamental process involved in making or inventing a monster is one of deformation: a construction made in an aberrant, unnatural pattern or from a mixture of incongruous parts. Look at nearly all of the monsters found in classical mythology or medieval representations of the wondrous East and one repeatedly finds that they are formed by bringing together bodily features or characteristics from two or more different creatures (including humans).[5] Thus the griffin combines parts of a lion and eagle; the cynocephali has the body of a man and the head of a dog; the dragon conjoins traits of the serpent, bird and fish, and its fire-breathing variants bring together all four elements of earth, air, water and fire.[6] One could easily go on citing monsters and their varied bestial components, and indeed part of Williams's study takes the form of an extended taxonomy of different monsters and their constituent parts.[7] In some of the medieval romance sources for Spenser's fairies one finds this kind of piecemeal construction of the monstrous taking place in different ways. Spenser's Duessa, for example, shares many characteristics with the figure of Melusine, the half-woman, half-serpent who features in several fourteenth- and fifteenth-century French romances and whose story became woven into the mythical foundation narratives of the Angevin dynasty and, later, the Lusignan family of Poitou.[8] The monstrous nature of Melusine's lower parts is made all the more shocking by the preceding description of her upper body's great beauty:

> Unto hir nauell shewing ther full white,
> Like as is the snow A faire branche vppon,
> The body welle made, frike in ioly plite,

> The visage pure, fresh, clenly hir person,
> To properly speke off hir faccion,
> Neuer non fairer ne more reuerent;
> But A taill had beneth of serpent!
>
> Gret And orrible was it verily;
> With siluer And Asure the tail burlid was,
> Strongly the water ther bete, it flasshed hy. (*Romans of Partenay* 100)

A slightly different mode of composite construction is found in *Huon of Burdeux*, a fifteenth-century French prose romance translated into English in 1533 by John Bourchier, Lord Berners. In *Huon* the fairy king Oberon is presented as a hybrid formed from multiple historical and mythological traditions: his father is Julius Caesar; his mother is a fay, the Lady of the Privy Isle; his half-brother is Alexander the Great (*Huon* 72-73). *Huon* itself is something of a generic monster, a hybrid text that brings together the feudal, homosocial world of Charlemagne and the *chanson de geste* with the fantastic commonplaces and amorous interactions of chivalric romance. In doing so, *Huon* anticipates the fifteenth-century Italian interlaced romance-epics of Luigi Pulci, Matteo Boiardo and Ludovico Ariosto, which are also important sources for Spenser's poem.[9]

Turning to *The Faerie Queene* itself, we can identify (as Goth has begun to) how Spenser creates monstrous characters that are formed—or de-formed—from a brutal admixture of human and animal parts, as with Duessa (I.viii.48), or the mismatched features of more than one animal, as seen in Geryoneo's dragon (V.xi.24).[10] To these we might add the very first monster encountered in *The Faerie Queene*, Errour, who is formed from another unholy combination of the human and ophidian (I.i.14). She too is a creator (as well as a creature) and spews forth books and papers and a swarm of "deformed monsters" during her struggle with the Redcrosse knight. Nobody said that bringing forth monsters was going to be a pleasant sight. Towards the end of book five, and during the course of book six, we encounter yet another monstrous creature, the Blatant beast, whose gruesome maw contains a thousand tongues and iron teeth (VI.xii.26-7). *Mutabilitie*

Cantos aside, *The Faerie Queene* begins and ends with Gloriana's knights involved in combat with monstrous figures representing debased or deformed discourse, and the abuse of the power to create things through words. Monstrous, conjoined bodies do not always have to be repulsive and treated as negative, and one finds an exceptional example at the end of book three in the 1590 *Faerie Queene* when Spenser compares the embrace of the reunited Amoret and Scudamour to "that faire *Hermaphrodite*, [...] [s]o seemd those two, as growne together quite" (III.xii.46; emphasis in the original).[11]

Just as Spenser's poem presents a number of monstrous creatures formed from different parts, *The Faerie Queene* itself is assembled in a similarly composite manner from a host of varied, seemingly incongruous and ill-fitting materials, as many source studies have already demonstrated.[12] Goth's characterisation of Spenser as a Promethean poet who labours to construct their work from already extant materials comes close to sounding like Roland Barthes's description of how an author or "scriptor" works:

> We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. [...] The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. (Barthes 315)

Spenser's mode of composition comes closest to that outlined by Barthes in the British chronicle that Arthur reads in Eumnestes's library whilst Guyon simultaneously enjoys his fairy history book. It is somewhat ironic that II.x opens with the lines "Who now shall giue me words and sound, / Equall vnto this haughty enterprise?," a literal translation from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (20) and the first strand of a complex weave of intertextual materials in the canto. As Carrie Harper demonstrated long ago, Spenser assembles the British chronicle by bringing together images, ideas and phrases from many different

medieval and early modern historical sources in a masterpiece of syncretic storytelling.[13] Throughout *The Faerie Queene* Spenser's narrator expresses a certain anxiety that his imagined readers may believe that he has simply made up his story of fairyland and the fairy queen. He therefore deliberately downplays the agency of any sort of imaginative or creative faculty as the poem proceeds. For this reason Spenser's working model of poetic creation differs from that proposed by Sidney. Whereas Sidney fully embraces the powers of the poet's imagination, Spenser's narrator characterises the manner in which *The Faerie Queene* is composed—clearly with defensive intentions—as a process of reading and setting forth an already extant body of materials. The narrator seeks to compare his text with "old records from auncient times deriud" (II.ix.57) produced through the faculty of memory, rather than drawn from Phantastes's chamber, seemingly a props cupboard for the romance genre as a whole:

> His chamber was dispainted all with in,
> With sondry colours, in the which were writ
> Infinite shapes of thinges dispersed thin;
> Some such as in the world were neuer yit,
> Ne can deuized be of mortall wit;
> Some daily seene, and knowen by their names,
> Such as in idle fantasies doe flit:
> Infernall Hags, *Centaurs*, feendes, *Hippodames*,
> Apes, Lyons, Aegles, Owles, fooles, louers, children, Dames. (II.ix.50)

Nevertheless, the "history" that the narrator assembles and sets forth *is* full of all such things: only outside the House of Alma the "monstrous rablement" of Maleger's forces that lay in siege includes many creatures found within the list above. And several of these are such creatures "as never were in nature." It would appear that Spenser conceived the Promethean act of bringing forth monsters—or indeed elf-fashioning itself—to be a far more fraught and potentially perilous business than Sidney ever imagined.[14] One only has to look at Prometheus's fate to realise that Spenser's sense of caution and anxiety was well-founded.

By way of conclusion, I would like to propose two areas where Goth's argument concerning Promethean creation and the monstrous could be expanded further in order to prompt additional lines of questioning. Firstly, we could discuss Spenser's construction of monsters and the monstrous in relation to ideas found in modern "monster" theory concerning their semiotic value. Working from the etymology of the word "monster," from Latin *monstrum* "that which reveals" and the verb *monstrare* "to show," critics such as Williams (mentioned above), John Block Friedman, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and others have explored how the monstrous in medieval art and thought can be read in Neoplatonic terms as a negation of the visual and material.[15] Monsters thus function as symbols or signifiers that lead a reader to apprehend a more transcendent reality. As Cohen proposes, "a monster exists only to be read" ("Monster Culture" 4). Modern monster theory draws much from psychoanalytic and postcolonial approaches and offers a sophisticated critical framework and vocabulary for reading the monstrous in the works of Spenser and his contemporaries. At heart, however, it is still working from the same essential starting point as J. R. R. Tolkien's famous 1936 lecture-turned-essay "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics." Tolkien argued that the dragon in *Beowulf* functions as a means of alienating a reader from a purely literal reading of the poem and thus serves to signal the text's polysemous nature. Just as we can read through the dominant fairy allegory of Spenser's poem, and are invited to do so on many occasions by the poet himself, perhaps we need to deconstruct the monsters of *The Faerie Queene* and to view them as another facet of the poem's heuristic engagement of the reader.

Secondly, it is surely essential to say far more about the potentially transgressive nature of Prometheus's actions. In all of the sources for the myth that Goth cites, Prometheus's creativity is clearly cast as an affront to the gods, and he duly receives censure. In fact, without stressing the distinctly transgressive aspect of the Prometheus myth that Spenser uses in *The Faerie Queene*, what Goth conceives and defines as Promethean poetic creation really only looks to be identical to

Sidney's model of creativity. Goth would appear to be proposing more than this more limited definition of what constitutes a "Promethean" act. But if we are to go as far as to see Spenser as Prometheus, we need to take this particular part of the myth into account. How, therefore, do we make sense of identifications between Prometheus's elf-fashioning and that of Spenser? It is maybe naive to assume that Prometheus's actions can be viewed as politically neutral since they involve a fundamental violation against the gods. One encounters several artificer figures in *The Faerie Queene*, such as Archimago, Merlin and Busirane, but the character that probably comes closest to Prometheus, in that he receives punishment for his art, is the disgraced public poet Bonfont found at Mercilla's court. For producing "rayling rymes" he is nailed to a post by his tongue for all to see and his previous good name has been erased so that he is now known as Malfont (V.ix.25-26). Perhaps the anxieties implicitly revealed by this small, but disturbing vignette help us to explain why there is a tailing off of Spenserian elf-fashioning in the final two books of the poem. If the progenitor of the fairy race stands as a surrogate for Spenser himself then the spectre of censure is always going to be an intrinsic part of his conception of authorship in *The Faerie Queene*.

University of East Anglia
Norwich

NOTES

[1]All quotations and citations from *The Faerie Queene* are from the edition by A. C. Hamilton.

[2]See Goth 186-88.

[3]In a rare moment where Sidney refers to his own writing process, any suggestion of Promethean "making" is eschewed in favour of the more natural image of birthing; see Sidney, *Old Arcadia* 3.

[4]This is discussed in my study of Spenser's use of fairy mythology; see Woodcock 57-75.

[5]See Williams 14. See also Cohen, "Monster Culture" 11.

[6]Cf. Williams 195-97, 202-07. Cohen, *Of Giants* 131-35 discusses cynocephali.

[7]See Williams 107-215.

[8]See Woodcock 35-36, 117; and Le Goff 205-22.

[9]Goodman (13-14) discusses the hybrid romances of the fifteenth century and their legacy.

[10]Goth's passing suggestion that the description of Duessa in I.viii.48 reads like an inverted or debased form of the Petrarchan blazon, can be extrapolated far further (Goth 190). Can we indeed compare the construction of an idealised model of female beauty to a Promethean creation, female forms "such as never were in nature?" Spenser clearly recognised the potentially monstrous nature of what might be created by the Petrarchan poet in action when he depicts the chambers of Busirane's castle in III.xi.51: "A thousand monstrous formes therein were made, / Such as false loue doth oft vpon him weare, / For loue in thousand monstrous formes doth ofte appeare." Idealisation of female forms "such as never were in nature" also anticipates the airbrushed images in modern magazines and advertisements, and an attendant conception of beauty dominated by figures whose faces or bodies are heavily "made up" by means of both cosmetics and editorial artistry.

[11]As Williams notes (168-76), Plato viewed the hermaphrodite as the ideal, perfected realisation of eros, and the positive associations of the androgyne became firmly established in Judaeo-Christian theology.

[12]See, for example, Hankins; Nohrnberg; Hamilton.

[13]See also Woodcock 126-27.

[14]Sidney does mention the negative associations of the imagination at one point in the *Defence of Poesy*, though he does so in the context of defending imaginative literature, and the uses to which it may be put, when questioning "shall the abuse of a thing make the right use odious?" (236). This is the fundamental principle of his reply to the third of the objections traditionally raised against poesy.

[15]See Williams; Friedman; Cohen, "Monster Culture"; Cohen, *Of Giants*; Jones and Sprunger.

WORKS CITED

Ariosto, Ludovico. *Orlando Furioso*. Trans. Guido Waldman. Oxford: OUP, 1974.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. Ed. David Lodge and Nigel Wood. Harlow: Longman, 2008. 313-16.

Cassirer, Ernst. *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy.* Trans. Mario Domandi. Oxford: Blackwell, 1963.

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters and the Middle Ages.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999.

——. "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)." *Monster Theory: Reading Culture.* Ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996. 3-25.

Friedman, John Block. *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981.

Goodman, Jennifer R. *Chivalry and Exploration, 1298-1630.* Woodbridge: Boydell P, 1998.

Hamilton, A. C., ed. *The Spenser Encyclopedia*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1990.

Hankins, John Erskine. *Source and Meaning in Spenser's Allegory: A Study of* The Faerie Queene. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1971.

Harper, Carrie A. *The Sources of the British Chronicle History in Spenser's* Faerie Queene. Philadelphia: Winston, 1910.

[*Huon of Burdeux*] *The Boke of Duke Huon of Burdeux, done into English by Lord Berners*. Ed. S. L. Lee. EETS ES 40, 41, 43, 50. London, 1882-87.

Jones, Timothy S., and David A. Sprunger, eds. *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations.* Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002.

Le Goff, Jacques. "Melusina: Mother and Pioneer." *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980. 205-22.

Nohrnberg, James. *The Analogy of* The Faerie Queene. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1976.

Raggio, Olga. "The Myth of Prometheus: Its Survival and Metamorphoses up to the Eighteenth Century." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 21 (1958): 44-62.

The Romans of Partenay, or of Lusignen. Ed. W. W. Skeat. EETS OS 22. London, 1866.

Sidney, Philip. *The Major Works.* Ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones. Oxford: OUP, 2002.

——. *The Old Arcadia*. Ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones. Oxford: OUP, 1994.

Spenser, Edmund. *The Faerie Queene*. Ed. A. C. Hamilton. 2nd ed. London: Longman, 2001.

Tolkien, J. R. R. "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Critics." *The Monsters and the Critics, and Other Essays*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: Unwin, 1983. 5-48.

Williams, David. *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Medieval Thought and Literature*. Exeter: Exeter UP, 1996.

Woodcock, Matthew. *Fairy in* The Faerie Queene*: Renaissance Elf-Fashioning and Elizabethan Myth-Making.* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

Connotations
Vol. 20.2-3 (2010/2011)

An Answer to Edmund Miller and Anita Gilman Sherman*

MARGRET FETZER

I am honoured that my paper, "Donne's Sermons as Re-enactments of the Word," has been met by two such insightful responses by Edmund Miller and Anita Gilman Sherman. The following constitutes an answer to the points raised in those papers.

Turning first to Miller's response, I am sorry that my assumption of sermons and plays both taking place on Sundays, and possibly even at parallel times, seems to be mistaken, as Miller's close reading of the *Declaration of Sports* suggests. Apart from that, however, I could not agree more with Miller's insistence on Donne's inherent affinity and indebtedness to the theatre. When I argued that Donne may have been careful not to directly allude to the theatre, because of its "dubious moral status" (cf. Miller 9), it was far from me to imply that Donne himself would have shied away from situations of moral ambiguity, nor that he would needs have shared the misgivings some of his preacher colleagues may have had with regard to drama and plays. What I did mean to draw attention to—and I do not believe Miller contradicts me on that count—was the fact that, in his function as a preacher, Donne may have been careful not to make his appreciation of theatrical technique, and possibly the dramatic medium in general, too obvious, in order to avoid offending the taste and moral expecta-

*Reference: Margret Fetzer, "Donne's Sermons as Re-enactments of the Word," *Connotations* 17.1 (2007/2008): 1-13; Edmund Miller, "A Response to Margret Fetzer's 'Donne's Sermons as Re-enactments of the Word,'" *Connotations* 19.1-3 (2009/2010): 9-13; Anita Gilman Sherman, "Donne's Sermons as Re-enactments of the Word: A Response to Margret Fetzer," *Connotations* 19.1-3 (2009/2010): 14-20.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debfetzer01701.htm>.

tions of those who took a more critical stance towards plays and play-acting than he may have done. Indeed, the argument of my book *John Donne's Performances: Sermons, Poems, Letters and* Devotions relies precisely upon the recognition that Donne's affinities to early modern theatre and drama cannot be overestimated and have so far been notoriously neglected by Donne criticism. In the chapter on Donne's sermons, I pay attention to various extracts from his sermons which use vocabulary and metaphors from theatrical contexts in order to illuminate their homiletic arguments, and it certainly would have been useful to include the valuable sermon quotations made by Miller which would have further supported my argument. I share Miller's judgement, that, in his sermons, and even as regards his oeuvre as a whole, Donne never articulated any whole-sale toleration of the theatre, nor did he anywhere actively encourage theatre and dramatic technique. But whether consciously or not, he did, and here again I believe myself in agreement with Miller, acknowledge the dramatic medium as an influential discourse and source of metaphor for his contemporaries and himself.

Anita Gilman Sherman draws attention to the altogether different atmospheres of church as opposed to theatre—certainly a point well worth considering and probably too little elaborated in my essay. However, I wonder if we should accept Calvinist doctrines of predestination as unquestionably for Donne's sermons as Sherman seems to do. Admittedly, there can be little doubt that, for many of Donne's listeners, the idea of being consigned to either salvation or eternal death and damnation would have constituted an undisputable dogma of their faith. Donne's sermons, by contrast, as I argue in greater detail in *John Donne's Performances*, repeatedly present man's union with God as the result of a mutual process and herein combine Roman Catholic and reformed approaches to salvation.

If, as I suggest, God's promise of salvation is performed in the preacher's invitations to identify with the sermon, then Donne's sermons appear to attribute too much agency to the individual's free will and actions to be subsumed under Calvinist doctrines of predestina-

tion and the irresistibility of grace. In one of his earliest sermons, for example, Donne describes the relation between God and man with reference to Rev. 3:20: "Christ promises to come to the door, and to knock at the door, and to stand at the door, and to enter if any man open; but he does not say, he will break open the door: it was not his pleasure to express such an earnestness, such an Irresistibility in his grace, so" (1.6: 255-56). At this time, man has not yet opened his door to God and, unless he does so, he will not be able to be reconciled to Him. God's knocking and calling must be heard, man's union with Christ cannot be effected by Christ's agency alone but relies on the individual's adequate response: it is the result of a reciprocal process, and one is not surprised to find that this should be so, for, if God was happy to redeem man even without his consent, preaching, the act of encouraging people to consent voluntarily to be united with God, would be rather futile. Such a view of the relationship between God and man accounts for Donne's reluctance to get too involved with Calvinist theories of predestination (Ferrell 61), as the passage very literally distances itself from the Calvinist doctrine of the "irresistibility of grace" (cf. Cummings 389) which essentially complements the doctrine of predestination.

Nor would Donne have been alone in eschewing the rigour of Calvinist doctrine: even the Thirty-Nine Articles (1563), as Cressy and Ferrell remark in their introductory note, "present the Calvinist doctrine of predestination in such a way as to render it practicably ambiguous" (59). Article 17, for example, explicitly warns against too exaggerated a contemplation of this doctrine: whereas it may have a positive effect on godly people, for "curious and carnal persons," it constitutes "a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchlessness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation" (Cressy and Ferrell 64). This does not mean that the "take-up" expected from the audience is but a matter of course: after all, there are, as we know from Austin, many ways in which performatives may misfire, and Donne likewise explores how his sermons can miss their point, for example if

hearers fail to recognise themselves in the examples he offers to them, fail, in Sherman's words perhaps, to recognise themselves as "providentially interpellated" (Sherman 18). To illustrate this difficulty, I would like to repeat a quotation given in my article: "It is a fearfull obduration, to be Sermon-proofe, 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). Indeed, "the challenge is to interpret take-up" (Sherman 16)—it poses itself for each and every listener of Donne's, and certainly, as I hope to have made clear in my essay, was not always successfully responded to.

I appreciate the distinction Sherman draws between exemplarity and typology, yet I doubt that these two terms either were or are commonly considered as clearly distinct from one another as Sherman suggests. In the course of writing on Donne at least, my reading of secondary literature has taught me otherwise. "Example" and "type" are often used interchangeably, and while one possibility to deal with this unclarity would have been to provide unambiguous definitions of my own, I have chosen a different strategy. As Sherman points out, "the typological imagination […] has more force—and is ultimately more dangerous" (Sherman 19)—while this may be so, it does not seem to me that Donne was any better at distinguishing example and typology from one another than many of his twentieth-century critics.

To act by way of example is all very well, and certainly both useful and inevitable for one's conversion to God. But the risk of "presuming of mercy by example" (6.10: 209), which I have mentioned but in passing, is lurking everywhere: to consider oneself, in a positive sense "providentially interpellated" may be dangerously arrogant, as Donne makes most explicit in one of his sermons on the Conversion of St Paul: "Now, Beloved, wilt thou make this perverse use of this proceeding, God is rich in Mercy, Therefore I cannot misse Mercy?" (6.10: 207). The speaker warns his listeners of being "[s]o ill a Historian as to say, God hath called *Saul,* a Persecutor, then when he breathed threatnings and slaughter, then when he sued to the State for a Commission to persecute Christ" (6.10: 208), and hence permit themselves to be

deluded to believe that they will likewise be spared by God. "God forbid. It is not safe concluding out of single Instances" (6.10: 208). The sermon explicitly addresses the practice of 'inserting' oneself into examples offered by the Bible or the sermon—but not without drawing attention to the dangers inherent in doing so. On the one hand, sermons have to rely on example and exemplification to involve their listeners in their discourse—on the other, wherever one appropriates for oneself too grand and positive a Biblical figure, wherever what Sherman calls being "providentially interpellated" is, however unnoticeably, driven by an individual's wishful thinking, theatrical identification and exemplification becomes dangerous.

I am grateful to Anita Gilman Sherman for drawing my attention to Gina Bloom's *Voice in Motion*: for the ambiguous stance which Donne's sermons take towards the merits and dangers of re-enacting Biblical example is mirrored and deepened by Bloom's insight that, "while sermons propose that receptive hearing is the mark of a good Christian, they simultaneously warn about the dangers of the ears being too impressionable" (Bloom 133). Since positively inspiring and seductively presumptuous examples may offer themselves simultaneously, each listener indeed better "take heed *what* [he] hear" (7.16: 405; cf. Bloom 113, cf. Sherman 19), for hearing, no less than theatrical re-enactment of homiletic examples constitutes not only "a multivalent," but also an ambivalent, "transformative practice" (Bloom 113).

Donne does not seem to accept unquestionably the doctrine of predestination, which typically manifests itself in the conviction of being "providentially interpellated"—for how am I to know if, in believing myself to be predestined for salvation, or typologically prefigured in St Paul or Christ, my own wish rather than God's election, may be father to this thought? "The belief that the long arm of God has reached down and singled out an individual, tapping him on the shoulder and knocking on his heart, differs from the bashful experience of identification occasioned by a dynamic preacher" (Sherman 18). True enough, but subjective interpretation and wishful thinking, Donne's sermons seem to suggest, may play a role in either case. The

danger consists precisely in the fact that there is a continuum between exemplarity and typology, a danger to which even the preacher himself may not be wholly immune: for, within the space of only eight pages, the speaker of the above-mentioned sermon, who had begun by admonishing his listeners to beware of identifying with the prominent example of St Paul's conversion, concludes by aspiring to identify with the figure of Christ Himself.

To conclude: Sherman may be right in wondering if my emphasis on the indebtedness of Donne's sermons to strategies of theatrical reenactment and exemplification is not too strong. Her argument, however, seems to presuppose that Donne accepted Calvinism whole-sale whereas I would contend that both his concept of conversion, as well as his awareness of the dangers of typology and (theatrical) exemplification (cf. 6.10: 209), demonstrate how uncomfortable he was with some of its doctrines. I am aware that there is a trend in recent Donne criticism (Sherman mentions Stachniewski) to view him as unambiguously Protestant or even, more specifically, Calvinist—Mary Papazian's 2003 publication on *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives* would be another example of that tendency. In the 1980s, by contrast, John Carey viewed Donne as crypto-Catholic, and P. M. Oliver's 1997 publication *John Donne's Religious Writing: A Discourse of Feigned Devotion* to some extent followed suit. My own article is part of the larger project of *John Donne's Performances*, in which I aim to read Donne's oeuvre not within the context of a specific religious denomination and instead hope to show how the discourse and communicative system of early modern drama have shaped his writing to a hitherto unrecognised extent.

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität
München

WORKS CITED

Bloom, Gina. *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2007.

Carey, John. *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*. 1981. London: Faber and Faber, 1990.

Cressy, David, and Lori Anne Ferrell, eds. *Religion and Society in Early Modern England: A Sourcebook*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Cummings, Brian. *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace*. Oxford: OUP, 2002.

Donne, John. *The Sermons of John Donne*. Ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson. 10 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1953-1964.

Ferrell, Lori Anne. "Donne and His Master's Voice, 1615-1625." *John Donne Journal* 11 (1992): 59-70.

Fetzer, Margret. *John Donne's Performances: Sermons, Poems, Letters and* Devotions. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2010.

Oliver, P. M. *Donne's Religious Writing: A Discourse of Feigned Devotion*. London: Longman, 1997.

Papazian, Mary Arshagouni, ed. *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2003.

Stachniewski, John. *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1991.

Connotations
Vol. 20.2-3 (2010/2011)

Worcestershirewards: Wodehouse and the Baroque[*1]

LAWRENCE DUGAN

> *I should define as baroque that style which deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) all its possibilities and which borders on its own parody.*
> (Jorge Luis Borges, *The Universal History of Infamy* 11)

> *Unfortunately, however, if there was one thing circumstances weren't, it was different from what they were, and there was no suspicion of a song on the lips. The more I thought of what lay before me at these bally Towers, the bowed-downer did the heart become.*
> (P. G. Wodehouse, *The Code of the Woosters* 31)

A good way to understand the achievement of P. G. Wodehouse is to look closely at the style in which he wrote his Jeeves and Wooster novels, which began in the 1920s, and to realise how different it is from that used in the dozens of other books he wrote, some of them as much admired as the famous master-and-servant stories. Indeed, those other novels and stories, including the Psmith books of the 1910s and the later Blandings Castle series, are useful in showing just how distinct a style it is. It is a unique, vernacular, contorted, slangy idiom which I have labeled baroque because it is in such sharp contrast to the almost bland classical sentences of the other Wodehouse books. The *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* describes the baroque style as "marked generally by use of complex forms, bold or-

[*]For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debdugan02023.htm>.

namentation, and the juxtaposition of contrasting elements often conveying a sense of drama." Later in the definition "grotesqueness" and "flamboyance" are used, among other words. (J. Mitchell Morse might have used the label 'rabelesian,' his term for an exuberant style.)[2]

With that definition in mind, along with whatever associations the word has developed for us relating to painting or architecture or music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, let us consider a passage from *The Mating Season* (1949), one of the later Jeeves-Wooster novels:

> When I was a piefaced lad of some twelve summers, doing my stretch at Malvern House, Bramley-on-Sea, the private school conducted by the Rev. Aubrey Upjohn, I remember hearing the Rev. Aubrey give the late Sir Philip Sidney a big build-up because, when wounded at the battle of somewhere and offered a quick one by a companion in arms, he told the chap who was setting them up to leave him out of that round and slip his spot to a nearby stretcher-case, whose need was greater than his. (38)

Sentences like these do not occur in Wodehouse's books outside of the Jeeves and Wooster novels, and he wrote dozens that do not tell of their adventures. The character, the personality of Bertie Wooster required such a new style when Wodehouse created him in the early 1920s, for the creation of this especially unique character encouraged the development of a new first-person voice that constitutes the style of the novels. This new baroque Wodehouse may also have been a response to the incipient modernism of the late 1910s that Wodehouse rejected, apparently; but that he may have met on its own grounds by creating a radical new style which is such a contrast to the rather traditional romantic themes that the Jeeves-Wooster books appear to follow.

The most important popular critics, including Hilarie Belloc, Evelyn Waugh and George Orwell, all of whom had great admiration for Wodehouse's novels, were quite attentive to his earlier non-Jeeves-Wooster books. With the exception of Usborne, to whom I shall return, no one has defined the unique change in style that came with the

voice of Bertie Wooster. The best way to consider the change is to look at the first style developed by Wodehouse as a young writer in the period 1900-1920.

2.

If Bertie Wooster is a unique character, he was not the first character of his kind. A similar kind of character, usually called a "knut," had first appeared in late nineteenth-century music hall skits, portraying an irresponsible young man-about-town who gets in comic difficulties. Later he appeared in plays and fiction, from characters in *Punch* to Algernon Moncrieff in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (cf. Usborne 130-35).

Wodehouse began writing sports stories for schoolboy magazines at the age of eighteen while working for the East India Bank in London where his father had found a job for him, refusing to allow him to attend a university. Within two years he was earning enough money to quit the bank job; and he worked as a writer for the next seven decades. From the schoolboys stories that Waugh and Orwell grew up reading in the Edwardian era, about cricket matches at good schools, he gradually progressed to a more sophisticated, if related world, the upper-class life of London, and country house and village life in Shropshire and Worcestershire. Dulwich College, his public school, was a good one (Raymond Chandler was another alumnus), Wodehouse's parents were well off, and his social world high enough that he was to begin a series of novels and connected tales with various upper class settings, such as Blandings Castle, home of the Earl of Emsworth, a locale and character that lasted through numerous books and several decades. This is from the novel *Something Fresh*, published in 1915, several years before Jeeves and Wooster appeared:

> They were variously occupied. In the long chair nearest the door, the Hon. Frederick Threepwood—Freddie to pals—was reading. Next to him sat a young man whose eyes, glittering through rimless spectacles, were concentrated on the upturned faces of several neat rows of playing-cards. (Rupert

> Baxter, Lord Emsworth's invaluable secretary, had no vices, but he sometimes relaxed his busy brain with a game of solitaire.) Beyond Baxter, a cigar in his mouth and a weak high-ball at his side, the Earl of Emsworth took his ease. (58)

The contrast to Bertie Wooster's voice in the passage quoted above is obvious. The third-person narrator is observant and ironic, a far cry from Bertie's unmistakable, contorted, emphatic voice.

The novel *Psmith in the City* was published in 1910. The term 'period piece' might have been created for it, if by that we mean something that is excellent for its time. The book has stayed in print sporadically, and it is worth noting that Orwell was especially fond of the Psmith and Mike books. In this scene in a restaurant, one young man is trying to express his gratitude to another:

> Psmith called for the bill and paid it in the affable manner of a monarch signing a charter. Mike sat silent, his mind in a whirl. He saw exactly what had happened. He could almost hear Psmith talking his father into agreeing with his scheme. He could think of nothing to say. As usually happened in any emotional crisis in his life, words absolutely deserted him. The thing was too big. Anything he could say would sound too feeble. […] The occasion demanded some neat, polished speech; and neat, polished speeches were beyond Mike.
> "I say, Psmith—" he began.
> Psmith rose.
> "Let us now," he said, "collect our hats and meander to the club, where, I have no doubt, we shall find Comrade Bickersdyke." (196)

Outside of the Jeeves-Wooster series, Wodehouse wrote in this bland, sophisticated style.[3] Contrast this to Bertie Wooster in a restaurant in *The Inimitable Jeeves* (1924):

> I was still brooding when I dropped in at the oyster-bar at Buck's for a quick bracer. I needed a bracer rather particularly at the moment, because I was on my way to lunch with Aunt Agatha. A pretty frightful ordeal, believe me or believe me not, even though I took it that after what had happened at Roville [a racetrack] she would be in a fairly subdued and amiable mood. I had just had one quick and another rather slower, and was feeling about as cheerio as was possible under the circs, when a muffled voice hailed me

> from the north-east, and, turning round, I saw young Bingo Little propped up in a corner, wrapping himself around a sizable hunk of bread and cheese. (47)

Until the Jeeves-Wooster novels no young man-about-town in a Wodehouse book was seen "wrapping himself around a sizable hunk of bread and cheese" in a corner, certainly not at the Oyster-Bar, whatever the circumstances, which were not "circs." Both incidents described above involve upper-class characters in reasonably similar settings. One man is reflective, the other is scared. Yet we are much closer to the comic distraught voice in the second passage than we are to the first. Wodehouse in the first passage is almost Olympian in his perspective, showing us the young man, the stylised emotion, the obvious solution, and this is generally true not only of his third-person Edwardian narrator, but of those he created much later when, for instance, he wrote several novels about Uncle Freddie, the Viscount Ickenham.

This contrast between clarity and irony on the one hand, and baroque comedy and confusion on the other, can be traced to Bertie Wooster's character and voice.

3.

There are fourteen novels in the Jeeves-Wooster series, several of them picaresque collections of incidents and characters, while several more follow a single story-line from beginning to end, with chapters having less the character of individual stories or episodes. This is the chief fault line in the books: those that are novels in the strictest sense, for instance *Joy in the Morning* (1946; published as *Jeeves in the Morning* in the U.S.) and *The Code of the Woosters* (1938); and those in which the chapters are more closed compartments with doors to other chapters, before and after. *The Inimitable Jeeves* (1924) and *Very Good, Jeeves* (1930) are examples of this looser, picaresque construction.

The plots have two consistent characteristics: a very tight farcical construction, and the style I have outlined. Once Wodehouse opens

the door to the farcical events he describes, his plots adhere to a seamless logic. Comic conclusions are arrived at, explained and reconciled, usually by Jeeves, but in the doing, not the telling. That is Bertie Wooster's critical role and the basis of my argument.

To give a broad summary: in these books, Bertie Wooster, a wealthy Englishman living in about the year 1912, perhaps thirty-two years old, with a good imagination, about average intelligence, and terrible judgement, gets into trouble, and his valet, Jeeves, gets him out of it, and explains to Bertie how he got him out of it, all the while maintaining the courtesies of the master-servant relationship. Bertie narrates all of this to the reader. Many details can be added to the profile, for Wodehouse carefully created a world of details surrounding them (Bertie is an alumnus of Magdalen College, Oxford; he is a very good dart player; Jeeves loves to fish and has an Uncle Charlie who is a butler in Hampshire) for the sake of realism, but these are the absolute essentials, with Jeeves explaining things to Bertie and Bertie telling the story.

Jeeves' word is law; what he says is right, not because of social position, but the exact opposite, social merit. He is smarter and more skillful than anyone else, helping Bertie when he is up against an outraged aunt, an offended ex-fiancee, an important British Fascist, or an angry Judge. Yet it is all told to us by Bertie, who gives us an overview of the social landscape, and it is his array of difficulties that motivate all of the action.

But what kind of problems? For one thing, a demanding woman is almost always at the center of Bertie's acts. In the very first Jeeves story, "Jeeves Takes Charge," included in one of the picaresque books, *Carry On, Jeeves* (1925), he receives marching orders in the clearest possible manner from his fiancee of the moment, Florence Craye, who is leaving *his* uncle's country house in Shropshire for the weekend to attend a ball at another house twenty miles away, and who has instructions for Bertie: steal the manuscript of his elderly uncle's scandalous memoirs, about to be sent to a publisher, which will disgrace all involved, including her father who was the uncle's pal thirty years

before, in the 1880s. Bertie is quoting her, and so not speaking in his usual twisted syntax:

> I mean it. You may look on it as a test, Bertie. If you have the resource and courage to carry this thing through, I will take it as evidence that you are not the vapid and shiftless person most people think you. If you fail, I shall know that your Aunt Agatha was right when she called you a spineless invertebrate and advised me strongly not to marry you. It will be perfectly simple for you to intercept the manuscript, Bertie. It only requires a little resolution. (17)

In *The Code of the Woosters*, perhaps the best novel that Wodehouse ever wrote, Bertie Wooster leaves his London flat and spends several days at the house of Madeline Bassett's father in the country, of course taking his valet Jeeves with him. Madeline is his former fiancee and now Gussie Fink-Nottle, Bertie's close friend, is engaged to her. Bertie is quite happy for them, but wants to give them a wide berth, and is dismayed that he must spend several days at her father's large country house because she insists that the engagement is in peril and that he is the only one who can keep it intact. By chance, he must also deal with her father, Sir Watkyn Bassett (a judge), and his possession of a valuable piece of silver—a cow-creamer that his own Uncle Tom covets. Bertie must steal this silver cow-creamer, for if he does not, his uncle will allow his wonderful chef Anatole to go to work for Sir Watkyn in exchange for it. This horrifies Bertie, for he is often a guest of his Uncle Tom and Aunt Dahlia, and being a good sophisticated upper-class Englishman—Bertie is no blimp—he is a Francophile to the bone. He loves French cooking, and speaks French, although this is the only European side of him.[4] The only possible solace for Bertie at the opening of *The Code of the Woosters* is that both tasks can be accomplished at the same locale.

The story's farcical plot is wonderfully executed, with each chapter of about ten pages leading into the next, and various loose-ends that the reader had forgotten about being snatched up and handled by Wodehouse, until the end of the book. It begins with a key recurrent plot device mentioned above that is common (and unique) to the

series. Bertie's Aunt Dahlia cajoles him into her service, i.e. to steal the silver cow-creamer, just after the telegram from Madeline arrives demanding his presence at her father's house. The importuning female is a character who recurs repeatedly in the Jeeves-Wooster novels and stories, and she is as essential a plot device as the master-servant relationship itself, for she requires the creation of a very peculiar narrative persona, Bertie Wooster, who is likable, anxious to please, upper-class and has a very unusual combination of innocence and pride that manifests itself in a chivalrous attitude toward the opposite sex and a bizarre manner of speaking. Given the plot I have outlined above, a character emerges whom Bertie himself would have to label "a chump" (*Carry On, Jeeves* 29). Yet he is anything but that because of his remarkable talk, the voice that tells the stories. The creation of that voice makes him farcically plausible. Many other themes persist throughout the books, and it is obvious that the marriage theme is one of them, or as Robert A. Hall has pointed out, "resistance to marriage" (27). But the demands of a woman, young or old, send Bertie Wooster on his adventures. Here are two examples from *The Code of the Woosters*:

> But Love will find a way. Meeting Madeline Bassett one day and falling for her like a ton of bricks, he had emerged from his retirement and started to woo, and after numerous vicissitudes had clicked and was slated at no distant date to don the spongebag trousers and gardenia for buttonhole and walk up the aisle with the ghastly girl. (13)

> At all times and on all occasions, owing to years of fox-chivvying in every kind of weather, this relative has a fairly purple face, but one noted now an even deeper mauve than usual. The breath came jerkily, and the eyes gleamed with a goofy light. A man with far less penetration than Bertram Wooster would have been able to divine that there before him stood an aunt who had got the pip about something. (26)

The women in the novels are usually in their twenties or fifties, of marrying age or mothers and aunts. Bertie is a gentleman to the core—the unkind reference to a "ghastly girl" above is not typical and of course is not heard by the object of it. They need something, help of

some kind, and Bertie can provide it. The lady in question may be his good aunt, Dahlia, or his bad aunt, Agatha, or some combination of aunts ("Aunt crying to aunt like mastodons across the primal swamp"; *The Inimitable Jeeves* 122-23) or a girl to whom he was once engaged, or simply a lady friend he wants to please. The essence of the plots is that they always come to Bertie, and he answers the call. The men Bertie must face on behalf of the women he aids are, to put it simply, physical or legal threats, and in a sense much simpler problems. At the house he must visit he confronts Madeline's father; and Roderick Spode, a fascist leader of a group called the Black Shorts.[5] They threaten jail or violence. The women rarely threaten anything, they only warn, but they motivate nearly every one of the Jeeves-Wooster novels. In the farcical world of these tales, there is one man whom women can impose upon constantly, and he is Bertie Wooster.

How is he made believable? Why do they come to him? Why does he do what they want? Wodehouse's earlier books, and those that come after Jeeves and Wooster, are full of smart upper-class Englishmen who would do nothing for a demanding woman if they did not think the demand practical, from Psmith in the series of early novels in which he appears, to Uncle Fred (the Viscount Ickenham in the Blandings Castle books); who would not act anything like Bertie, who might perform a deed for a lady in distress that is quite risky, or dangerous, but only if he thought it necessary or it amused him, not simply because she wanted him to do it.

Bertie Wooster is different, he takes his marching orders from his female friends, enemies and relatives, making only the briefest of protests about the impracticality or danger of what is demanded, as scared or apprehensive as he may be. This is a given but is re-established at the beginning of all of the books. He is like a comic knight who is given a quest and performs it. The comedy lies in his unknightly voice describing himself, the ladies, the men he must confront, and Jeeves, his valet, who saves him.

The reason for this is that Bertie is proud (or vainglorious) and humble (or a chump), two qualities that everyone from the man in the

street to a philosopher such as Pascal argue do not sit well together. Wodehouse is in partial comic agreement with the great Pascalian model. He sees pride and humility as two poles of self-esteem, but he brings them together in one man. This is not a realistic mixture, but a farcical one. It shows us man at his worst, as Aristotle tells us comedy does, but it is redeemed by the engaging foolish hope that we hear in the narrator's voice rather than the despair that Pascal tells us we should expect.[6]

Usborne is the one critic who discusses Bertie's personality carefully. He gives the best summation of his character that I have found. His long chapter in *Wodehouse at Work*, titled "Bertie Wooster" (150-76), is essential as an analysis of the basic innocence of Bertie's character. In his view Bertie is a genial goof, but he also acknowledges that he is a perplexed gallant. He stresses that Bertie has never really developed, but unlike other critics he realizes that he never really could as long as Wodehouse wanted to write the farces that he did. There was never any lack of invention in Wodehouse, his imaginative well was about as deep as any on record, but to let Bertie grow old was to let him slip away. Usborne recognizes the distinctiveness of Bertie's speech—perhaps I should say acknowledges it, for almost anyone would hear it—and ties it to his undeveloped, youthful personality. He emphasizes his critical role as a first-person narrator and the world he creates through his unique language. He notes also the similarity between Psmith and Jeeves, both very intelligent and concerned men, although superficially aloof, who stage-manage their tales, speaking in distinct idioms in which he hears traces of Bertie. This comparison of Psmith and Jeeves is quite astute, for we do not hear in their languid periods Bertie's energetic voice. As Usborne himself says, "Jeeves speaks copperplate *Times* Augustan to Bertie's *Sporting Life* vernacular" (201).[7]

All of the key literary tropes appear scattered throughout the other books, although never with anything like Bertie's tangled combinations that break them up and reassemble them in his own peculiar manner, which I call baroque. As said above, Morse's label 'rabele-

sian' (although he does not discuss Wodehouse) for enthusiastic, and parodic, literature, might also fit. In *Mulliner Nights* the condescending narrator, with a smooth voice rather like that of the hero in the Psmith books, occasionally breaks into a patch of Bertiese as he speaks in another character's voice, male or female:

> "I mean a goof," said the girl. "A gump. A poop. A nitwit and a returned empty. Your name came up the other day in the course of conversation at home, and mother said you were a vapid and irreflective guffin, totally lacking in character and purpose." (88)

> Hobnobbing in cabs, by Jove ! Revelling tete-a-tete at luncheon-tables, forsooth! […] [I]f Muriel supposed that he was going to stand by like a clam while she went on Babylonian orgies all over the place with pop-eyed, smirking, toothbrush-mustached Guardees, she was due for a rude awakening. (120)

Thompson is another critic who comes close to my perspective. She argues for the absolute distinctiveness of Bertie's speech, although not for the reasons I propose. "Wodehouse's insistence upon clichés, repetition, and quotation, however, also creates a less obvious, but pervasive, set of devices in the Jeeves-Wooster series" (276). She goes on to say:

> Wodehouse also displays his obsession with writing in the Jeeves-Wooster series in a way that sets it apart from his other works. Of all Wodehouse's characters, Jeeves and Bertie are the most fascinated with language […]. While all the other works use the distinctive Wodehousian prose, the Jeeves-Wooster series permits its two central characters to linger over conditions of language. (278-79)[8]

Alexander Cockburn has given a good summary of Bertie Wooster's role with an important key to understanding him: "Above all it is Bertie who weaves the idiom of the stories; everything is cast in that unique language, a stew of half-remembered quotations, slang, repetitions, formulaic expressions. It is Bertie who dreams up the great similes and bleats out the dense word play" (viii). Robert McCrum says of Reggie Pepper, a character who is a sort of trial-run of Bertie

Wooster: "But Reggie is not Bertie. He's a rougher and more selfish character; he lacks Bertie's baffled inner monologue" (98). Bertie is unselfish, but he is a "baffled hero," as Evelyn Waugh said of one of his own characters, if ever there was one (*Helena* 103). To enhance that baffled quality, to make it comic and convincing, Wodehouse created the contorted slangy speech of Bertie Wooster.

4.

Let us consider a final non-Jeeves-Wooster passage from *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* (1939), a novel in the Blandings Castle series, which like almost all of Wodehouse's material involves the British upper-class in *circumstances* somewhat like Bertie Wooster's, but with much different plots. It is written almost twenty years after the appearance of Jeeves and Wooster:

> It was for this reason that Jane, Countess of Ickenham, had prudently decided that the evening of her husband's life should be spent exclusively at his rural seat, going so far as to inform him that if he ever tried to sneak up to London she would skin him with a blunt knife. And if, as he now stood on the steps, his agreeable face seemed to be alight with some inner glow, this was due to the reflection that she had just left for a distant spot where she proposed to remain for some considerable time. […] [H]er absence would render it easier for him to get that breath of London air which keeps a man from growing rusty and puts him in touch with the latest developments of modern thought. (18)

This was written many years after the creation of Bertie Wooster, yet Wodehouse reverts to his transparent third-person style when the story is not about Bertie. *Uncle Fred in the Springtime* has many similarities to *The Code of the Woosters*, including the London-country house axis, an upper-class ambience, the dominating lady, the easy going gentleman with plans for having fun; but the voice is not that of Bertie Wooster. It is a third-person comic voice using a clear style, an occasional cliché ("she would skin him") but making fun in a classical manner of the discrepancy between what a man wants to do and what he is allowed to do, between the status he should have in his house-

hold and the status quo. And the Viscountess is the only woman who attempts to tell the Viscount what to do.

This is the direct opposite of Bertie's circumstances, and, of course, of the voice describing them, which never shifts even into the temporary neutrality of a landscape description that is found, for instance, in the first-person novels of Hemingway. Even when he tries to be aloof, the real Bertie comes through. He is always redacting recent events in his life or that of friends, problems that have arisen, and the solutions suggested or affected by Jeeves, in his distinctive speech. This also is from *The Inimitable Jeeves*:

> Great pals we've always been. In fact, there was a time when I had an idea I was in love with Cynthia. However, it blew over. A dashed pretty and lively and attractive girl, mind you, but full of ideals and all that. I may be wronging her, but I have an idea that she's the sort of girl who would want a fellow to carve out a career and what not. I know I've heard her speak favorably of Napoleon. So what with one thing and another the jolly old frenzy sort of petered out, and now we're just pals. I think she's a topper, and she thinks me next door to a looney, so everything's nice and matey. (125)

A good deal is made by critics, including both Hall and McCrum, of the farcical, formulaic circumstances of the Jeeves-Wooster plots, and their similarity to musical comedy in pacing and scene changing, as opposed to the more realistic (and melodramatic) comedy of some of the other novels, like *Something Fresh* (1924). Wodehouse, sometimes collaborating with Guy Bolton and others, wrote the book or lyrics for such musical hits as *Sally* (1920) and *Anything Goes* (1934) and many other West End and Broadway shows, and is an important figure in the evolution of musical comedy. He spoke frequently of the practical lessons of writing these shows and the simplification of character to which it led. The Jeeves-Wooster plots are much less realistic, more complicated and farcical than most of his other books. The emotions are simpler and more polarized, lyric contentment and comic desperation are more frequent, but this does not necessarily lessen the complexity of the task the artist has set for himself.

5.

I have chosen seven characteristic elements of the style of the Jeeves-Wooster books and isolated them in very short examples. They include: Wodehouse's use of the first-person narrator; slang; clichés; misquotation; outrageous similes and metaphors; transferred epithets; and a mock-aesthete attitude, a very subtle reversal of the aesthete mockery found in modern writers from Max Beerbohm to James McCourt. Wodehouse uses so many rhetorical devices that these categories could be tripled in number, but I think restricting ourselves to these produces the essence of the style in very clear examples.

So distinctive is Bertie's voice that most of these will demonstrate other qualities besides the heading they are under.

The First Person. This is the *sine qua non* of the Jeeves-Wooster books, yet, except for the Mulliner stories, they are the only that he wrote (that I know of) out of over ninety books of fiction, in the first-person. This is from *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves* (1962):

> The smile which had been splitting my face faded. It's never easy to translate what Jeeves says into basic English, but I believe I had been able to grab this one off the bat, and what I believe the French call a *frisson* went through me like a dose of salts. (59)

Outrageous Metaphors and Similes. As suggested, the example above could also serve under this heading, but here is an interesting example of a simile; followed by a fruit metaphor for a young lady:

> She drove off, Gussie standing gaping after her transfixed, like a goldfish staring at an ant's egg. (*The Mating Season* 116)

> In my previous sojourn at Totleigh Towers circumstances had compelled me to confide in this young prune my position as regarded her cousin Madeline. (*Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves* 80)

Mock-Aesthete Attitude. A breath of the 1890s will sometimes sound through Bertie's voice when he is in a less Edwardian mood. This is from *Right Ho, Jeeves* (1934):

> Beginning with a *critique* of my own limbs, which she said, justly enough, were nothing to write home about, this girl went on to dissect my manners, morals, intellect, general physique, and method of eating asparagus with such acerbity. (128)

Slang, Cliches and Mis-quotation. For brevity's sake all three can be considered in these sentences from *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* (1955) in which Bertie reflects on his own manly character in the third-person:

> It is pretty generally recognized in the circles in which he moves that Bertie Wooster is not a man who lightly throws in the towel and admits defeat. Beneath the thingummies of what-d'you-call-it his head, wind and weather permitting, is as a rule bloody but unbowed, and if the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune want to crush his proud spirit, they have to pull their socks up and make a special effort. (161)

Transferred Epithet. This rhetorical device has received the most attention from various critics, including Hall and Warren. According to Warren, the term was created by Hall (255).[9] It is the use of an unsuitable adjective to modify a noun. In the following examples the words "cigarette," "forkful" and "sip" get such modifiers:

> I lit a rather pleased cigarette. Things were beginning to clarify. (*The Mating Season* 9)

> He uncovered the fragrant eggs and b., and I pronged a moody forkful. (*Very Good, Jeeves* 9)

> I took an astonished sip of coffee. (*Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves* 89)

Hall says that this device is rather infrequent in Wodehouse, although it occurs often enough to be noticed by several critics and is certainly part of Bertie's repartee, usually in a thoughtful moment early in a novel.

Another Wodehouse device is what Billerey-Mosier calls "the systematic use of the definite article to refer to body parts in place of the expected possessive adjective." I have not included it in my list of the

most distinct style marks, but he is quite right to notice it. Both of these examples are from *The Mating Season*:

> Then, as if a bomb had suddenly exploded inside the bean, he shot up with a stifled cry. (33)

> I inclined the ear invitingly. (61)

Hall notes another of Bertie's verbal turns which I have not included in my list; in fact it is the shortest of devices, the eccentric use of initials: "Such was the v. that rose before my e., as I gaped at that c.d. [closed door] and I wilted like a salted snail" (*Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* 44). While I have read the book, I had never noticed that sentence and must credit Hall with isolating one of the most distinctive Wooster utterances, among thousands. He also identifies such effects as "neglected positives," i.e. "couth" as opposed to uncouth and "gruntled" as opposed to disgruntled (*Comic Style* 84). Hall is apparently one of the very few critics (Usborne is another) who has read all of Wodehouse.

For my catalogue of Wooster Baroque I came up with a partial list of my own, refining it after reading him; but anyone who wishes to see a list of dozens of other variations of rhetorical devices, e.g., metonymy used with initials as in the above, or zeugma, should read at least chapters 5 and 6 in Hall's *The Comic Style of P. G. Wodehouse*. Yet Hall never argues that these are all characteristics of the Jeeves-Wooster novels and generally not of the other books. Of course, his wonderful examples come from those novels, but these devices are not pointed out as part of the makeup of Bertie's personality, as I have insisted they should be.[10]

6.

Laura Mooneyham has raised a very interesting question: was the apparently anti-modernist Wodehouse, the professional writer for the

Saturday Evening Post and Broadway and the West End, much more of a modernist than he seems at first glance?

Mooneyham stipulates some essential characteristics of modernism, emphasizing the movement away from the market-driven literary production of fiction in the mid- and late-nineteenth century to the Parnassian approach that Pound, Joyce and Proust established, either by example or by fiat. The close attention to time and perspective and all of the narrative intricacies for which Henry James had paved the way came onto the literary scene just as Wodehouse was creating the Jeeves-Wooster characters, while in his early forties. At that point, in the early 1920s, his career was committed to a type of writing that violated one great tenet of modernism, it was straightforwardly funny, as opposed to being funny from an ironic perspective. "Wodehouse remained beyond the pale because he practised a discredited genre, and because he wrote to be popular," Mooneyham writes. Above all modernism was opposed to "the culminating happiness and formal closure that comedies promise" (118). Her careful weighing of these two against each other, classical comedy (high and low) and modernism, gives an especially clear picture, looking back eighty years, at how theoretical approaches were materialising in the literary world, and how Wodehouse reacted to them. She does not say a great deal about critical reaction to his work, but it was generally accepted for what it appeared to be; the possibility that it might have lasting value did not occur to critics until in fact it had lasted. Wodehouse was quite current on literary matters, and she notes his jokes about vorticist painters and free-verse poets. She of course also considers the possibility that he was a modernist himself, and I think her tentative conclusion that he had modernist qualities can be strengthened. "There are two areas in which one might claim the title of modernist for Wodehouse: his use of language and his employment of narrative self-consciousness" (127).

Finally, she also refers to John Bayley's *The Characters of Love: A Study in the Literature of Personality* (cf. Mooneyham 127). Bayley emphasizes the modern attitude of taking humor seriously:

> We are apt to esteem only the kind of humour which can be taken seriously. […] Of all modern authors, the closest to Shakespeare was certainly Joyce, but for all its marvellous and intricate power to move us *Ulysses* is leaden with its own art, sunken in its richness like a great plum-cake. The lordship of language that makes Shakespeare's world so spacious turns Joyce's into a prison. Absurd as it may sound, we can find more of the Shakespearean buoyancy in P. G. Wodehouse. (285)

Orwell said once about Henry Miller that he was much less a conscious artist than Joyce. A key note of modernism is the artist who is especially conscious of language, or any medium, as a worthy subject in its own right. This is unmistakable in Wodehouse in a way that it is in Joyce, Wilde, Hemingway, and Marianne Moore, and is not in Shakespeare, Pope, and Dickens, who may be far greater artists but for whom writing seems to have been a means to different goals. It is an attitude rooted in late nineteenth century aestheticism, with art for its own sake as the motive.

The Free Library of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, PA

NOTES

[1]"Worcestershirewards" in my title is from *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit* 171.

[2]See J. Mitchell Morse, *Matters of Style*.

[3]Bertie speaks as an anonymous character in *Young Men in Spats* (1936) and *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets* (1940), two collections of short stories. I have discussed this in an unpublished paper "Bertie Speaks: Identifying the Detached Narrator in a Wodehouse Short Story." The voice is identical to the one described in this paper.

[4]Otherwise, for Bertie, the continent means Monte Carlo and Cannes; he dresses very well, has a world-class valet, is a member of a top-drawer club, loves horse racing, going down to the country to visit friends and 'giving' them lunch in town.

[5]This is modeled on Oswald Mosley's 1930s organization, the British League of Fascists, known as the Black Shirts. When Bertie first discusses them with Gussie Fink-Nottle and calls them "Black Shirts" he is corrected: it is *shorts*, they were all out of shirts when Spode founded his organization (cf. *The Code of the Woosters* 53).

[6]In Pensée 435, Pascal states the paradigm most succinctly: "Some considering nature as incorrupt, others as incurable, they could not escape either pride or sloth, the two sources of all vice […]. […] For if they knew the excellence of man, they were ignorant of his corruption; so that they easily avoided sloth, but fell into pride. And if they recognized the infirmity of nature, they were ignorant of its dignity; so that they could easily avoid vanity, but it was to fall into despair" (122-23).

[7]Usborne is not as systematic as Hall in categorizing Wodehouse's turns of speech, but unlike Hall he sees they are essential to Bertie, not to Wodehouse's other creations, remarkable as his use of language is in other books.

[8]Usborne agrees that Bertie's speech represents "a genuine hankering for the *mot juste*, the vivid phrase, the exact image" (158). The results achieved are a different matter, comic, expressive, vivid, but not precise.

[9]Warren refers to Robert A. Hall, "Transferred Epithet in P. G. Wodehouse."

[10]Another academic critic who is a very acute listener to Bertie's voice is Robert F. Kiernan. In *Frivolity Unbound: Six Masters of the Camp Novel* he gives a beautifully written overview of Wodehouse's style in the Jeeves-Wooster novels, with excellent examples of Bertie's turns-of-phrase, and those of other characters; but again he does not find in it the practical purpose on Wodehouse's part that I have suggested. Instead he believes it is motivated by the camp genre and the sense of humor and style that creates it.

WORKS CITED

Bayley, John. *The Characters of Love: A Study in the Literature of Personality*. London: Constable, 1960.

Billerey-Mosier, Roger. "Translating Humor: P. G. Wodehouse and French." *Romance Language and Linguistics Review* (1997). 18 April 2011 <http://www.linguistics.ucla.edu/people/grads/billerey/papers/humor.pdf>.

Borges, Jorge Luis. *The Universal History of Infamy*. New York: Dutton, 1979.

Cockburn, Alexander. Introduction. *The Code of the Woosters*. Mattituck, NY: Rivercity, 1976. v-xii.

Hall, Robert A. *The Comic Style of P. G. Wodehouse*. Hamden, CT: Archon, 1974.

——. "Transferred Epithet in P. G. Wodehouse." *Linguistic Inquiry* 4 (1973): 92-94.

Kiernan, Robert F. *Frivolity Unbound: Six Masters of the Camp Novel*. New York: Continuum, 1990.

McCrum, Robert. *Wodehouse: A Life*. New York: Norton, 2004.

Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 10th ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1998.

Mooneyham , Laura. "Comedy among the Modernists: P. G. Wodehouse and the Anachronism of Comic Form." *Twentieth Century Literature* 40 (1994): 114-38.

Morse, Josiah Mitchell. *Matters of Style*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968.

Pascal, Blaise. *Pensées*. Trans. W. F. Trotter. Intr. T. S. Eliot. New York: Dutton, 1958.

Thompson, Kristin. *Wooster Proposes, Jeeves Disposes, or, Le mot juste*. New York: Heinemann, 1992.

Usborne, Richard. *Wodehouse at Work*. London: Jenkins, 1961.

Warren, Beatrice. "A Nervous Report: The Transferred Epithet and Body Language." *Proceedings from the Second Nordic Conference for English Studies Finland*. Ed. Håkan Ringbom and Matti Rissanen. Åbo: Åbo Akademi, Distribution, Tidningsbokhandeln, 1984. 255-63.

Waugh, Evelyn. *Helena*. 1950. London: Penguin, 1978.

Wodehouse, P. G., and Guy Bolton. *Anything Goes*. Alvin Theatre, New York, 1934.

Wodehouse, P. G., lyrics. *Sally*. By Guy Bolton. New Amsterdam Theatre, New York, 1920.

Wodehouse, P. G. *Carry On, Jeeves*. 1925. New York: Penguin, 1957.

——. *The Code of the Woosters*. 1938. New York: Vintage, 1975.

——. *Eggs, Beans and Crumpets*. 1940. London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1976.

——. *The Inimitable Jeeves*. 1924. New York: Penguin, 1984.

——. *Jeeves and the Feudal Spirit*. 1955. New York: Harper and Row, 1983.

——. *Joy in the Morning*. 1946. Woodstock, NY: Overlook P, 2002.

——. *The Mating Season*. 1949. Woodstock, NY: Overlook P, 2001.

——. *Mulliner Nights*. 1933. New York: Vintage, 2005.

——. *Psmith in the City*. 1910. Woodstock, NY: Overlook P, 2003.

——. *Right Ho, Jeeves*. 1934. New York: Penguin, 1999.

——. *The Adventures of Sally*. London: Jenkins, 1922.

——. *Something Fresh*. 1915. New York: Penguin, 1986.

——. *Stiff Upper Lip, Jeeves*. 1962. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.

——. *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*. 1939. New York: Penguin, 1954.

——. *Very Good, Jeeves*. 1930. New York: Penguin, 1982.

——. *Young Men in Spats*. 1936. London: Hutchinson, 1980.

Connotations
Vol. 20.2-3 (2010/2011)

Lilies and an Olive Branch: On Robert Lowell's *Lord Weary's Castle*[*]

FRANK J. KEARFUL

I am pleased that Henry Hart found much to praise in my "'Stand and Live': Tropes of Falling, Rising, Standing in Robert Lowell's *Lord Weary's Castle*," and I find most of his suggestions for modification or elaboration of points I made persuasive. I will focus here on a few things I view differently, beginning with lilies, about which I have something to add myself.

In my commentary on "lily-stands" in "The Exile's Return," the opening poem in *Lord Weary's Castle*, I mention that the angel Gabriel is frequently represented holding a standing lily when he appears before the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation. A fascinating example in the National Gallery in London that I might have cited is Fra Fillipo Lippi's "The Annunciation," which portrays Gabriel holding a lily in his left hand that rests upon his left knee as he genuflects. The stalk of the lily extends upward above his halo, while his right hand points to an urn from which another lily rises. This additional lily grows out of earth visible at the top of the rounded, bulging urn with its womblike suggestions. The visual attention that Fra Fillipo Lippi gives to Gabriel's hands in connection with lilies, one holding a lily, the other directed toward a growing lily, complements Lowell's rhyming of "lily-stands" and "in your hands."

---

[*]Reference: Frank J. Kearful, "'Stand and live': Tropes of Falling, Rising, Standing in Robert Lowell's *Lord Weary's Castle*," *Connotations* 17.1 (2007/2008): 29-60; Henry Hart, "Lowell's Tropes of Falling, Rising, Standing: A Response to Frank J. Kearful," *Connotations* 19.1-3 (2009/2010): 45-52.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debkearful01701.htm>.

Inge Leimberg has set me going on a more secular association of "lily-stands" in conjunction with "Lili Marleen," the German love song that Lale Andersen made popular in World War II, and that Marlene Dietrich (once a Blue Angel) also made her own as "Lily Marlene." Each stanza ends with a wish-fulfillment projection of Lily standing alongside a returning soldier (compare the exile's return to war-torn Lübeck in "The Exile's Return"). Lily and the soldier stand by a lamppost that stands. In one English translation the first stanza reads: "In front of the barracks, / In front of the main gate, / Stood a lamppost, / And it still stands there, / And if we should see each other there again, / By the lamppost we'll stand, / As before, Lily Marlene." Lily standing by the lamppost remains the song's central image.

But now to lily-stands and my disagreement with Hart. I maintain that "The Exile's Return" encourages us to take lily-stands in the standard horticultural sense of "stand," as a group or growth of tall plants or trees. As for trees, try Lowell's "a scary stand of virgin pine," with its scrambled echoes of the Virgin Mary and lily-stands, in "My Last Afternoon with Uncle Devereux" (*Life Studies,* 1959). Lowell's lily-stands ought to be no more difficult imagining than Wordsworth's "crowd, a host of golden daffodils."

Hart is more interested, however, in capitalism than in horticulture. My essay identifies critical linkings in *Lord Weary's Castle* of modern capitalism and a debased Christianity historically stemming from New England Calvinism. I find too crass, however, Hart's use of lily-stands—conjuring up hot-dog stands and markets and hence capitalist commerce—to back his argument that Lowell is incessantly ambivalent, perhaps no more so than when he seems to take a stand. I find it difficult, on the basis of lily-stands, to agree that Lowell "finds Calvinism and commerce flourishing in ruined Germany" (48). Hart's assertion that when Lowell describes "the unseasoned liberators roll[ing] / Into the Market Square," he is "both celebrating the Allied liberators who find new life flourishing and grimly intimating that the lilies of peace produce the seeds of future wars" (47) is a bit of special plead-

ing. I find no evidence in the poem (or in history) that life in Lübeck in 1945 was in any manner, shape, or form "flourishing." On the capitulation and occupation of Lübeck, see the diary of British occupation officer Arthur Geoffrey Dickens cited in my essay, *Lübeck 1945*. Moreover, at the close of "The Exile's Return" the poem's gaze turns from northern, Protestant Lübeck southwest to the Catholic Rhineland, and by implication toward Cologne Cathedral, as "lily-stands / Burgeon the risen Rhineland, and a rough / Cathedral lifts its eye." At war's end little in Cologne other than the Cathedral was left standing—one sortie over Cologne became known as "the night of the thousand bombers"—and long after the war the *Trümmerfrauen* (the "rubble women") were still at work clearing the rubble. The poem's vision of the risen Rhineland is spiritual rather than economic, its Catholic and Marian redemptive promise a reflection of Lowell's ardent religious convictions. Lowell himself had turned away from his northern, New England Protestant heritage to become a Roman Catholic while living in the South, and was officially received into the Roman Catholic Church at a chapel on the Louisiana State University campus on March 29, 1941.

I also disagree with Hart about the religious thrust of "The Dead in Europe," a later poem in *Lord Weary's Castle* that responds to Allied fire-bombing of civilians during the war. Hart contends that Lowell "invokes Christian expectations of redemption and salvation only to deny or parody them" (48). Lowell had grounded his conscientious objection to military service not on a priori pacifism but on Christian theological distinctions between a just and unjust war that his intensive religious reading provided him. After the fire-bombing of Hamburg in August, 1943, the war as conducted by the Allies could no longer be called a just war. I do point to how the poem's chorus of the dead bewails the bitter fact that Christianity was of no avail in forestalling the undoing of Christian Europe. Hart quotes me on this, but glosses over everything else I say about the outrage at Allied fire-bombing of civilians that the poem voices. Its fervent Marianism and highly wrought rhetoric may not be to everyone's theological or liter-

ary taste, but I find it impossible to construe as denial or parody the pleas to Mary by the fire-bombed dead to rescue them on "Rising-day."

Speaking for all those with delicate stomachs, Hart responds to my reading of the ending of "Where the Rainbow Ends": "If this is Eucharistic and desirable, it is also slightly repugnant. Who, after all, would want to eat an olive branch? Olives are obviously more palatable than the branches that produce them" (49). OK, skip the wood and concentrate on the olives. And when you eat a bowl of cereal, skip the bowl. Hart continues: "The olive branch might represent peace, but from Lowell's typological perspective the branch also evokes the Tree of Knowledge and the 'tree' or cross on which Christ was crucified. The fall and the crucifixion initiated redemptions and resurrections, but even as Lowell accentuates the latter he grimly bears witness to the former" (49). Before he "intimates grimly," now he "bears witness grimly," in both instances in contradistinction to what he apparently accentuates. Actually, I have no a priori quarrel with a use of Christian typology to gloss tropes in *Lord Weary's Castle*, and in fact I do so myself, beginning with the title page illustration of Abel's falling to the ground, struck down by Cain. The injunction "Stand and live" is, I point out, a biblical topos employed by Jesus, while "The dove has brought an olive branch to eat" responds to the dire biblical allusions to hunger, eating, trees and wood which dominate stanza one and carry on into stanza two. Two are precisely relevant for the ending of the poem: "The worms will eat the deadwood to the foot / of Ararat" and "The wild ingrafted olive and the root // Are withered."

Later Hart remarks: "When Kearful points out that Lowell had the last sentence of 'Where the Rainbow Ends' chiseled on his father's gravestone, however, it is hard to read this directive as anything but wishful-thinking and ironic. Lowell, who generally despised his father, knew very well that as a corpse in a coffin his father could neither stand, live, nor eat" (50). Lowell, to be sure, was no dummy, and neither is Hart. Whether Lowell chose the inscription in order to mock Christian wishful thinking and bid ironic farewell to his "gener-

ally despised" father, thus killing two birds with one gravestone, is another matter. My "Connecting Rooms: Entering 'Father's Bedroom' in Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*," *Partial Answers* 6:1 (2008): 111-34 offers a different view of Lowell's complex emotional response to his father's death.

Where I think that Hart really goes overboard is in treating the ambivalence that he seems to find everywhere in Lowell's poetry as a direct and predetermined product of a bipolar disorder. As I see it, a certain ambivalence, conveyed through irony and at times ambiguity, imbues many of Lowell's poems, lending the best of them an emotional, moral, and intellectual complexity. This no doubt has something to do with Lowell's temperament, but also with his assimilation of New Critical dicta about irony, ambiguity, and paradox that he grew up on as an aspiring poet. In any event, I would stress the artfully rhetorical rather than the compulsively pathological in Lowell's poetic ambivalence. I am not convinced that a psychologically driven ambivalence, a being at cross-purposes, is the determining feature of Lowell's poetics.

Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität
Bonn

Connotations
Vol. 20.2-3 (2010/2011)

Ambiguity and Ethics: Fictions of Governance in Geoffrey Hill's *Mercian Hymns*[*]

RAJEEV S. PATKE

Is the ethical concern, even in its realistic and concrete form, detrimental to the interests of action?
Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (152)

Writers have been far more alert than philosophers to the kind of recognition articulated by Martha Nussbaum that imaginative writing is responsive to the ethical sensitivities of "the lived deliberative situation."[1] A singular instance of such alertness is provided by Geoffrey Hill's *Mercian Hymns* (1971), a sequence of prose poems which dramatizes an imaginative interplay of voices centered on the emotional and moral ambiguities attendant upon a contemporary fascination with a semi-mythical King of Mercia named Offa. The volume as a whole implies a relation of antithesis-within-affinity between the King, as imagined ruling over his people, and the poet as he governs language while answering to its order as a system of expression bound by its own historicity. The analogy, in all its problematic aspects, extends to the ethical realm. The need to acknowledge responsibility for the use of power, and the antithetical need to admit to moral ambiguity when the use of power leads to the kind of violence that gives pleasure to its perpetrator, are both dramatized as the bonds that tie the imagined king to the dramatized persona of the prose poem.

The preoccupations of *Mercian Hymns* conform to the general principle articulated in Hill's critical prose that power and responsibility are "a double vocation, an ethical twinning" (CW 339).[2] For Hill, a

[*]For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debpatke02023.htm>.

sense of ambiguity surrounds the pleasures derived from the power of the imagination as embodied in language. Two recognitions are registered explicitly in the prose and implicitly in the poem: if one has a natural propensity for power, in the realm suited to that propensity it is natural to derive pleasure from the power (over words in the case of the poet, over people in the case of kingship); yet it is also inevitable to face up to ethical considerations when the exercise of power leads to violence and the brutalization of sensibilities in those inured to violence, whether as perpetrators or victims. For Hill, within his deeply English contexture, history, etymology, politics, and ethics thus become mutually interdependent. Kingship is allied to the poetic vocation on the basis of "the correspondence between two given but indeterminate values: political values and English word values" (CW 466-67).

English word values remain an obsessive concern throughout Hill's career as poet and critic. How word values might relate to ethical values is a matter to which he returns in many of his poems and essays. *Mercian Hymns* contributes an unusual dimension to this dual concern. It shows the poet obsessed with recuperating a figure from history which has as much to do with an aura of menace as with the burden of atonement.[3] The moral earnestness that attends Hill's sense of vocation can be reconciled to the exuberant fascination with power displayed by *Mercian Hymns* only through a paradox: we must treat the representation of ambiguous states of mind and morally questionable dispositions as the poet's way of fulfilling a sense of responsibility towards his sense of vocation.

For Hill, the *Oxford English Dictionary* is a cherished authority for all matters to do with the governance of meaning in English. It is therefore appropriate to consider, selectively, how it addresses the relations between ambiguity, equivocation, and ambivalence, given that each linguistic practice has a role to play in the utterances and implied states of mind in *Mercian Hymns*. The *OED* recognizes that notions like ambiguity, ambivalence, and being equivocal can pertain to utter-

ances (in the objective realm) and also to states of mind (in the subjective realm):

> Ambivalent: "having either or both of two contrary or parallel values, qualities, or meanings; entertaining contradictory emotions (as love and hatred) towards the same person or thing; acting on or arguing for sometimes one and sometimes the other of two opposites; equivocal." (*OED*)
>
> Ambiguous: "Of words or other significant indications: Admitting more than one interpretation, or explanation; of double meaning, or of several possible meanings; equivocal." (*OED* I.2.)
>
> Equivocal: "Of words, phrases, etc.: Having different significations equally appropriate or plausible; capable of double interpretation; ambiguous." (*OED* A.2.a.)

To be equivocal is a choice, and hence an act of deliberate obfuscation, whereas being and sounding ambiguous corresponds as inner weather to outer report. In contrast, ambivalence has a direct relation to affective states and attitudes: one is told that the speaker is in two minds about someone or something. A self-conflict is acknowledged, more or less directly. Ambivalence operates as a notion in the realm of the subjective, and its corresponding status as objective utterance is relatively straightforward, a matter of being scrupulous in registering a divided state of mind. The uncertainty attending *Mercian Hymns* might look as if it has to do with the poet's ambivalence about his subject matter, but, as I argue below, the problem with the poem is that it is perhaps *not ambivalent enough*, given the dubious nature of Offa's morality, and the dubious pleasure derived by the poet in contemplating violence. If anything, Hill is not severe enough on Offa's unethical conduct, at least explicitly. It appears that this is less a matter of choosing to withhold moral judgment than of choosing to represent a state of mind ambiguously and equivocally. In this context, one can speak of the poet being ethical only through his commitment to the deliberate representation of ambiguity. In painterly terms, one might distinguish between an object near or far represented as a blur not because the painter lacks the eyesight or the

wherewithal to show it precisely, but because it is the blur that he wishes to represent accurately.

I think we should dismiss as unlikely the possibility that Hill ended up sounding more equivocal or ambiguous than he meant to at the level of objective utterance. Of course, we have no reliable recourse to intention except through the printed word, though we do have the author recollecting his intentions in an interview (to which we attend with all the caveats apt to relating recollected intentions to actual performance). Instead, I recommend the interpretive option that we treat the equivocal and ambiguous aspects of the poem as a matter of congruence between intention and execution, as what the poet did deliberately (under the plausible assumption that he was neither inept nor careless in his utterance). That option leads to a view of *Mercian Hymns* as a poem that is intent on registering the difficulties, pitfalls, and subversions encountered in trying to arrive at ethical judgments.

More than one possibility of signification remains latent to, or residual in, specific human situations of the kind Hill evokes through the word "contexture" ("Hobbes's word both for the continuity or contiguity of things and for the structure and composition of artefacts," CW 195).[4] In Hill's view, one can be ambiguous in using a word or phrase to give "quite unambivalent expression to moral preference or decision" (CW 50-52), as for instance, in the seventeenth century use of the Janus-faced "anointed" to suggest both smeared and consecrated (as in Ben Jonson).[5] Jonson manages the dramatic context in such a way that the derogatory and the respectful meanings of "anointed" are both possible, and Hill treats that as an example of how, in the right hands, ambiguity can be constructive in its balancing of equivocal meanings.

Hill's prose turns often to developments in seventeenth century England as having had a decisive role to play in shaping attitudes to ambiguity, both as a general feature of language and as something specific to the English language. Thus, in the Locke tradition, ambiguity is a nuisance to be avoided and eliminated, along with all other obscurities of language.[6] Hill argues that contemporary critics of

Hobbes, especially John Bramhall, anticipated Locke when he expressed concern at "the moral and emotional attrition which is the toll exacted by ambiguity, obscurity, and all forms of disputation" (CW 341). Hill notes of such critics that they "negotiate for the best terms each can get, among a compact body of ambiguities: ambiguities which are in part ethical, part civil, part etymological" (CW 340). Regardless of how laudable the aim of cleansing language of its obscurities might sound, Hill argues that this intent could never succeed because of the inseparability of "fallacies and false appearances from our progressive endeavours," as Bacon had argued (CW 194), because it resorts to prescriptions which "turn legitimacy into tyranny" (CW 341), and because it presumes "to disconnect language from the consequences of our common imbecility," from what Calvin, Hooker and Bramhall regard as "the nature of contingency" (CW 341).

Rejecting Lockean sanguineness, Hill aligns himself with a view which he associates with Hobbes and several other English writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for whom "the equivocal and the ambiguous are intrinsic to human nature and civic history" (CW 195), and "our language retains, and is directed so as to retain […] the stuff of contrary feelings and perplexed experience" (CW 335). That is what we see happening in *Mercian Hymns*. The poem gives voice to contrary feelings and perplexed experience, faithfully reproduced, as evidence of the difficulty in arriving at unambiguous moral positions when engaged imaginatively and affectively with what Offa signifies to the poet. For Hill, ambiguity is a kind of "double-meaning" (CW 338), "impacted" (CW 228) with the customs and habits of common usage, and capable of creating both "bafflement" and "resonance." Hill thinks that such effects of "contexture," "semantic doubleness" and "double valency" (CW 330) can be used expressively by poets to achieve mastery over "tonal indeterminacy" through "semantic opportunism" (CW 302), as he thinks was accomplished by Dryden and Pound at their best. We could say of Hill's poems what he said of Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590) and Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), that either text "commits, but does not abandon, its discourse to that

debatable ground where, in the corrupt state of man, private and public interests are determined—but not irretrievably—by the indeterminate" (CW 332), thus identifying a literary genealogy for his own commitment to the indeterminate element in the interface between language and morality.

Hill's prose underlines two points: first, the significance he finds in the integral attachment of poetic language to the warp and weft of common speech, regardless of the extremes of pressure the poet applies to that fabric. Thus if ordinary language is sometimes or often ambiguous, poetic language cannot hope to accomplish its aims and responsibilities by aspiring to a clarity that turns its back on a shared origin in possible confusion and likely obscurity. Second, the purely linguistic is never the merely linguistic; ambiguity and indeterminacy at the level of word and phrase remain inextricable from ambiguity at the level of ethical concerns concerning 'right' action and thought. According to Hill, this type of contexture is tested and proven when the making of poetry pushes "the maker beyond the barrier of his or her own limited intelligence" (CW 404). That is when writing poetry retains the capacity to startle even the poet. It entails stepping outside the bounds of the poet's ordinary lexical and ethical norms, to produce "the abrupt, unlooked for semantic recognition understood as corresponding to an act of mercy or grace" (CW 404), the linguistic imagination seamlessly one with the moral imagination. Thus, when Hill proposes "a theology of language," he describes it in terms of fulfilling an expectation that conforms to his belief that the language of poetry and the language of ethics are closely connected, so "that the shock of semantic recognition must also be a shock of ethical recognition" (CW 405; see also 91).

Several recurrent motifs from Hill's critical prose have a direct bearing on *Mercian Hymns*: (1) the absolute necessity for a poet to acquire "an auditory imagination," and the need to recognize the enormous difficulty encountered in doing so; (2) the absolute need to remember that an ear for "particular sought pitch and accent" (CW 421) is inseparable from what is variously described as "moral exactitude" in

Empson,[7] "the ethical burden" in the context of his adaptation of Ibsen's *Brand* (Hill, Preface xi n2), and "hearing, or sounding, history and morality in depth" in the context of Yeats (CW 391); and (3) an attitude of scrupulous responsibility towards sustaining the balance (or tension) between authorial and fictional voice, an idea derived from Henry James, "that 'no character in a play (any play not a mere monologue) has, for the right expression of the thing, a usurping consciousness; the consciousness of others is exhibited exactly in the same way as that of the 'hero'" (CW 421).

Mercian Hymns starts off with a complex interplay between two voices: a scop in full flow praising his lord and master, while the subject of his peroration listens appreciatively.

> King of the perennial holly-groves, the riven sand-stone: overlord of the M5: architect of the historic rampart and ditch, the citadel at Tamworth, the summer hermitage in Holy Cross: guardian of the Welsh Bridge and the Iron Bridge: contractor to the desirable new estates: saltmaster: money-changer: commissioner for oaths: martyrologist: the friend of Charlemagne.
>
> "I liked that," said Offa, "sing it again."[8]

This is witty: appositional extravagance set off against laconic brevity, the entire performance nicely balanced between a king valorized and praise subverted. The epithets are lavish but strangely assorted; and the deliberate anachronisms alluding to a symbolic realm that extends in time as well as space cannot prevent—perhaps, are not meant to prevent—the hint of a "discrepancy between 'fealty' and 'servitude.'"[9] Likewise, the King's enjoyment could be said to betray more than a hint of discrepancy between satisfaction at the praise, and indifference to its slight absurdity. Given such a complex dramatization, scrupulosity of lexical care can be said to have been applied to the specific task of sustaining a degree of tonal indeterminacy in both speakers: we cannot determine if the scop is being ironic or sincere in his hyperbolical language; likewise, we cannot be sure if the king finds the praise hyperbolical or sincere. The authorial strategy is one of judgment and attitude held in abeyance, so that tonal indeterminacy can

be placed firmly in the foreground. As a later Hill poem puts it, "*glowery* is a mighty word with two meanings / if you crave ambiguity in plain speaking / as I do" ("In Memoriam: Ernst Barlach").

In *Mercian Hymns* an inventive historical imagination broods intently on a remembered boyhood and what an eighth century west midlands King "almost lost to history" could signify for the implied "I" of the poem. As several commentators on the poem have noted (e.g. Kerrigan; Brannigan), the sense of place embodied in the poem is intensely regional, with a strong sense of how the past resurfaces in the present. The time of the poem keeps shifting between the present tense of reflection, the past tense of recollected boyhood, the other past tense of Offa in his time and place, and a fluid afterlife in which the fictional Offa moves across the entire span of time from the eighth to the twentieth century. The most striking ambiguity about the poem is the peculiar relation of undecidability of attitude that ties Hill's Offa to the boyhood evoked by the implied first person voice of the poem.

Ambiguity, as William Empson reminds us at the beginning of *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), entails several kinds of undecidability: "an indecision as to what you mean, an intention to mean several things, a probability that one or other or both of two things has been meant, and the fact that a statement has several meanings" (5-6). My description of *Mercian Hymns* takes a similar view: that the volume is ambiguous both in terms of states of mind and in terms of what is said by the various fictional voices in the poem, especially since—as noted by Maximilian de Gaynesford—"ambiguity may threaten commitment to one's utterances or it may strengthen it, depending on whether it is used to slide off a point (to make one's excuses, perhaps) or to make the point felt (perhaps by owning each of the meanings that could be meant)" (16). The challenge for the reader, in such cases, is dual: first, one has to distinguish between cases where the author might be uncertain or in two minds, and cases where a statement might have two referents, all of which are containable within the idea of a providential author; second, one has to work out for oneself

whether the text provides grounds for believing that it could tell something it does not know about itself. Consider Hymn IV:

> I was invested in mother-earth, the crypt of roots and endings. Child's-play. I abode there, bided my time: where the mole
>
> shouldered the clogged wheel, his gold solidus; where dry-dust badgers thronged the Roman flues, the long-unlooked-for mansions of our tribe. (NCP 96)

We could suppose that the "I" is Offa giving voice to his sentiments in posthumously timeless fashion; or that the "I" is the implied first-person of the poem, who remembers boyhood as a state of incipience, an abiding in "mother-earth," which retrospection transforms into a biding. The poem provides no way to decide between the two alternatives. In fact, we could say that it actively solicits an ambiguity of reference, an effect of the equivocal which implies two speaking voices (or their intermittent merger), while leaving the reader unclear about the extent and limits of the implied congruence.

Like ripples spreading from a central disturbance, the conjunction of Offa and his conjuror expands in scope to include by extrapolation any (presumably English or midlands-born) person who transforms identity through similar elective affinity: an investiture whose happening is purely textual, and always attended by a sense of its own discrepant nature. We could generalize from the instance and say that this form of ambiguous contexture is metaphor in metamorphosis, which dissembles its own making as a finding, just as the coins minted in Offa's reign (chief among the few physical artifacts to have survived as metonymies of his rule) become Hill's inheritance, and Hill's writing circulates the cultural capital he finds in Offa across the realm of the English language. The implications of elective affinity do not end in the poem. As John Brannigan remarks, the use of Offa in the symbolic role of a king presiding over the genius of the English nation acquires an ironic resonance for a contemporary England more multicultural than it was in 1971, especially when we note the attention given recently to the fact that Offa appears to have issued at least

one coin in the eighth century with inscriptions from the Koran (cf. Brannigan 100).

Another retrospective irony has gathered momentum as England has become more multicultural in the forty years since *Mercian Hymns* was completed: the tone of the sentiments expressed in parts of the poem sound even more reactionary now than they might have in 1971, especially if the reader sympathizes with Tom Paulin and William Wootten, who argue that the authoritarian declarations of Hymn VIII—"Today I name them; tomorrow I shall express the new law. I dedicate my awakening to this matter" (NCP 100)—imply neither irony nor humour nor resolute decisiveness, but the grim xenophobia of Enoch Powell and his right-wing rhetoric of 1968.[10] Clearly, poetic voice, in addition to the linguistic precision and moral exactitude prized by Hill, also entails a political element capable of activating in readers a need to define their own position in relation to the issues signaled and pointed by the voices in the poem.

The implications of the central ambiguity of the poem can be teased out a little further by turning to the final part of Hymn V:

> Exile or pilgrim set me once more upon that ground: my rich and desolate childhood. Dreamy, smug-faced, sick on outings—I who was taken to be a king of some kind, a prodigy, a maimed one. (NCP 97)

"Exile or pilgrim" is pretentious if applied by the speaking voice of the poem to his own boyhood self, but could be intended as just that kind of self-characterization (a boy recollected in adulthood as snotty and smug); "exile or pilgrim" is disingenuous if applied by Hill's Offa to himself, but that too might be part of an intended attribute (the king as self-indulgent hypocrite). While a king might have had a childhood both rich in appurtenances and desolate in its solitariness, the speaking voice of the poem too might remember or imagine his boyhood as desolate in its solitariness but rich in fantasy. The richness differs in being either literal or metaphorical, while the desolation is shared. The logic is not unlike that of a syllogism with a missing middle: "I am short; Julius Caesar was short: am I and Caesar not

similar?!" Possible but inadequate as extrapolation, hence slightly ridiculous. The partial analogy between king and boy is not too different. The poet might well be aware that it could seem so, but regardless, he might choose to push the point past the line of plausibility, leaving the proportion of humor and seriousness with which this is done ambiguous.

Hill's 1981 account of the poem in his interview with John Haffenden throws some light on the matter of authorial self-awareness. It also provides some indication of the ground on whose basis a reader might decide on the degree to which the intention and its realization coincide, or fail to coincide. Hill speaks of the impulse to articulate "mixed feelings for my own home country" and "the ambiguities of English history in general" (Haffenden 94). This helps our interpretation in three ways: it provides confirmation, if any was needed, for the ambivalence we discover in the poem; it reassures us that, if the value discovered in Offa remains unresolved and double, that too is intentional rather than inadvertent; and it shows how the equivocal, the ambivalent and the ambiguous, when used precisely, "can work to clarify meaning," as de Gaynesford puts it (17). It does so, somewhat paradoxically, by foregrounding the difficulty of separating prejudice from ethical judgments, the difficulty of distinguishing between pleasures that are involuntary but questionable and responsibilities that are compelling but unacknowledged. Hill's remarks do little to allay the worry that the poem provides much more evidence when it comes to the poet's attraction to Offa than for any disapproval of Offa. If we are to talk of objective correlatives, as Hill does, then the poem can be said to supply a surplus when it comes to the relish with which Offa enjoys violence, but the supply is turned off almost completely when it comes to an objective correlative for a moral judgment on Offa. The reader can choose to interpret the gap as a form of vicarious enjoyment without any overt restraint (a form of scrupulosity that becomes ethical in its desire to preserve fidelity to the truth of a troublesome frame of mind), or as a form of oblique irony that reveals

ambivalence while sustaining ambiguity about the exact ethical orientation adopted by the author towards his quasi-historical subject.

In writing the poem, we are told in the Haffenden interview, Hill meant "to encompass and accommodate" the voice of a hateful and "tyrannical creator of order and beauty" and the voice of a boyhood remembered for its "early humiliations and fears" as well as the "discovery of a tyrannical streak in oneself as a child" (Haffenden 94). This is plausible. But while anyone might share a streak of tyranny with others, the admission does not provide sufficient ground by itself for the kind of sustained resemblance the poem seems to imply. Offa and the poet come from the same part of England, and are, in some basic sense, patriotic about England as a nation or kingdom (whatever the anachronism of imputing anything resembling a modern idea of nationhood to an eighth century regional ruler, or whatever the interpretive freedom needed to invoke a genealogical connection between two ideas of commonweal): but the skeptical reader might wonder if the gap between intention and execution is very wide when it comes to the central ambiguity of the poem. It could be said that the affinity between Offa and the boy in the poem is given less by way of an objective correlative than Hill's account of his poem might suggest. We are thus dealing with two kinds of undecidability: how (far) the boy and the king resemble each other remains unclear; and how far this lack of clarity might be part of the poet's design remains unclear. We could give the poet the benefit of the doubt in both cases. But we can never be sure if that will find a consensus among English and non-English readers. What we can be reasonably sure about is that the desire to create a blurred double-focus between Offa and the boy reads as a figure of fantasy through which Hill projects the empowering aura of kingship onto a young person's frustrations and intimations. The incongruity of the analogy makes it a figure of excess, and the text could be said to accept the incommensurate as part of a design that has as much room for humor and the grotesque as for the self-revelatory and the annunciatory.

A reader might thus concede that in *Mercian Hymns* poetic complexity is accomplished by creating "semantic energy" from ambiguities inherent to the dramatized and problematic affinity between king and boy. Hill's respect for ambiguity finds a natural predecessor in Empson, who argued for a necessary connection between poetic merit and complexity throughout *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. Hill, in his *Paris Review* interview, asseverates bluntly that "any complexity of language, any ambiguity, any ambivalence" in poetry equates with "intelligence" ("The Art of Poetry LXXX" 275). In *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, the reckless prodigality of Empson's ingenuity reduces the efficacy of his seven-fold typology to little more than a bare frame on which to stretch—not a method but—a gift. Seven is no magic number when it comes to types of ambiguity, nor is ambiguity the most accurate term for everything that Empson includes for analysis in his first book. Recognizing this, he qualified his use of the term in *The Structure of Complex Words* (1951), and admitted that the notion of ambiguity as he had played it out in 1930 was like "the idea of a double meaning which […] belongs rather to peculiar states of dramatic self-conflict" (103n).

As noted above, for Empson the undecidability of a text is interesting irrespective of whether the poet means two things, or one of two, or both, or remains uncertain (consciously or involuntarily) about whether he meant one or both things. This kind of blur occurs in *Mercian Hymns*. Consider a line from Hymn V: "I wormed my way heavenward for ages amid barbaric ivy, scrollwork of fern" (NCP 97). The ambiguity of reference is evident in the hovering between two senses of "heaven" (as sky and as a transcendent realm). If we read "for ages" more or less literally, the reference works best in relation to the fiction of a timeless Offa; if we read "for ages" as mundane exaggeration, the boy poring over ruins comes to focus more readily. The poet's implied voice can be said to cherish or permit both significations. One could not quite call it an extended pun, because a pun points two ways: semantic difference combined with auditory congruence, meanings indifferent to an agreement between sounds. In

this case, the reader is left uncertain about which of the two references is intended. If they coincided fully, we would approach a situation in which "two or more meanings are resolved into one" (Empson's second type; cf. *Seven Types* 48).

Such a resolution would satisfy a reader who could assent to a full congruence between Offa and the boy. But for the reader who has reservations about the analogy, it becomes appropriate to think of the line as fitting a different situation, in which, as Empson notes, "two ideas, which are connected only by being both relevant, in the context, can be given in one word simultaneously" (his third type; *Seven Types* 102). What works for Empson at the level of the word can be said to work in *Mercian Hymns* at the level of entire sentences.

So far, I have dwelt on the resemblance between Empson's ideas on ambiguity and the double-focus created by Hill between the voice of Offa and the voice of remembered boyhood. It is possible to extend the resemblance by noting that "focus on a complicated state of mind in the author" can also be brought out "when two or more meanings of a statement do not agree among themselves" (Empson's fourth type; *Seven Types* 133). Consider the final sentence of Hymn X, "He wept, attempting to master *ancilla* and *servus*" (NCP 102). As Michael North (among others) has noted (cf. North 468), while it is possible to imagine the king as well as the boy weeping at his Latin grammar, the likelihood is more apt for the boy than for the king, and when applied to the king, the symbolic connotations extend to the power to enforce servitude in ways that become incongruous in the case of the boy. The example suggests that Hill's poem traverses a semantic territory that could be said to occupy a zone between Empson's third and fourth types of ambiguity.

The difference within similarity between Offa and remembered boyhood gets more problematic, and the poem's silences become more telling than the ambivalence and ambiguities, when we confront the poem's fascination with power. Consider the latter part of Hymn VII:

> After school he lured Ceolred, who was sniggering with fright, down to the old quarries, and flayed him. Then, leaving Ceolred, he journeyed for hours, calm and alone, in his private derelict sandlorry named *Albion*. (NCP 99)

We can pass over in silence the delicious pun of the last phrase. We can also pass over in silence the question of whether the experience recollected might not emanate from the memory of a victim even though it is devoted to the exaltation of a bully. We focus instead on the experiential sequence from luring to flaying to feeling calm; the need for violence to exact pain, suffering, and humiliation; the calm accomplished and enjoyed because of wreaking violence on others. The moral pitch is of brutishness acknowledged frankly, as if it were a need, a ritual, and a habit that needed affirmation. The moral judgment we might extract from such an anecdote is troubling. How to characterize the poetic voice that declares its pleasure at fear and pain, and the calm quietude derived from the brutal exercise of power? If the poetic text acknowledges an ethical burden, it does so paradoxically, by withholding overt judgments while foregrounding the lack of moral considerations in what is voiced. If there is moral exactitude at work here, it does its job invisibly. That, in itself, constitutes another ambiguity. In a *Guardian* interview dating from 2002, Hill remarks: "In my childhood, the word 'cancer' could not be said aloud; it was mouthed silently. In my own approach to language, that aspect of fraught mime is as significant to me as are the history and contexts of etymology" ("A matter of timing"). Likewise, we could say that ethical responsibility in *Mercian Hymns* is as much a matter of "fraught mime" as of the rich encrustation of words; as much a matter of signification "mouthed silently" as of values made explicit through language.

That Offa is shown as brutish, we see. To produce fear, pain, suffering, and death gives him pleasure; and causing fear, pain, suffering, and death is necessary: either because kingship requires it or the enjoyment of power requires it. The relish and precision with which his voice reports his satisfactions, unqualified by any "usurping consciousness," creates a challenge for the reader. What Hill refers to, in

another context, as the ethical burden in writing, here becomes a burden for the reader because while Offa's pleasures are rendered vividly, the ethical burden of the text is voiced in silence, as an abeyance. We may make of it what we will. The poem's fascination with power raises the question of a counter-balance: does admiration for Offa make room for justice, law and the rule of reason in the application of force? The text is enigmatic on this question. Offa's kingship raises the question of right governance: when one has power, what is the relation of force to law? Does law legitimate violence or force? We have one kind of answer from Walter Benjamin: "If justice is the criterion of ends, legality is that of means" (237). Law has to relate to justice, as means to ends. Legality or legitimation, as we are reminded by Derrida, depends on a balance between force and justness; without that balance, nothing legitimates force (cf. Derrida 11-12). In Hymn XVIII, for example, Offa appears as an epicure of the instruments of torture:

> He willed the instruments of violence to break upon meditation. Iron buckles gagged; flesh leaked rennet over them; the men stooped; disentangled the body.
>
> He wiped his lips and hands. He strolled back to the car, with discreet souvenirs for consolation and philosophy. (NCP 110)

On such evidence, *Mercian Hymns* chooses to remain—not only equivocal or ambiguous, but also—opaque about how justice or legality could be associated with Offa's propensity for violence. And it is in this enigmatic fashion that the poem acknowledges Offa as perhaps the earliest ruler to have envisaged an England of which the present nation is a distant descendant. The Offa gifted by the poet to his nation in *Mercian Hymns* is thus a complex and troubling legacy. At a more general level, *Mercian Hymn*s subsidizes a complex figuration in which linguistic, ethical and political orientations are held in suspension, needing the reader's active involvement for sounding the depth

of a poem with an ear for its pitch and stress, and to its capacity to startle, enlighten, and bemuse.

National University of Singapore

NOTES

[1]"[W]ithout a presentation of the mystery, conflict, and riskiness of the lived deliberative situation, it will be hard for philosophy to convey the peculiar value and beauty of choosing humanly well […]. […] [And] [i]t is in this idea that human deliberation is constantly an adventure of the personality, undertaken against terrific odds and among frightening mysteries, and that this is, in fact, the source of much of its beauty and richness, that texts written in a traditional philosophical style have the most insuperable difficulty conveying to us." Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge* 142.

[2]Geoffrey Hill, *Collected Critical Writings*; hereafter abbreviated as CW.

[3]An allusion to Hill's inaugural lecture, "Poetry as 'Menace' and 'Atonement,'" at the University of Leeds, December 1977: "I am suggesting that it is at the heart of this 'heaviness' that poetry must do its atoning work, this heaviness which is simultaneously the 'density' of language and the 'specific gravity of human nature" (CW 17).

[4]Cf. *OED* "contexture," *n.*1.a.: "The action or process of weaving together or intertwining; the fact of being woven together; the manner in which this is done."

[5]See Jonson, *Sejanus His Fall*: "Why, we are worse, if to be slaves, and bond / To Caesar's slave, be such, the proud Sejanus! / He that is all, does all, gives Caesar leave / To hide his ulcerous and anointed face" (IV.171-74).

[6]John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: "The imperfection of Words is the Doubtfulness or ambiguity of their Signification, which is caused by the sort of ideas they stand for" (Book III, ch. IX, 105).

[7]See Geoffrey Hill, "The Dream of Reason" 96.

[8]Geoffrey Hill, *New and Collected Poems* 93; hereafter abbreviated as NCP.

[9]Terms cited by Hill from Coleridge, who applied them to the tone of a Donne sermon (CW 110).

[10]William Wootten points out that on 20 April 1968 the conservative British MP Enoch Powell delivered a speech in Birmingham which was "in its poetic predictions of civil strife and its implied sympathy for the racialist views of constituents, to prove explosive" (3-4). The connection with Hill is then made explicit: "if we read *Mercian Hymns* VIII against the background of Powell's speech, its 'venomous letters' and its fear of immigrants, the poem's vague menace begins to clarify. […] If any had claim to be a modern-day king of Mercia, the latest incarnation of

King Offa, and the alter ego to Hill it was the MP for Wolverhampton South-West" (6).

WORKS CITED

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. 1947. Trans. Bernard Frechtman. New York: Philosophical Library, 1948.

Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings*. *Volume 1: 1913-1926*. Ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap P of Harvard UP, 1996.

Brannigan, John. *Orwell to the Present: Literature in England, 1945-2000*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Derrida, Jacques. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority.'" *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson. New York: Routledge, 1992. 3-67.

Empson, William. *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. 1930. Harmondsworth: Peregrine Books, 1961.

——. *The Structure of Complex Words*. 1951. London: Penguin, 1995.

Gaynesford, Maximilian de. "The Seriousness of Poetry." *Essays in Criticism* 59.1 (January 2009): 1-21.

Haffenden, John. "Geoffrey Hill." *Viewpoints: Poets in Conversation*. London: Faber and Faber, 1981. 76-99.

Hill, Geoffrey. "The Dream of Reason." *Essays in Criticism* 14.1 (1964): 91-101.

——. *New and Collected Poems 1952-1992*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

——. Preface. *Brand*. By Henrik Ibsen. Adapt. Geoffrey Hill. London: Penguin, 1996. vii-xi.

——. "The Art of Poetry LXXX." Interview with Carl Phillips. *The Paris Review* 154 (Spring 2000): 272-99. Online version: "The Art of Poetry No. 80." 10 June 2011 <http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/730/the-art-of-poetry-no-80geoffrey-hill>.

——. "A Matter of Timing: Mercian Poet Geoffrey Hill on how He Creates 'beautiful energy.'" *The Guardian* 21 September 2002. 10 June 2011 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2002/sep/21/featuresreviews.guardianreview28>.

——. "In Memoriam: Ernst Barlach." *A Treatise of Civil Power*. London: Penguin, 2007. 45.

——. *Collected Critical Writings*. Ed. Kenneth Haynes. Oxford: OUP, 2008.

Ibsen, Henrik. *Brand*. Adapt. Geoffrey Hill. London: Penguin, 1996.

Jonson, Ben. *Sejanus His Fall*. Ed. Philip J. Ayres. Manchester UP, 1990.

Kerrigan, John. "Divided Kingdoms and the Local Epic: *Mercian Hymns* to *The King of Britain's Daughter*." *Yale Journal of Criticism* 13.1 (Spring 2000): 3-21.

Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser. Vol. 2. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1894. 2 vols.

North, Michael. "The Word as Bond: Money and Performative Language in Hill's *Mercian Hymns*." *ELH* 54.2 (Summer 1987): 463-81.

Nussbaum, Martha C. *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. New York: OUP, 1990.

Paulin, Tom. "A Visionary Nationalist: Geoffrey Hill." *Minotaur: Poetry and the Nation State*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992. 76-84.

Wootten, William G. "Rhetoric of Violence in Geoffrey Hill's *Mercian Hymns* and the Speeches of Enoch Powell." *Cambridge Quarterly* 29.1 (2000): 1-15.

Connotations
Vol. 20.2-3 (2010/2011)

"The Jungles of International Bureaucracy": Criminality and Detection in Eric Ambler's *The Siege of the Villa Lipp*[*]

ROBERT LANCE SNYDER

Early in *The Dark Frontier* (1936), the first of Eric Ambler's eighteen novels, a director of armaments manufacturer Cator & Bliss tries to recruit Professor Henry J. Barstow, an acclaimed physicist, as a highly paid technical adviser to his company's program in what he euphemizes as "applied atomic energy" (20). When the scientist voices moral reservations, citing his public declaration a year earlier that recent developments in nuclear research "might prove to be mixed blessings" (11), the corporation's representative attempts to assuage them by defending Cator & Bliss's flourishing trade in munitions. Pluming himself on taking a "Nietzschean view" of the world (16), Barstow's interlocutor dismissively remarks: "Personally I believe questions of ethics are never anything but questions of points of view" (22-23).

Over the span of forty-five years as a writer who transformed a popular genre, Ambler relentlessly examined the issue of where such relativism leads. In his celebrated novels of the 1930s and 1940s, like many other leftist authors of that era, he was inclined to indict fictitious conglomerates for endorsing casuistry of this kind while trafficking in weapons, prostitution, drugs, and black-market goods. Initially Ambler was impelled in this direction by a recognition that the antecedent productions of Erskine Childers, John Buchan, Dornford Yates, William Le Queux, and E. Phillips Oppenheim defied credibility by presenting improbable figures who epitomized a reductive "Us"/"Them" binary (see Cawelti and Rosenberg 38-45; Stafford 503-

[*]For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debsnyder02023.htm>.

04). In his 1985 autobiography he thus explains his perception that at the time "the thriller had nowhere to go but up":

> It was the villains who bothered me most. Power-crazed or coldly sane, master criminals or old-fashioned professional devils, I no longer believed a word of them. Nor did I believe in their passions for evil and plots against civilization. As for their world conspiracies, they appeared to me no more substantial than toy balloons, over-inflated and squeaky to the touch, with sad old characters rattling about inside like dried peas. The hero did not seem to matter much. He was often only a fugitive, a hare to the villain's hounds, prepared in the end to turn pluckily and face his pursuers. He could be a tweedy fellow with steel-grey eyes and gun pads on both shoulders or a moneyed dandy with a taste for adventure. He could also be a xenophobic ex-officer with a nasty anti-Semitic streak. None of that really mattered. All he […] needed to function as hero was abysmal stupidity combined with superhuman resourcefulness and unbreakable knuckle bones. (*Here Lies* 120-21)

Beginning with such post-war narratives of political intrigue as *Judgment on Deltchev* (1951), however, Ambler's focus shifted away from the ascendancy of hegemonic monopolies to the subtler, more pervasive influence of internationalism and bureaucratization. The new threat to ethical practice, in other words, was a global system that annulled individual agency and promoted the Orwellian manipulation of meaning while embracing a seemingly unquestioned doctrine of expediency. At the same time he continued to characterize this emergent world architecture by one of his favorite tropes. The metaphor surfaces most memorably in *Journey into Fear* (1940) when its protagonist, a ballistics engineer employed by Cator & Bliss who "had never handled a revolver in his life before" (130), is suddenly thrust into circumstances that bring home to him the fact of danger's lurking everywhere, "waiting […] to remind you—in case you had forgotten— that civilisation was a word and that you still lived in the *jungle*" (70; my emphasis).

This idea of an underlying Darwinism also dominates *The Siege of the Villa Lipp* (1977), Ambler's seventeenth novel, which explores not the outdated premise of "master criminals or old-fashioned professional devils" as villains but rather a latter-day phenomenon catego-

rized by sociologists within its pages as the "Able Criminal" (4). Before I discuss this neglected text,[1] we should note that its first-person narrator, pseudonymically Paul Firman, is a variant of the eponymous racketeer in *A Coffin for Dimitrios* (1939). Of the latter pimp, thief, extortionist, and murderer whom Eurasian Credit Trust eventually appoints as one of its directors, the frame storyteller asserts:

> But it was useless to try to explain him in terms of Good and Evil. They were no more than baroque abstractions. Good Business and Bad Business were the elements of the new theology. Dimitrios was not evil. He was [as] logical and consistent […] in the European jungle as the poison gas called Lewisite and the shattered bodies of children killed in the bombardment of an open town. (252-53)

Nearly four decades later the avatar of Dimitrios espouses a similar "new theology." For Firman there likewise obtains no longer an absolute distinction between "Good and Evil"; what matters instead in the post-World War II cultural milieu is only the pragmatics of "Good Business" versus "Bad Business." Though no less subject to an earlier era's stigma of criminality, this secularist orthodoxy is driven by a widely accepted mandate for capitalistic profit, no matter whether transactions are licit or illicit.

White-collar crime, particularly as it involves the covert sheltering of vast financial sums, is Ambler's specific target in his next-to-last novel. In order to explore this refinement of larceny, he structures *Siege* around a heavily dialogical contest between two entrenched adversaries. One is Paul Firman, who in his mid-fifties directs a shadowy organization known as the Institute for International Investment and Trust Counselling, headquartered in Brussels, that sponsors seminars in tax avoidance—not evasion, he stresses—under its innocuously named subsidiary Symposia SA. Owning a 20% stake in this venture, which reportedly is backed by kingpin Mathew Williamson, Firman finds to his discomfiture that several years earlier in Zürich he was photographed while attending the funeral of Johann Kramer, a Swiss banker whom Firman, masquerading as one Reinhardt Oberholzer, had suborned for privileged information about

anonymously numbered accounts. Taking advantage of that inadvertent lapse in concealment, Frits Bühler Krom, a 62-year-old Dutchman and Professor of Sociology at a German university, becomes determined to track down "Oberholzer" as a case study in what he conceives as a "new and peculiar breed" in the annals of criminology (4). Supported by younger American colleague Dr. George Kingham Connell and British counterpart Dr. Geraldine Hope Henson, both of whom have aligned themselves with Krom's revisionist theory about the "Able Criminal," he threatens exposure unless Firman agrees to a four-day stint of interrogation at Villa Lipp on the French Riviera. The narratological puzzle posed by Ambler's intricate text is that of knowing which, if either, of these main characters' accounts to believe.

Because Firman is both the novel's controlling voice and organizing consciousness, we tend to credit his version of events. Only in the final chapter is it revealed that the protagonist has relied upon an "amanuensis" and "literary mentor," fictively Ambler himself, to prepare his manuscript for publication (231).[2] Even so, the opening exposition contains several rhetorical clues that Firman protests too much, not unlike the compulsively confessional ironist in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1864), and therefore is not entirely reliable. Cornered by the "new criminologists" at the Villa Lipp, for example, and not wanting to be branded a "consistently sly, treacherous, ruthless and rapacious, vindictive, devious, sadistic and generally vile" sociopath, he proclaims: "I do not, of course, expect justice; that would be too much; but I believe that I am entitled to a fair trial before the only court I recognize, the only court whose judgements I now value; that is, the court of public opinion." This demagogic appeal, however, loses some of its persuasive weight when Firman promises evidence "sans whitewash that[,] far from being the villain of the piece[,] I am [Krom's] principal victim" (7). Shortly thereafter, invoking the terminology of juridical proceedings rather than that of fictional representations, he roundly declares: "I am not the defendant. I am the plaintiff" (10). Firman's pronouncement that he will offer testimony "sans whitewash" is undercut a few

chapters later, however, when again echoing Dostoevsky's Underground Man he announces:

> My account will be full, reasonably accurate[,] and free from Krom's distortions. It will not, of course, be free of *my* distortions. I happen to be one of those who believe that the ability to tell the whole truth about anything at all is so rare that anyone who claims it, especially if he does so with hand on heart, should be regarded with the deepest suspicion.
>
> I can only attempt to be truthful. (55-56)

In light of such equivocation, Ambler's audience is obliged to reserve its verdict about the narrator's veracity, however admirable his acknowledgment of subjective bias in self-reporting might seem to be.

Other elements of Firman's quasi-legalistic defense, even though he assumes the role of aggrieved plaintiff, raise questions about his probity. For one thing, as the pressures of scrutiny begin to mount during the Villa Lipp interviews, he is fond of resorting to various *ad hominem* ways of invalidating his chief accuser. These include Firman's recurrent caricature of Krom as a bumbling social scientist who—prone to academic pomposity, displays of prognathous front teeth, a susceptibility to inebriation, and cowardice in the face of physical danger—comes off as an oafish clown.[3] Second, in response to the three sociologists' cross-examination of him about certain disclosure files or "papers," which Firman admits he doctored for their consumption, the protagonist is consistently cagey in his replies. Finally, in order to extenuate his involvement with the suspect Institute for International Investment and Trust Counselling, the narrator weaves an elaborate tale of two "Darwin[s] of criminology" (33), Carlo Lech and Mathew Williamson, who as his silent partners qualify more than he for Krom's investigation.

The Professor's competing extrapolation of Firman/Oberholzer's career compounds our uncertainty about whose affidavit, given the novel's selective filtering, is the more credible. Particularly damning is Krom's hard-wrung admission that, in order to secure a face-to-face meeting with Firman at the Villa Lipp, he relied essentially on blackmail (see 21, 52, 173-75), the same kind of opportunistic exploitation

for which he has arraigned his case study. Eager to prove that the notion of "Master Criminal" was a "beguiling figment of nineteenth-century fictional imaginations who so often fell prey to amateur detectives" (5), Krom fastens on Firman as his premier suspect and rejects any possibility of Lech's or Williamson's being behind what he denounces as an organized campaign of "international parasitism" (97). Entranced by an *idée fixe*, Krom cannot conceive of any bureaucratic complexity in the underworld's operative structure. As a consequence, his conviction that Paul Firman, acting solely on his own initiative, is a heretofore undiscovered specimen of the twentieth century's "Able Criminal" proves to be little more than a redaction of the late-Victorian hypothesis of "Master Criminal."

Also noteworthy about the forensic standoff between the two men is the readiness of each to accuse the other of mendacity while parsing their own terminology. Thus, objecting to the Professor's "casual use of the word 'criminal,'" Firman invokes a standard definition approved by "most modern lexicographers"—"one who commits a serious act generally considered injurious to the public welfare and usually punishable by law"—before spinning it to his own advantage: "Krom seemed to believe that anyone possessing the imagination and business […] skills needed to evolve a new way of investing time and money in order to make a profit was automatically a criminal" (21). Only a dozen pages later, however, while reporting his initial interview with the sociologist to Mathew Williamson in London, the narrator candidly admits that he engaged in "double-talk."

> I asked [Krom] to define crime. I asked him if he didn't think that it was largely a fiction created by politicians posing as legislators and […] pretending that their motives are free from political pollution. Didn't he agree that ninety-five percent of so-called crime is committed by governments against, and at the expense of, those citizens in whose names they pretend to govern? (33)

For his part the Professor is equally prone to semantic gamesmanship. Condemning Firman as the mastermind of a "multimillion-dollar extortion racket" (97), as already noted, Krom is blind to his own use

of blackmail in tracking down his quarry. This capacity for self-deception prompts his opponent at one point to wonder whether, "without the burden of that overweight superego he carries around," the academician might "not have become one of our less scrupulous competitors" (130). Failing to grasp the implications of either Friedrich Nietzsche's or Herbert Marcuse's writings, Frits Bühler Krom concludes only that Paul Firman's description of his role in the "Oberholzer" caper, which Krom insists on hypostatizing as the "Symposia Conspiracy," is "nothing but a pack of lies" (173; 141).

Ambler's embedded stories of both Carlo Lech and Mathew Williamson suggest the shallowness of Professor Krom's theory regarding modern criminality. A cunning Italian lawyer during World War II and subsequently Firman's *patrono*, Lech allegedly took the young sergeant, then serving with British Field Security Police in 1943, under his wing and divulged what he anticipated would be a lucrative scheme of private banking for servicemen, primarily U.S. quartermasters, in need of safe havens for their profiteering windfalls. On the basis of an informal but honored compact, if we can believe Firman's narrative, both Lech and he as "Oberholzer" benefited enormously from their enterprise until the late 1950s, at which time new market forces intervened to challenge the thriving partnership now known as "Agence Euro-Fiduciare." Especially important in this background sketch is the two men's personal relationship. Twice his protégé's age upon their first meeting one another, Lech regards the protagonist as "the kind of son I would have liked to have, one with whom, and at whose side, I could do business" (67).[4] For his part the Argentina-born and dual-nationality Firman, who has no fond memories of his British father's shipping him off at age eight to boarding schools in England, is effectively a deracinated orphan receptive to the guidance of a surrogate mentor. Thus, when Carlo dies five years prior to the novel's opening, his understudy finds himself appointed Lech's joint trustee for a privately owned Caribbean island, the sale of which will benefit primarily an American grandson, by way of daughter Maria and her cellist husband, named Mario. What this interpolated tale

projects, we can infer, is an allegory of adoption and custodianship, an encoding of both the *relative* legitimacy of post-war financial chicanery as well as a sentimental commitment to the idea of family. This paradigm, however, is juxtaposed with an altogether different template of that which succeeded and supplanted it. The new order of "gangster-ridden monopoly capitalism" is epitomized by Mathew Williamson, "a half-caste Melanesian sorcerer" who also goes by the surname of Tuakana (206; 26).

In sharp contrast to the depiction of Carlo Lech and his "old buccaneering ways" (159), the narrator's portrait of "sexually double-gaited" trickster Williamson makes clear his generational difference (35). Almost twenty years younger than Paul Firman, this graduate of the London School of Economics, who later attended Stanford Law School, was born on Placid Island[5] in the Pacific and, while being educated by Methodist missionaries in Fiji during the war that left him parentless, acquired a reputation for terrorizing classmates with pagan spells. Incongruously, given this haphazard start in life, the young Williamson then came under the sway of Robert Baden-Powell, whose Boy Scout Movement's creed of self-sufficiency spoke deeply to his need for "[t]ribalism, […] with lots of stern rituals and the chance to exercise a natural talent for leadership" (29). By his mid-thirties, having already become the majority shareholder of Symposia SA and therefore Firman's superior after Lech's death, this latter-day entrepreneur—with the help of Frank Yamatoku, "a Japanese-American whiz kid from California who [had] made a killing in the porn trade there before Mat found him" (31)—devotes himself to a scheme for turning Placid Island, without the knowledge of Chief Tebuke and its indigenous population, into an internationally competitive outpost for money-laundering. Cleverly disguising his real ambitions, Williamson/Tuakana poses as an advocate for the territory's post-World War II claims against the Anglo-Anzac Phosphate Company that had stripped its natural resources. Like Lech and Firman, Mathew Williamson falls somewhere between a criminal and a businessman, but the ethos he typifies is far different from that of his

wartime precursors.[6] Thus this dispassionate opportunist "does not have to be in the least angry with a man before deciding that he must be destroyed" (87).

Implicit in the narrator's account of this post-war figure's connivance is a sketch of the consummate bureaucrat. Unlike Carlo Lech, who despite his wiliness honors a code of personal fidelity, Mathew Williamson compartmentalizes his allegiances in accordance with how, at any given moment, they benefit him. When Paul Firman is compromised by intrusive Professor Krom, therefore, the hybrid creature known as Williamson/Tuakana is more than ready to sacrifice former colleagues for his own self-protection under the ruse of "plausible deniability."[7] While posing publicly as "patron saint of Placid Island" (166), in Firman's mocking description, who at the United Nations is advocating postcolonial independence for "the most prosperous sovereign state in the entire South Pacific" (34), Mathew Williamson arranges through intermediaries for the Villa Lipp to come under murderous rocket siege on Bastille Day, 14 July, by hired killers before he has another group of thugs viciously execute Yves Boularis, a once-trusted Tunisian expert in electronic surveillance who failed to ensnare Firman within the compound. During the siege Williamson also dissociates himself from Frank Yamatoku, whom he had charged with orchestrating the attack. The protagonist narrowly escapes these dangers, along with assistant Melanie Wicky-Frey, but in the process he learns a valuable lesson about the lengths to which bureaucratic duplicity will go in order to safeguard its strategic interests.

Professor Krom's inability to credit Paul Firman's representations of either Carlo Lech or Mathew Williamson/Tuakana stems from more than naïveté. For one thing, as a sociologist whose pet theory is that white-collar criminals are anarchists who lack "faith in established patterns of order" (23), he is eager to validate his hypothesis and thereby regain a lost standing within the academic community (see 33, 131). Ironically declaring that this new breed of those who trespass the law "will not have taken to […] heart the works of the ineffable Mar-

cuse" (23), author of *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), Krom cannot conceive of the possibility that *systems* rather than *individuals* generate anti-social behavior. The academician also credulously believes that his own research efforts are exhaustive. Pursuant to his "most careful inquiries," Carlo Lech was nothing other than "a highly respectable […] corporation lawyer," and Mathew Williamson, according to an article titled "The Able Criminal: Notes for a Case Study" that Krom contributes to *The New Sociologist* two months after the Villa Lipp's siege, simply a benevolent businessman who became Chief Minister on Placid Island after it won independence (76; 224). Finally, although paradoxically given their differences, Professor Krom subscribes to the same paradigm as Paul Firman when the latter asserts early in the novel: "If sociologists like Krom must paste labels on men and women in order to classify them, I would say that Mat is, as I am, an adventurer; that is, in the old pejorative sense of the term, a healthy and intelligent person who could labour usefully in the vineyard, but who prefers instead to live by his wits" (34). Without admitting as much, Professor Krom concedes the point in terms of how he construes culpable agency. Only when the Villa Lipp is under lethal assault does there come a moment in which the first-person narrator explicitly sets forth Ambler's theme:

> For a few minutes they [Professors Krom, Connell, and Henson] seemed to have stopped wondering how much truth there was in me, and to be asking themselves a question that their books had always said was irrelevant. Was there or wasn't there honour among thieves?
>
> Could criminal relationships be like those to be found in trade and industry? […] Or was the "standard" criminal relationship one of convenience and collusion only, like a contract between politicians, cancellable without warning by either party the moment it became in any way embarrassing? (179)

These questions form the crux of *Siege*. Behind all the verbal jousting between Paul Firman and the team of criminologists interrogating him is the issue of whether expediency governs the world of legitimate commerce as well as that of deviant criminality. If one sphere is simply an analogue of the other in terms of its ethics, the presumptive

distinction that separates the realm of societal order from the forces of predatory misrule collapses.

In order to explore this issue in a 1970s context, Ambler uses a staging device that he borrowed from classical detective fiction and first employed in *Epitaph for a Spy* (1938)—namely, a sealed or otherwise isolated environment, like the country manor houses of Arthur Conan Doyle, in which the drama of detection can unfold through a process of deductive ratiocination. In *Epitaph* this confined setting is the Hotel de la Réserve in St. Gatien where Josef Vadassy, a young teacher of languages and man without a country threatened with deportation from France, desperately tries to ascertain through a series of interviews which of ten other guests snapped surveillance images of seaside artillery installations at nearby Toulon. He fails in this mission imposed on him by the Sûreté Générale, however, because all the clues are equivocal. Early in his career Ambler thus derails the epistemological assumptions of an antecedent genre (see Snyder 231-33, 236). In *Siege*, of course, the leased Villa Lipp functions similarly as a circumscribed arena in which is played out the dialogical sparring between Paul Firman and his accusers, but in Ambler's seventeenth novel unlike his third the putative or logocentric "truth" of things is finally indeterminate. According to commentator Peter Lewis, *Siege* inducts us "into a contemporary equivalent of Lewis Carroll's looking-glass world where, conveniently, words can mean whatever you want them to mean" (196). By foregrounding the hollowness of rhetoricity and the endless play of *différance* in his main subjects' exchanges, Ambler's text figures as "a deconstructionist critic's delight" (Wolfe 203), all the while declining to make doctrinaire statements about "the divorce in modern capitalist society between the socially admired qualities of individual initiative and imaginative enterprise, on the one hand, and the moral values that should but do not control them, on the other" (Lewis 198). With few exceptions, moreover, Ambler's *personae* are linguistically self-invented simulacra. Mathew Williamson/Tuakana, for example, is said to be an expert mimic adept in ventriloquizing other people's voices and speech patterns. *Siege* con-

sequently presents no Jamesian development of character, choosing instead to dramatize the factitiousness of such constructs in "the jungles of international bureaucracy" (23).

Late in the novel, after proclaiming Professor Krom a "phony" (224), Paul Firman denounces his adversary as follows: "His is a monochrome world of good-and-evil, innocence-and-guilt, truth-and-falsehood. If such a world exists, and perhaps it does exist in the privacy of some minds, then he is welcome to it" (225-26). This riposte, one might argue, is the last defense of an embattled relativist, yet Firman recognizes—whether or not one endorses his viewpoint—that "Truth games are dangerous" in a culture dominated by dissimulation and dissemblance (156). Ambler leaves it entirely up to us as readers to decide at the end whose "clouds of verbiage" in the protagonist's debate with Krom are the metaphorical equivalent of "octopus ink" (235; cf. 74). At the same time, however, he includes a detail about his text's provenance that provides some direction in interpreting the narrative as a whole.

I am referring to the fact, as noted earlier in this essay, that Firman discloses in *Siege's* concluding chapter that he has relied upon an "amanuensis," "literary mentor," and "business intermediary" to "prepare this account of the 'siege of the Villa Lipp' for publication" (231). The fictive entity, it seems plausible, is Ambler himself as author of *The* Intercom *Conspiracy* (1969), in which he suddenly "moved from the single narrative voice" of his earlier novels to "collections of views," as in *Siege*, that "cast doubt on the truth of the main narrator" (Panek 153). As I have argued elsewhere, *Conspiracy* can be construed as "a uniquely decentered and metafictional work within his corpus" because, though it "lacks the degree of historiographic self-consciousness evident in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) and A. S. Byatt's *Possession: A Romance* (1990), it nevertheless investigates in comparably intensive fashion the permeable border usually accepted as separating fiction and reality" (251-52). A further parallel can be drawn between Ambler's fourteenth and seventeenth productions. In telling a convoluted story of how Colonels Brand and

Jost, disillusioned directors of two small nations' intelligence networks, extort a huge sum from NATO superpowers by arranging for the dissemination of top-secret technical bulletins in a propagandistic newsletter,[8] *Conspiracy* emphasizes how textuality usurps and scripts our perceptions of the world. It thus is no accident that within the novel Charles Latimer Lewison, an author of detective stories who fancies that he can untangle the labyrinthine scheme, is eventually murdered and buried under wet cement at a construction site, thereby literalizing "Roland Barthes's concept of the demise of the author in postmodernity" (Snyder 257). Neither Paul Firman nor Professor Krom suffers this fate in *Siege*, but their rhetorical skirmishing, coupled with Carlo Lech's and Mathew Williamson/Tuakana's prevarications, occludes our access to the truth of things. In both of these texts, therefore, Ambler compels us to wrestle with complementary dimensions of our discursive orientation, particularly as they pertain to pivotal issues of ethical practice and responsibility.

Given this thematic emphasis in both *Conspiracy* and *Siege*, it is fitting that the latter ends with a battle of two books. The first of these is Krom's *Der kompetente Kriminelle*, which identifies "Oberholzer" as the sole con-man behind Symposia SA. "Produc[ing] a whole crop of articles on the subject in the international news magazines and business journals" (224), the tome makes no mention of Mathew Williamson, Placid Island, Frank Yamatoku, Yves Boularis, or the siege of the Villa Lipp. Because of this exposé's negative impact on his tax-avoidance seminars, Paul Firman is motivated to set the public record straight by drafting a professedly "true" account while sequestered on aptly named Out Island, former retreat of Carlo Lech, in the Caribbean. This is the text vetted by the narrator's "literary mentor" and "business intermediary," but the publisher's conditions for its release stipulate the obtaining of legally binding waivers of prosecution for libel. Professor Krom's consent is contingent on Firman's including as a postscript or appendix his twelve-page commentary thereon. In this supplement Krom refutes his opponent's "self-serving effusion" by citing the claim of newly installed Chief Minister of Placid Island, Mr.

Tuakana, that several years ago Paul Firman became mentally imbalanced as a result of his son's death by suicide (235; see 245). Whether this circumstantial information is accurate or not, considering its source and purveyor, is uncertain. The allegation becomes no less disconcerting because on the novel's last page Ambler's protagonist seems to confirm it. That with which readers are finally left, then, is an endlessly whorled narrative wherein both textual and oral representations proliferate to undermine our expectation of a clearly defined resolution.

In his seminal study titled *Cover Stories: Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller*, Michael Denning distinguishes between "magical" and "existential" thrillers. The first category features "a clear contest between Good and Evil," whereas the second "play[s] on a dialectic of good and evil overdetermined by moral dilemmas" (34). If we acknowledge this distinction in terms of *Siege*'s departure from the traditional genre whence it arose, Ambler like Graham Greene privileges "issues of innocence and experience, of identity and point of view" (63), because he recognizes how their dramatization interpellates his audience in the hermeneutical problem of perspective. At the same time he addresses in two of his later novels how we are besieged by the gathering forces of bureaucratization, with its concomitant impulse toward relativism, in terms of how we make sense of our world.

None of this is to imply that Ambler lends himself to conventional classification. His surprising shift in architectonics beginning with *Conspiracy* and expanded in *Siege* no doubt contributed to why fellow author C. P. Snow, reviewing the 1977 novel under its British title of *Send No More Roses*, was hard-pressed to categorize the text:

> Along with John le Carré, [Ambler] is recognised, and rightly so, as this country's master of—what? It is difficult to define precisely what kind of books these two write. They are certainly not detective stories. They are scarcely thrillers, or not in the Dashiell Hammett or Raymond Chandler sense. Though suspense plays a part, as it does in almost all the classical straight novels, sensation rarely does. The Ambler books are […] a good deal more than mildly intellectual entertainment.

Although Snow clearly found it easier to define his contemporary's seventeenth production in terms of what it was not rather than of what it was, he perceptively went on to observe that *Siege*, "like all the best of Ambler, induces a sense […] of Man Alone" pursued by enemies "even when he isn't certain who they are." Corroborating Paul Firman's admission that he is "still on the run" after his escape from the Villa Lipp (233), the same critic proposed that the anti-hero's "inner drama" constitutes his narrative's core interest: "He and Krom each know some of the truth," remarked Snow. "No one knows all[,] and no one ever will."

In setting out to transform the pulp fiction of his day and challenge the established literature of detection, Eric Ambler elevated the thriller to a new level of philosophical subtlety.[9] Heralding this depth in the novelist's early work, Ralph Harper, who was among the first to devote scholarly attention to Ambler's chosen *métier*, linked it to major tenets of existentialism, including the "boundary situations" of "Man Alone" (51). To this thematic dimension *Siege*, like *Conspiracy* eight years before it, experimentally added a high degree of narrational complexity, tasking us to reexamine nothing less than the very idea of fictionality itself. For these and other reasons Ambler deserves to be regarded as more than a "spy novelist," the usual tag by which publicists as well as otherwise informed critics try to pigeonhole him. Transcending such reductive labeling, he is a writer who continues to speak to our troubled time.

University of West Georgia
Carrollton, GA

NOTES

[1]Within the generally modest body of scholarship on Ambler's fiction, only Peter Lewis (186-98) and Peter Wolfe (197-207) discuss *The Siege of the Villa Lipp* at any length. Ronald J. Ambrosetti's 1994 book for Twayne's English Authors Series inexplicably fails to consider any of Ambler's last four novels.

[2]"I had sought him out," Ambler has Firman say in this bit of authorial persiflage, "because I liked something he had written and deduced from it that he was

a person who would be unlikely to strike high-minded or other tedious attitudes" (231). It is tempting to speculate, for reasons clarified later in this essay, that the "something he had written" may refer to *The* Intercom *Conspiracy*.

[3]Diane Bjorklund points out that "sociologists […] get no respect from novelists" because of the former group's reputed penchant for disciplinary jargon and failure to "understand human life in any meaningful way." Claiming that some eighty novels, including Ambler's *Siege*, over the last century pillory sociologists, she cites among others Randall Jarrell's *Pictures from an Institution* (1954), Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man* (1975), and John Gardner's *Mickelsson's Ghosts* (1982).

[4]Carlo Lech, we are told, did have a son, "a handsome, clever[,] but rather vain boy, who later disappointed him profoundly by going into the Church" (68). Even in this small plot detail business and morality, or ethics, part company.

[5]Peter Lewis observes, on the basis of a passage in the novel itself (see 34), that the fictitious Placid Island closely "resembles what was known as Pleasant Island until 1968 when it became Nauru, the world's smallest independent republic" located in Micronesia (195).

[6]Supporting this point, Ambler has Firman comment that "Carlo Lech and I always told one another the truth. To do so was part of our mutual respect. With Mat Williamson, mutual respect is based on insights of a different order. When a question is asked there, you consider, first, not what the exactly truthful answer would be, but what the questioner wishes to hear from you. No, I'm not surprised by his betraying me […] . When you deal with Mat, there's always a chance that he may *try* to deceive or betray you" (180). This observation confirms a shift in ethics that accompanied the rise of bureaucratization after World War II.

[7]I am referring, of course, to the famous phrase of evasion that surfaced in President Richard M. Nixon's surreptitiously taped conversations with advisers John Ehrlichman and John Haldeman during the Watergate scandal before his impeachment-forced resignation on 9 August 1974. By noting the connection, I am suggesting that *Siege* reflects such an essentially bureaucratic mindset. The novel alludes to Watergate when its protagonist says of Carlo Lech's activities in 1945: "Thirty years were to go by before the Watergate investigation brought the word 'laundering' into metaphorical association with the word 'money'" (82).

[8]It bears mention that Colonels Brand and Jost's one-time campaign of "[c]alculated indiscretion" (*Conspiracy* 127) is not comparable to the career-long deceptions of Carlo Lech, Paul Firman, and Mathew Williamson/Tuakana. For the most part the former are treated sympathetically as rogues disenchanted with the "secrecy fetish" of post-World War II espiocracy (*Conspiracy* 33), whereas the latter, despite generational differences among them, have embraced extralegal adaptations of practices associated with corporate bureaucracy.

[9]"Ambler's great achievement," writes Simon Caterson, "was to bring realistic detail, political awareness[,] and philosophical substance to the thriller, without forgoing suspense or reducing narrative velocity" (87).

WORKS CITED

Ambler, Eric. *A Coffin for Dimitrios*. 1939. New York: Vintage-Random, 2001.

——. *The Dark Frontier*. 1936. Rev. ed. New York: Mysterious-Warner, 1990.

——. *Epitaph for a Spy*. 1938. Rev. ed. 1952. New York: Vintage-Random, 2002.

——. *Here Lies: An Autobiography*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985.

——. *The* Intercom *Conspiracy*. New York: Atheneum, 1969.

——. *Journey into Fear*. 1940. New York: Vintage-Random, 2002.

——. *Judgment on Deltchev*. 1951. New York: Vintage-Random, 2002.

——. *The Siege of the Villa Lipp*. New York: Random, 1977. *Send No More Roses* (British title). London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977.

Ambrosetti, Ronald J. *Eric Ambler*. New York: Twayne, 1994.

Bjorklund, Diane. "Sociologists in Novels: A Skewed Sample." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 49.26 (2003): B13-B14.

Caterson, Simon. "Eric Ambler's Dark Frontiers." *Quadrant* 44.1-2 (2000): 87-88.

Cawelti, John G., and Bruce A. Rosenberg. *The Spy Story*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987.

Denning, Michael. *Cover Stories: Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller*. London: Routledge, 1987.

Harper, Ralph. *The World of the Thriller*. Cleveland: P of Case Western Reserve U, 1969.

Lewis, Peter. *Eric Ambler*. New York: Continuum, 1990.

Panek, LeRoy L. *The Special Branch: The British Spy Novel, 1890-1980*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular P, 1981.

Snow, C. P. Rev. of *Send No More Roses*, by Eric Ambler. *London Financial Times* 28 July 1977: 12.

Snyder, Robert Lance. "Eric Ambler's Revisionist Thrillers: *Epitaph for a Spy*, *A Coffin for Dimitrios*, and *The* Intercom *Conspiracy*." *Papers on Language & Literature* 45 (2009): 227-60.

Stafford, David A. T. "Spies and Gentlemen: The Birth of the British Spy Novel, 1893-1914." *Victorian Studies* 24 (1981): 489-509.

Wolfe, Peter. *Alarms and Epitaphs: The Art of Eric Ambler*. Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular P, 1993.

Connotations
Vol. 20.2-3 (2010/2011)

Written Sounds and Spoken Letters, but All in Print: An Answer to Bärbel Höttges[*]

HANNES BERGTHALLER

First of all, I would like to thank Bärbel Höttges for her perceptive comments on my essay, providing a critical counter-point from the perspective of postcolonial theory and affording me an opportunity to clarify somewhat my own argument. What I found particularly helpful was her exposition of Morrison's religious syncretism; whereas I perhaps overemphasized the extent to which Morrison in *Beloved* distances her characters from the Christian tradition, Höttges rightly insists that the religious practices they engage in are best understood as hybridizations of Christian and African elements. Yet, I am not convinced that the interplay between orality and literacy in the novel is simply another example of the same logic of hybridity, as Höttges argues: "*Beloved* is not a novel that *pretends* to be an oral story, and it is certainly not a magic trick that depends on the illusion of orality, but Morrison combines orality and literacy to create something new and distinctively black" (155).

While it may not pretend to *be* an oral story, *Beloved* certainly seeks to suggest that it can *function* like one, and it is precisely on this point that I believe greater skepticism is in order. To hybridize the cultural codes of different ethnic or religious communities is one thing; it is quite another to hybridize different media at the level of their operativity, i.e. with regard to how they engage individuals in communica-

---

[*]Reference: Hannes Bergthaller, "Dis(re)membering History's *revenants*: Trauma, Writing, and Simulated Orality in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," *Connotations* 16.1-3 (2006/2007): 116-36; Bärbel Höttges, "Written Sounds and Spoken Letters: Orality and Literacy in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," *Connotations* 19.1-3 (2009/2010): 147-60.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debbergthaller01613.htm>.

tion. What is at issue is not the reproduction of certain stylistic features of orality within a written text—not the combination of the speech patterns of the Black vernacular with the conventions of 'white' literary discourse, which Henry Louis Gates has famously described as the distinctive feature of African American literature. *Beloved* undoubtedly furnishes a prime example of just such a "speakerly voice" (Gates 148), and Morrison's linguistic inventiveness in the creation of this literary idiom is perhaps one of the best measures of her achievement. However, this should not be taken to imply that one therefore needs to go along with the author's own account of how her texts are to be received by their proper audience. Morrison has often stressed that her fiction is meant to translate into the medium of print those participatory qualities which she sees as essential to African-American traditions: "antiphony, the group nature of art, its functionality, its improvisional nature, its relationship to audience performance, the critical voice which upholds tradition and communal values and which also provides occasion for an individual to transcend and/or defy group restrictions" ("Memory" 389).

Too many critics have taken such pronouncements at face value. By and large, they have accepted the idea that those features of Morrison's texts which reflect her effort to reproduce the participatory dimension of oral discourse somehow make them distinctly "black." Yet Morrison's description of how readers participate and co-create the meaning of a text by "filling in" the "spaces" prepared for them by the author ("Unspeakable Things" 157) are strikingly similar to Wolfgang Iser's notion of "spots of indeterminacy" which are constitutive to *any* act of reading. Morrison has invented a singularly effective and beautiful way of capturing in print the sound and pacing of the African-American vernacular (without ever resorting to the condescension of eye-dialect); what she has not (and could not have) achieved is a literary form which could constitute a community of speakers and listeners in a way significantly similar to that of oral discourse. To put the matter quite simply: to *read a description* of a mass, no matter in how impassioned a manner, is not the same as *participating* in a mass.

This difference may appear too obvious to need pointing out, yet it is of particular saliency with regard to *Beloved* because so many critics have argued that the therapeutic, community-building function of oral narrative as described on the level of diegesis can and should be replicated in the experience of the reader—i.e., that story-telling heals and "re-members" not only the community formed by the novel's characters, but also the readers who, through their engagement with the novel, are joined to that community. Again, such an understanding of the novel is in keeping with Morrison's own views as voiced in many of her interviews and essays, but it tends to downplay, if not to elide, the irresolvable tension between orality and literacy that is so essential to the novel's peculiar pathos. I agree with Höttges when she writes that the "transient quality" of oral narrative is central to *Beloved* because forgetting is necessary for the victims of slavery if they are to "have the chance of a future" (156), whereas the written word resists forgetting and, thus, serves our need for historical memory. I concur that it is therefore important for any interpretation of the novel to keep both of these dimensions in view. I would like to add, however, that it is just as important to keep in mind that forgetting and remembering really are contradictory goals, equally compelling but mutually exclusive. The breakdown of simulated orality which I refer to in my essay bears testimony to the fact that it is impossible to accomplish both of these goals at once. Perhaps the distinctive achievement of Morrison's novel is to have found a literary form able to contain this existential quandary—on the printed page.

National Chung-Hsing University
Tai-Chung, Taiwan

WORKS CITED

Gates, Henry Louis. The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism. Oxford: OUP, 1988.

Morrison, Toni. "Memory, Creation and Writing." *Thought* 59 (1984): 385-90.

——. *Beloved*. 1987. New York: Vintage, 2004.

——. "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature." *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. U of Michigan, 7 October 1988. 7 March 2011.
<http://www.tannerlectures.utah.edu/lectures/documents/morrison90.pdf>.

Connotations
Vol. 20.2-3 (2010/2011)

Can the Indigent Speak? Poverty Studies, the Postcolonial and the Global Appeal of *Q & A* and *The White Tiger*[*]

BARBARA KORTE

1. Poverty as a Challenge for Literary Criticism

In a document of the United Nations, poverty is defined as "a human condition characterised by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights" (UN 2001). This definition reflects the current understanding of poverty—in the social and economic sciences as well as in the humanities—as lack in terms not only of material, but also human and cultural capitals. In the twenty-first century, indigence and crass social inequality have become phenomena located not only in developing countries, but also increasingly in the societies of Europe and North America. In an age of globalisation, new social walls between rich and poor are being erected everywhere. Faced with the new worldwide visibility of poverty, Poverty Studies are on the rise, and they have begun to include the analysis of literature (as well as other forms of art),[1] acknowledging, just as studies in human development have recently done,[2] that the literary narrative has a special capacity to present poverty as the multi-faceted experience of individual human beings rather than in the form of anonymous statistics.

Literary and cultural studies are challenged to offer approaches to such (re-)presentations, not only in light of traditions of 'poverty literature' which, in the English language, date back to the Middle

[*]For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <http://www.connotations.de/debkorte02023.htm>.

Ages,[3] but also with respect to theoretical questions. It is here that an important impetus comes from Postcolonial Studies—not primarily because this area of study focuses on cultures in which poverty has always been an urgent problem.[4] Above all, issues prominent in the discussion of poverty (now and in former periods) have long been analysed for the forms of marginalisation—and resistance to them—that arise from colonial subordination: the power over and of representation (Stuart Hall), the importance of 'authority' (Homi Bhabha), and the 'agency' to act and speak for oneself.[5] In particular, Poverty Studies frequently echoes Gayatri Spivak's influential question, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In her seminal essay, Spivak answers this question in the negative (cf. 308), and she also rejects attempts to 'lend' the poor a collective, homogenising and paternalistic voice.[6]

This is a position also encountered in recent discussions of poverty literature. Walter Benn Michaels (2006), for instance, who sparked a debate on the literary treatment of poverty in the US, observes that such treatment is rarely authored by the poor themselves, and that in the cases where poor people do speak for themselves, they employ forms of articulation that transcend their own class and reach privileged readers only (cf. Michaels 200). Such claims can hardly be contested. What seems more important, however, and should concern literary and cultural critics more, is the fact that *literature* has long spoken about poverty, and that there is an accumulation of literary presentations of indigent life throughout time and across cultures that has reached readers and affected the ways in which these readers imagine[7] and take positions on poverty. It appears to be the prime responsibility of literary studies to scrutinise the modes and ideological positions of these representations, while their specific authorship seems of subordinate importance. Of course, whether subalterns are granted opportunities to speak, and to be listened to, are questions of social and ethical relevance which literary criticism must not push aside. But are the non-poor disentitled to write about poverty? Not from the point of view of Aravind Adiga who, in an interview published in *The Guardian* about *The White Tiger* (one of the novels to be

discussed below), claimed his right to write about experiences he never had himself: "I think the whole point of being in literature, of being in imaginative fiction, is to try and get under the skin of someone else and to speak in the voice of someone else […]. That's the reason I became a writer. I never wanted to write about someone like myself" (Adiga, Interview). Do Adiga and other novelists 'steal' stories from the poor when they write about them?[8] Do they 'ventriloquise'[9] for them or commit acts of ethically suspicious class 'passing' of the kind George Orwell is associated with in British literature?[10] Are literary treatments of poverty a fictional equivalent to 'slum tourism'[11]?

Rather than raising questions that involve individual authorship, my subsequent discussion regards literary texts as (more or less) fictional projections in which poor people are represented and, in the specific cases to be analysed, assigned an authority to raise their voice and speak (as well as act) for themselves. Even where their authors are members of cultural elites, such texts *per se* create impressions of poor lives with a potential to impact on their readers' social imaginary. In recent years, such texts have been produced in growing numbers, to critical acclaim and often with significant performance on the (globalised) English-language book market. It appears that novels by writers with a background in post-colonies—notably in the Caribbean[12] and the Subcontinent—have been particularly successful. It might be suspected that these novels are attractive to readers in the global North because they deal with a poverty that is *not* located in the North, because they appear to deflect a problem which is also the North's by setting it in the developing world. But part of their success can also be attributed to the fact that their authors have found ways to write about poverty that depart from literary traditions of treating this theme, whether realist or sentimentalist. Such traditions were significantly shaped by nineteenth-century British cultural production (most prominently from the pen of Charles Dickens), i.e. the representational practice of a society that developed strikingly similar strategies for dealing with its indigent at home and the indigenous people of its

colonies.[13] By providing alternatives to—and sometimes even twisting—'familiar' modes of poverty literature, postcolonial novels have a potential to challenge their readers' imaginations of poverty quite beyond their immediate 'postcolonial' context.

The two novels by Indian authors at the centre of the following section, Vikas Swarup's *Q & A* (2005) and Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008), were written in English with an eye on international audiences,[14] and both enjoy a high visibility on the international and especially the UK book market[15] even several years after their original publication. The sales figures for *Q & A* were significantly boosted when the novel was adapted for the Oscar-BAFTA-and-Golden Globe-winning film *Slumdog Millionaire* (UK 2008, dir. by Danny Boyle); those for *The White Tiger* as soon as Adiga was awarded the 2008 Man Booker Prize.[16] Both novels are set in an India that has transformed into a tiger economy and for this fact alone depart from a literary image of India as the world's poorhouse to which Indian writers themselves have copiously contributed.[17] As portrayed by Swarup and Adiga, globalised India is still a place of abject poverty, but this poverty is now contextualised in finanscapes and mediascapes (Appadurai) that not only create new dimensions of social inequality but also present new opportunities to reject and rise from poverty—if only to a few determined individuals. It is the stories of such determined individuals that the two novels undertake to tell: the narratives of exceptional men who stand out from the millions in their country who cannot, or do not dare to, escape from social suffering. The autodiegetic narrator of Adiga's novel explicitly identifies himself as a "white tiger," i.e. a creature "that comes along only once in a generation" (35), capable of breaking out of the "rooster coop" in which most of the Indian poor prefer to stay. The narrator-protagonist of *Q & A* diagnoses his people's "sublime ability to see the pain and misery around us, and yet remain unaffected by it" (84), but he himself develops a different mentality. With their exceptional central characters, Swarup and Adiga have found a means to treat (Indian) poverty in a distinctly *non*-generalised way, and they also avoid a

familiar romantic rags-to-riches pattern that promises wealth to any individual willing to work hard enough and persist in his efforts. Rather, it seems a major point of both novels to disturb preconceptions which their readers might have about poor people and how, according to these preconceptions, they might 'authentically' speak and act. What serves this purpose exemplarily is a narrative voice that endows the indigent with conspicuous agency and powers of enunciation.

2. Fictions of Agency: *Q & A* and *The White Tiger*

In both novels, highly individualised narrators have significant achievements to share: Ram in *Q & A* participates in the Indian version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, the global media franchise that promises wealth through trivial knowledge; although uneducated in any formal way, Ram wins the jackpot because he can answer all of the questions as a result of the experiences accumulated during his young and humble life. Balram in *The White Tiger* has been kept as a despised and ridiculed servant for most of his life until he murders his wealthy, westernised master and steals the money with which the latter has intended to bribe the government. With this money, Balram manages to re-invent himself as a successful entrepreneur in Bangalore, "the world's centre of technology and outsourcing" (3).

There is an undeniable social asymmetry between the novels' narrators and their authors: Swarup wrote *Q & A* while serving as a diplomat for his country in London; Adiga, the son of a surgeon, enjoyed a high-profile education at Australian schools and prestigious American and British universities before he took up a career in journalism, working for *Time* magazine, among others. This social asymmetry, which also extends to most of the novels' readers, has attracted criticism especially from Indian reviewers and critics. Criticism was particularly vehement for *The White Tiger*, especially after Adiga won the Booker—a prize, after all, that has been noted for promoting, and

helping to sell, exotic otherness (cf. Huggan). As A. J. Sebastian summarises in his article on the novel,

> some Indian critics wonder if Adiga intended the novel primarily to get western readership, projecting the protagonist, getting away with his crime, being a victim of perpetual servitude […]. Similar is the anguish of Amardeep Singh who is perturbed by Adiga's narrating about India's poverty for a non-Indian, non-poor readers [sic], through a half baked Indian protagonist who is a sociopolitical caricature. ("Poor-Rich Divide" 242)

To the *Guardian*'s Book Club reviewer too, Balram is an inauthentic narrator because his voice appears to be his author's rather than his 'own':

> The frequent reminders of [the narrator's] lack of education and supposed naivety unwittingly draw attention to the sophistication of the writing. Even if it is spiced up with earthy profanities and an unembarrassed delight in scatalogical [sic] detail, there's no getting away from the fact that the voice of the novel, if not the viewpoint, is that of an educated, highly-trained writer—especially thanks to a frequent striving for almost Edward Gibbonesque aphorism. (Jordison)

Q & A attracted less polemical attention, but its (rather loose) adaptation to the screen sparked a heated controversy over its alleged confirmation of stereotypes and its supposed exploitation of Indian poverty for the gratification of Western voyeurism. A reviewer of the London *Times* even referred to the film as "poverty porn" (Miles).[18] Such allegations may not be unjustified, but they seem to miss a point about agency that both novels (and also *Slumdog Millionaire*) provocatively try to make—namely that the poor, once they stand out as individuals, may be quite different from what most audiences know or imagine about them. A seemingly 'inappropriate' voice can be seen precisely as *part* of this representational strategy, as Ana Cristina Mendes briefly suggests for *The White Tiger* and its narrator's command of language. To Mendes, the fact that this language seems to be at odds with the character's social background is not a flaw (as some critics have claimed), but part of Adiga's aim to undermine readers'

preconceived notions about the poor and their 'probable' capabilities: "Adiga's failure to achieve (an in itself untenable) authenticity is deliberate" (284).[19]

Balram in *The White Tiger* is neither a reliable narrator (he is prone to exaggerate and contradict himself), nor a likable character,[20] but he is conspicuously a master of trope and pithy phrase, as in the following instances:

> A rich man's body is like a premium cotton pillow, white and soft and blank. *Ours* are different. My father's spine was a knotted rope [...]. The story of a poor man's life is written on his body, in a sharp pen. (26-27)

> The dreams of the rich, and the dreams of the poor—they never overlap, do they?
>
> See, the poor dream all their lives of getting enough to eat and looking like the rich. And what do the rich dream of?
>
> Losing weight and looking like the poor. (225)

One of Balram's powerful metaphors captures the paradox of an urban poverty that is simultaneously 'there' and 'not there,' depending on point of view: While driving his master through Delhi, Balram perceives the car as a shell that protects the people inside from an outside which the rich do not wish to be aware of. Balram, however, has an epiphany when the simultaneous existence of two cities suddenly reveals itself to him:

> We were like two separate cities—inside and outside the dark egg. I knew I was in the right city. But my father, if he were alive, would be sitting on that pavement, cooking some rice gruel for dinner, and getting ready to lie down and sleep under a streetlamp, and I couldn't stop thinking of that and recognizing his features in some beggar out there. So I was in some way out of the car too, even while I was driving it. (138-39)

It is rich people's ignorance of the 'other' life and what poverty means to those who have to live with it that enrages Balram so much that he will eventually kill his master. But he also raises his voice to give vent to his anger at being pushed around and humiliated by people who do everything to crush his sense of agency. He is especially outraged

at the authorities, above all the corrupt police and the law, who conspire with the rich to keep the poor in their humble state. As Balram comments:

> The jails of Delhi are full of drivers who are there behind bars because they are taking the blame for their good, solid middle-class masters. We have left the villages, but the masters still own us, body, soul, and arse. (170)

Swarup's *Q & A* differs from *The White Tiger* in plot and in a more humorous, picaresque approach, but there are significant parallels between the two novels. Ram learned to speak "the Queen's English" (33) as a young child, during a brief happy period he spent with a Catholic priest. However, in his instance too the confidence and eloquence with which he narrates his struggle for survival are not what most readers would expect from a man who speaks about life in Mumbai's Dharavi slum in the first person plural—"Dharavi's grim landscape of urban squalor deadens and debases us" (157). Ram displays his acute social observation and poignant rhetoric, for instance, when he compares Dharavi to "a cancerous lump" in Mumbai's "heart" (157). The body imagery employed here is complex: Mumbai's new heart, with its glittering architecture of global capitalism, "modern skyscrapers and neon-lit shopping complexes" (157), seems aseptic—something from which the ill of poverty has been excised. The India of new wealth, like the older India of caste, has othered the poor and declared slum life "outlawed" and "illegal" (157). However, the slum is still there and, like a lethal growth, might destroy the heart from within.

Like Balram in Adiga's novel, Ram also uses his eloquence to express his exasperation about India's blatantly unequal distribution of social power:

> Street boys like me come at the bottom of the food chain. Above us are the petty criminals, like pick-pockets. Above them come the extortionists and loan sharks. Above them come the dons. Above them come the big business houses. But above all of them are the police. They have the instruments of naked power. And there is nobody to check them. Who can police the police? (25)

Ram even tells most of his story while under police arrest: he has won the quiz honestly, but because the show was planned as a hoax in the first place and the producers do not have the money for the jackpot, Ram's success is 'outlawed' and, in order to cheat Ram of his prize, he is accused of having cheated himself—the accusation being constructed on the widespread assumption that the poor cannot 'authentically' have access to the capital of knowledge and must therefore be suspected of fraud when they display it.[21] This is a prejudice—which many readers of the novel might also have—against which Ram protests explicitly and quite early in his narration:

> There are those who will say that I brought this upon myself. By dabbling in that quiz show. They will wag a finger at me and remind me of what the elders in Dharavi say about never crossing the dividing line that separates the rich from the poor. After all, what business did a penniless waiter have to be participating in a brain quiz? The brain is not an organ we are authorized to use. (12)

Knowledge as a human capital which the poor are denied to have is less prominent a theme in *The White Tiger*, but it is important there too because early in his life Balram is deprived of a concrete opportunity to develop his brain. An intelligent boy, he is granted a scholarship but then cannot profit from it because his family is obliged to others and he has to contribute to their income. Balram is resourceful, however, and practices self-education, acquiring knowledge useful for his later rise in the world by closely observing other people's behaviour and in particular by listening to the rich.

The two protagonists share a spirit of resistance to being victimised and sweepingly categorised.[22] This spirit is revealed not only in their outspokenness, but also in their various transgressive acts. Transgressing boundaries is an element in their behaviour that Ram and Balram are quite obviously pleased with. The major transgression is that they become rich themselves. This is preceded, however, by many minor and temporary acts of class-crossing, for instance when Balram 'trespasses' into a shopping mall,[23] or when Ram crashes the dinner party of an indecently rich woman with the dead body of the

handicapped son whom she has hidden amongst the poor,[24] or when he once uses a hard-earned salary to travel like a middle-class man:

> Looking at the typical middle-class family scene in front of me, I don't feel like an interloper any more. I am no longer an outsider peeping into their exotic world, but an insider who can relate to them as an equal, talk to them in their own language. Like them, I too can now watch middle-class soaps, play Nintendo and visit Kids Mart at weekends.
>
> Train journeys are about possibilities. They denote a change in state. (178)

In this episode, Ram's triumph is short-lived because the middle-class family in his train compartment do not appreciate that he should enjoy the possibility of crossing the poverty line. When the train is waylaid by bandits, they make sure that Ram loses all the money he has hidden on his body. More significantly, however, Ram raises the point that a change in state may also not be part of his *readers'* imaginary of Indian poverty:

> If you were to search for me in this crowded maze [of New Delhi's Paharganj railway station], where would you look? You would probably try to find me among the dozens of street children stretched out on the smooth concrete floor in various stages of rest and slumber. You might even imagine me as an adolescent hawker, peddling plastic bottles containing tap water from the station's toilet as pure Himalayan aqua minerale. You could visualize me as one of the sweepers in dirty shirt and torn pants shuffling across the platform, with a long swishing broom transferring dirt from the pavement on to the track. Or you could look for me among the regiments of red-uniformed porters bustling about with heavy loads on their heads.
>
> Well, think again, because I am neither hawker, nor porter, nor sweeper. Today I am a bona fide passenger, travelling to Mumbai, in the sleeper class, no less, and with a proper reservation. (173-74)

By thus challenging the reader in a passage of direct address, Ram also asserts his narrative agency. The novel's strongest assertion of this agency is a significant manipulation of the reader's knowledge (quite fitting for a narrative that aims to destabilise people's ideas about what the poor can know or what kind of knowledge is a useful 'capital' in the first place). What begins as a plot of a poor man's apparent victimisation when Ram is arrested and interrogated by the

police, later turns—quite surprisingly for the reader—into a plot of cunning revenge when Ram reveals that he joined the quiz show, not in order to win a lot of money and leave his poverty behind, but in order to avenge two women whom the show's host once maltreated and humbled: a kind actress whom Ram served and who committed suicide, and a prostitute whom Ram wants to save and marry. That Ram does not narrate his story chronologically helps him disguise the true reason for his participation in the show: telling his story retrospectively to explain why he was able to answer the quiz questions without cheating, Ram points out how he came across the correct answers during various significant experiences in his life. Since his narrative follows the sequence of the quiz questions, however, its flashbacks jump from one experience to another, regardless of their sequence in time, and with many gaps such as Ram's motive for contesting in the quiz. When this motive is finally revealed, what seemed to be a story of fairy-tale luck unexpectedly turns into a story of purposeful endeavour. Significantly, at the end of the novel, Ram throws away the lucky coin that he has always claimed to consult for his decisions: "'I don't need it any more. Because luck comes from within'" (361). But this is a conviction he must always have had because the coin has never been useful as a decision-making device—having two identical sides. Ram's decisions, the reader learns, have always been his own; his agency has always been more important than his luck.

Balram's narrative in *The White Tiger* works without comparable tricks upon the reader but it does assert the narrator's sense of power. Balram's confidence in his voice is apparent, for instance, in his audacity to address, once more with rhetorical aplomb, the Chinese Prime Minister—eye to eye as members of Asian nations that have inherited the power of the West:

> Never before in human history have so few owed so much to so many, Mr Jiabao. A handful of men in this country have trained the remaining 99.9 per cent—as strong, as talented, as intelligent in every way—to exist in perpetual servitude; a servitude so strong that you can put the key of his emanci-

> pation in a man's hand and he will throw it back at you with a curse. (175-76)

As this passage exemplifies, Balram has a megalomaniac streak that makes him appear ridiculous at times. However, the attributes which he ascribes to himself at the novel's beginning—"A Thinking Man," "a self-taught entrepreneur," "a man of action and change" (5-6)—are justified by his actual achievements, even if the money he gained through his crime was a major catalyst for his final success.

3. Listening to the Indigent

Q & A and *The White Tiger* are novels emerging from a postcolonial context that destabilise preconceptions about poverty and the poor. As discussed above, their narrator-protagonists are drawn as exceptional human beings in contemporary India who manage to overcome the general lethargy of the 'rooster coop' and develop idiosyncratic voices. These voices not only articulate the characters' sense of agency and achievement; they also have the power to challenge common generalisations about poverty—not only Indian poverty. But whom will the complex—and provocative—treatments of poverty in these two novels reach? What kinds of readers did their authors have in mind? Who will *listen* to the indigent as presented in these novels?[25]

When Adiga was interviewed about *The White Tiger* and its controversial reception in *The Guardian* in 2008, his following answer refers to an intended readership in India:

> At a time when India is going through great changes and, with China, is likely to inherit the world from the west, it is important that writers like me try to highlight the brutal injustices of society. That's what writers like Flaubert, Balzac and Dickens did in the 19th century and, as a result, England and France are better societies. That's what I'm trying to do—it's not an attack on the country, it's about the greater process of self-examination. (Jeffries)

This statement points to an Indian cultural elite as part of Adiga's intended audience and the vision of a socially privileged author speaking to socially privileged readers about a poverty that is not their own but that they should be concerned about because it is part of their society. However, as a novel successful on the global book market (even beyond the English-speaking world), *The White Tiger* speaks to a far greater number of readers *outside* India. In the interview in question, Adiga did not comment on this segment of his readership, but his international orientation is reflected in the fact that he inscribes his novel in an eminent tradition of European social-realist writing (Flaubert, Balzac and Dickens). In the case of *Q & A*, such inscription takes place in the novel itself, notably in its playful intertextual gestures towards a 'classic' of poverty literature in English, Dickens's *Oliver Twist.* As young boys, Ram and his friend Salim are taken to a Juvenile Home for Boys in Delhi that recalls one of the most famous and popular episodes from Dickens's novel:

> The mess hall is a large room with cheap flooring and long wooden tables. But the surly head cook sells the meat and chicken that is meant for us to restaurants, and feeds us a daily diet of vegetable stew and thick, blackened chapattis. He picks his nose constantly and scolds anyone who *asks for more*. (91; my emphasis)

From the home, the boys are sold to a man running a beggars' school in Mumbai, where boys are crippled to become beggars and/or trained to become pick-pockets.[26] As novels speaking to readers in the UK, North America and other countries in the global North, *Q & A* and *The White Tiger* can affect these readers' images of Indian subalternity, but also their imagination of poverty in general. At a time when poverty is no longer contained in an 'exotic,' 'third' world safely removed from the wealthy metropolis, the postcolonial appears to have acquired a new authority in discussing matters of poverty: in theory, but also through its literature.[27]

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität
Freiburg

NOTES

[1]Cf., among others, Gandal.

[2]Cf. Lewis, Rodgers, and Woolcock: "Works of fiction can thus offer a wide-ranging set of insights about development processes that are all too often either ignored or de-personalised within academic or policy accounts, without compromising either complexity, politics or readability in the way that academic literature is often accused of doing. It is clear that literary works sometimes have a stronger Geertzian 'being there' quality than certain academic and policy works; they may cover aspects of development that are often not made explicit in conventional academic accounts; or, they are written in a more engaging and accessible manner. Furthermore, partly for this latter reason, works of literary fiction often reach a much larger and diverse audience than academic texts and may, therefore, be more influential than academic work in shaping public knowledge and understanding of development issues" (209).

[3]On late-medieval and early-modern poverty literature cf. Crassons, and Carroll; on poverty in literature of the eighteenth century and Romanticism cf. Perry, and Lloyd. On Victorian treatments of poverty cf. Smith, Williams, Tobin, Lenard, and Betensky. Kumar provides a concise overview of important treatments of poverty in English fiction.

[4]Given this urgency, Postcolonial Studies, or at least its literary branch, has given poverty comparatively short shrift. Diana Brydon has briefly discussed poverty as a 'new marginality' in postcolonial literatures; there is also a number of observations on individual writers and works (such as Chikowero, Heyns, Odhiambo, Puri, and Yenika-Agbaw). Even for India, whose poverty has been a major object of study in the historiographical branch of Subaltern Studies (cf., among others, Guha; Chakrabarty and Amin), and whose writers have often dealt with indigence, analyses of literary poverty treatments are limited (but see Nandi below).

[5]Cf. Wilson on the use of the term in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies.

[6]"The first part of my proposition […] is confronted by a collective of intellectuals who may be called the 'Subaltern Studies' group. They *must* ask, Can the subaltern speak? […] Their project is to rethink Indian colonial historiography from the perspective of the discontinuous chain of peasant insurgencies during the colonial occupation. This is indeed the problem of 'the permission to narrate' discussed by Said" ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 283). But, to Spivak, "the colonized subaltern *subject* is irretrievably heterogeneous" (284).

[7]Cf. Charles Taylor's view of the social imaginary as "the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (23).

[8]On the 'stolen stories' debate cf. Lutz (1996).

[9]Cf. Spivak: "The ventriloquism of the speaking subaltern is the left intellectual's stock-in-trade" (*Critique* 255). In the interview cited above, Adiga was

explicitly asked: "You've written a novel which ventriloquises a member of the Indian underclass. I mean you as an Oxford-educated middle-class man, you know, that takes some nerve?" (Adiga, Interview).

[10]On the questionable ethics behind narratives of actual cross-class passing (such as Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London*) see Carolyn Betensky: "People of means who pass for poor or homeless play with, script, and dramatize relations of power. The simulation of powerlessness is an elaborate role-playing game that takes its material from the anxieties generated by lived social injustice—that is to say, social injustice lived from the side of the oppressing class" (148). She further claims that "[i]t is important to understand that the problem with dominant-class simulations of powerlessness lies *not* in the bourgeois subject's enjoyment, but in the customary and uncritical conflation of this enjoyment with the promotion of social justice. The *misrecognition* of 'powerlessness' for powerlessness is what transforms these middle-class experiments from role-playing rituals (with meaning for the middle-class role-player and those to whom the role-playing fantasy speaks) into something that gets taken for activism" (151). On the history of class-passing since the nineteenth century cf. Freeman.

[11]Selinger and Outterson discuss actual slum tourism side by side with fictional treatments of poverty, notably in the film *Slumdog Millionaire*. On contemporary slum tourism in India also see Meschkank, who grants that poverty tourism will often be voyeuristic but can also transform the "poverty semantics" (60) of the tourists who come into a more positive evaluation of life in the slum (for example as more active and community-orientated).

[12]In his forthcoming PhD thesis, Georg Zipp discusses novels by such internationally known writers as Edwige Danticat, Junot Díaz, Earl Lovelace, and Achy Obejas.

[13]For instance, both were 'missionised' by religious groups, and the subject of extensive ethnography. Cf., in particular, Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, which categorises the underclass as 'tribes': "Here, then, we have a series of facts of the utmost social importance. (1) There are two distinct races of men, viz.:—the wandering and the civilized tribes; (2) to each of these tribes a different form of head is peculiar, the wandering races being remarkable for the development of the bones of the face, as the jaws, cheek-bones, &c., and the civilized for the development of those of the head; (3) to each civilized tribe there is generally a wandering horde attached; (4) such wandering hordes have frequently a different language from the more civilized portion of the community, and that adopted with the intent of concealing their designs and exploits from them. […] The resemblance once discovered, however, becomes of great service in enabling us to use the moral characteristics of the nomad races of other countries, as a means of comprehending the more readily those of the vagabonds and outcasts of our own" (2).

[14]Adiga has also published short stories about Indian poverty. For instance, "The Elephant" was published in *The New Yorker* (26 January 2009).

[15]Where literature from the former crown colony still enjoys particular interest.

[16]For *Q & A*, cf. "Q & A's Sales"; for *The White Tiger*, cf. Tivnan (2009).

[17]For a discussion of treatments of poverty in Indian literature (both in English and in Indian languages) cf. Nandi (2007), who diagnoses a tendency for Indian intellectuals to treat poor India as an abject other that may also become a site of projection for their own fantasies, desires and anxieties.

[18]For a summary of this criticism see Banaji. In a paper given at the Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of the New Literatures in English (University of Münster, 2009), Ellen Dengel-Janic provides a more differentiated analysis of the film, proposing that its appeal "reflects not only the West's exoticism of India, but also its repressed fear and paranoia of becoming abject and poor. In times of financial crisis the very stability of cosmopolitan capitalism is shaken, and therefore, films like *Slumdog Millionaire* offer immediate relief from the Western citizen's anxiety of losing status, money and security, since, it is *there* and not *here*, that poverty can be securely located."

[19]This deliberation is obviously right from the novel's beginning where Adiga, through his narrator's voice, plays with the contradiction that the novel's language is English although Balram allegedly does not speak the language. As Balram says to the Chinese Prime Minister whom he addresses: "Neither you nor I can speak English, but there are some things that can be said only in English" (3).

[20]Apart from being a murderer—eventually also of his family, whom he knows will be killed in revenge of his master's death—Balram is unpleasantly boastful and has a cheap nouveau-riche taste epitomised in his fondness for his shiny silver Mac and the chandeliers which he even sports in his toilet.

[21]Indeed, Swarup claimed in an interview in 2005 that a report about access to knowledge in an Indian slum inspired *Q & A*: "I read a newspaper report that street children in India have begun using the mobile Net facility. That gave me an idea. They had intuitively understood technology. […] I thought, why not have an unlettered person appear on a quiz show […]" (qtd. in Sebastian, "Voicing Slum-Subaltern" 907). The project in question is 'Hole in the Wall,' which provides children in slums with free internet access via computers literally installed in walls (see Pratapchandran). This is an idea which the project's initiator Sugata Mitra is convinced can be transferred back successfully to British schools: "'The scheme means hundreds of English teachers are now teaching children in Indian slums, whilst the kids there are teaching us a thing or two about education—it's a perfect circle'" (Tobin, "Slumdog Reveals Learning Treasures" 2010).

[22]Balram is so proud of this spirit that he even attributes it to his parents: He notes how his mother's foot during her cremation 'refused' to be burnt (17), and that his father, a rickshaw puller, refused to behave like the donkey as which he was treated (30). He also claims that he loves poetry because it is a form of poor man's resistance (254).

[23]"I was conscious of a perfume in the air, of golden light, of cool, air-conditioned air, of people in T-shirts and jeans who were eyeing me strangely. I saw a lift going up and down that seemed made of pure golden glass. I saw shops

with walls of glass, and huge photos of handsome European men and women hanging on each wall. If only the other drivers could see me now!" (152).

[24]"I climb on to the table, and place Shankar's body gently in the middle, in between a creamy vanilla cake and a bowl of *rasagullas*. [...]. Swapna Devi, sitting at the head of the table, clad in a heavy silk sari and loaded with jewellery, looks as if she is going to choke" (327). Ram then steals the woman's money but gives it to another poor man who urgently needs it to save his own child's life.

[25]Cf. Spivak in an interview about her seminal essay: "So 'the subaltern cannot speak,' means that even when the subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak, she is not able to be heard, and speaking and hearing complete the speech act" ("Subaltern Talk" 292; cf. also Maggio). The importance of listening as a complement of speaking is also emphasised by Couldry: "Voice as a social process involves, from the start, both speaking and *listening*, that is, an act of attention that registers the uniqueness of the other's narrative" (8-9).

[26]When Ram and Salim travel to the beggars' school, the passage is reminiscent of a famous passage in another classic of poverty literature, George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), where Orwell watches a scene in a Northern English slum from the train window (cf. Orwell 14-15). On *their* train, the boys in *Q & A* also briefly become spectators of the poverty of others: "From time to time, the train passes through slum colonies, lining the edges of the railway tracks like a ribbon of dirt. We see half-naked children with distended bellies waving at us, while their mothers wash utensils in sewer water. We wave back" (105).

[27]This essay is part of a research project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

WORKS CITED

Adiga, Aravind. *The White Tiger*. London: Atlantic-Grove Atlantic, 2008.

——. Interview with Stuart Jeffries. *The Guardian* 16 October 2008. 12 May 2011 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/oct/16/booker-prize>. [audio-file].

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996.

Banaji, Shakuntala. "Seduced 'Outsiders' versus Sceptical 'Insiders'?: *Slumdog Millionaire* through Its Re/Viewers." *Participations: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 7.1 (May 2010): 1-30.

Betensky, Carolyn. *Feeling for the Poor: Bourgeois Compassion, Social Action and the Victorian Novel*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2010.

——. "Princes as Paupers: Pleasure and the Imagination of Powerlessness." *Cultural Critique* 56 (Winter 2004): 129-57.

Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Brydon, Diana. "Commonwealth or Common Poverty? The New Literatures in English and the New Discourse of Marginality." *After Europe*. Ed. Stephen Slemon and Helen Tiffin. Mundelstrup: Dangaroo, 1989. 1-16.

Carroll, William C. *Fat King, Lean Beggar: Representations of Poverty in the Age of Shakespeare*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh, and Shahid Amin, eds. *Subaltern Studies IX*. Delhi: OUP, 1996.

Chikowero, Joseph. "Return of the Dry Season: Mapping Postcolonial Childhood Experiences in Memory Chirere's Short Fiction." *Sankofa: A Journal of African Children's and Young Adult Literature* 7 (2008): 6-14.

Couldry, Nick. *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics After Neoliberalism*. London: Sage, 2010.

Crassons, Kate. *The Claims of Poverty: Literature, Culture, and Ideology in Late Medieval England*. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 2010.

Dengel-Janic, Ellen. "Bringing the Slum to Your Doorstep: New Modernity in Slumdog Millionaire (dir. Danny Boyle, 2008)." Annual Conference of the Association for the Study of the New Literatures in English. University of Münster. May 2009.

Freeman, Mark. "'Journeys into Poverty Kingdom': Complete Participation and the British Vagrant, 1886-1914." *History Workshop Journal* 52 (Autumn 2001): 99-121.

Gandal, Keith. "Poverty Studies." *Inside Higher Education* 29 June 2009. 12 May 2011 <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2009/06/29/gandal>.

Guha, Ranajit, ed. *Subaltern Studies I*. Delhi: OUP, 1982.

Hall, Stuart. "New Ethnicities." *Black Film, British Cinema*. Ed. Kobena Mercer. ICA Documents 7. London: ICA, 1988. 27-31.

Heyns, Michael. "Houseless Poverty in the House of Fiction: Vagrancy and Genre in Two Novels by J. M. Coetzee." *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa* 11.1 (1999): 20-35.

Huggan, Graham. "Prizing 'Otherness': A Short History of the Booker." *Studies in the Novel* 29.3 (1997): 412-33.

——. *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*. London: Routledge, 2001.

Jeffries, Stuart. "Roars of Anger." *The Guardian* 16 October 2008. 06 June 2011 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2008/oct/16/booker-prize>.

Jordison, Sam. "Booker Club: The White Tiger." *The Guardian* 22 August 2008. 12 May 2011
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2008/aug/22/theindianeconomicmiraclemi>.

Kumar, Krishan. "Versions of the Pastoral: Poverty and the Poor in English Fiction from the 1840s to the 1950s." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 8.1 (1995): 1-35.

Lenard, Mary. *Preaching Pity: Dickens, Gaskell, and Sentimentalism in Victorian Culture*. Frankfurt: Lang, 1999.

Lewis, David, Dennis Rodgers, and Michael Woolcock. "The Fiction of Development: Literary Representation as a Source of Authoritative Knowledge." *Journal of Development Studies* 44.2 (2008): 198-216.

Lloyd, Sarah. "Poverty." *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture, 1776-1832.* Ed. Iain McCalman. Oxford: OUP, 1999. 114-25.

Lutz, Hartmut. "Robbed Graves, Whiteshamans and Stolen Stories: (Re-?)Appropriations of Native Cultures." *Difference and Community: Canadian and European Cultural Perspectives*. Ed. Peter Easingwood, Konrad Gross, and Lynette Hunter. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996. 131-44.

Maggio, Jay "Can the Subaltern Be Heard? Political Theory, Translation, Representation, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 32.4 (2007): 419-44.

Mayhew, Henry. *London Labour and the London Poor: A Cyclopaedia of the Condition and Earnings of Those That* Will *Work, Those That* Cannot *Work, and Those That* Will Not *Work.* Vol. 1: *The London Street-Folk*. London: Griffin, Bohan, and Company, 1861.

Mendes, Ana Cristina. "Exciting Tales of Exotic Dark India: Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 45 (2010): 275-93.

Meschkank, Julia. "Investigations into Slum Tourism in Mumbai: Poverty Tourism and the Tensions between Different Constructions of Reality." *Geo Journal* 76 (2011): 47-62.

Michaels, Walter Benn. *The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality*. New York: Metropolitan, 2006.

Miles, Alicia. "Shocked by Slumdog's Poverty Porn: Danny Boyle's Film Is Sweeping Up Awards, But It's Wrong to Revel in the Misery of India's Children." *The Times* 14 January 2009. 12 May 2011 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article5511650.ece>.

Nandi, Miriam. *M/other India/s: Zur literarischen Verarbeitung von Armuts- und Kastenproblematik in ausgewählten Texten der indisch-englischen und muttersprachlichen indischen Literatur seit 1935*. Heidelberg: Winter, 2007.

Odhiambo, Tom. "Kenyan Popular Fiction in English and the Melodramas of the Underdogs." *Research in African Literatures* 39.4 (2008): 72-82.

Orwell, George. *The Road to Wigan Pier*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989.

Perry, Ruth. "Home Economics: Representations of Poverty in Eighteenth-Century Fiction." *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture.* Ed. Paula R. Backscheider and Srinivas Aravamudan. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. 441-58.

Pratapchandran, Sarat. "Inspired by the Slum." *Educational Facility Planner* 43.4 (2009): 10-11.

Puri, Shalini. *The Caribbean Postcolonial: Social Equality, Post-Nationalism and Cultural Hybridity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

"Q & A's Sales on the Boyle." *Bookseller* 5366 (2009): 17.

Sebastian, A. J. "Poor-Rich Divide in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*." *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* 1.2 (2009): 229-45.

——. "Voicing Slum-Subaltern in *Slumdog Millionaire*." *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* 1.3 (2009): 897-920.

Selinger, Evan, and Kevin Outterson. "The Ethics of Poverty Tourism." Boston University School of Law Working Paper No. 09-29. 12 May 2011 <http://www.bu.edu/law/faculty/scholarship/workingpapers/documents/SelingerEOuttersonK06-02-09.pdf>.

Smith, Sheila. *The Other Nation: The Poor in English Novels of the 1840s and 1850s*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1980.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1988. 271-313.

——. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999.

——. "Subaltern Talk: Interview with the Editors (1993-1994)." *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Spivak*. Ed. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean. New York: Routledge, 1996. 287-308.

Swarup, Vikas. *Q & A*. 2005. London: Black Swan, 2006.

Taylor, Charles. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2004.

Tivnan, Tom. "Rising Tide." *Bookseller* 5373 (2009): 20-21.

Tobin, Beth Fowkes. *Superintending the Poor: Charitable Ladies and Paternal Landlords in British Fiction, 1770-1860*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1993.

Tobin, Lucy. "Slumdog Reveals Learning Treasures." *The Guardian* 16 March 2010. 06 June 2011 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/mar/16/slumdog-millionaire-education-online-independent>.

United Nations. *Poverty and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, E/C.12/2001/10. Geneva: United Nations. 10 May 2001. 12 May 2011 <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/docs/statements/E.C.12.2001.10Poverty-2001.pdf>.

Williams, A. Susan. *The Rich Man and the Diseased Poor in Early Victorian Literature*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987.

Wilson, Jon E. "Agency, Narrative, and Resistance." *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*. Ed. Sarah Stockwell. Malden: Blackwell, 2008. 245-68.

Yenika-Agbaw, Vivian. "'Half Education Is Madness!' Mwangi's Teenage Characters Battle Poverty in a Postcolonial African City." *Sankofa: A Journal of African Children's and Young Adult Literature* 2 (2003): 13-19.

Connotations

A Journal for Critical Debate

Contents of Volume 20 (2010/2011)

Creative Imagination and Didactic Intent
in Medieval Visions of the Other World:
A Response to Fritz Kemmler
JESSICA BARR 1

Transformations of Life and Death
in Medieval Visions of the Other World:
A Response to Fritz Kemmler
MATTHIAS GALLER 12

The Audiences of Three English Medieval Visions:
A Response to Fritz Kemmler
COURTNAY KONSHUH 23

*

Spenser as Prometheus:
A Response to Maik Goth
ANDREW HADFIELD 189

Spenser's Monsters: A Response to Maik Goth
JOHN WATKINS 201

Elf-Fashioning Revisited:
A Response to Maik Goth
MATTHEW WOODCOCK 210

*

An Answer to Edmund Miller and
Anita Gilman Sherman
MARGRET FETZER 221

*

An Addendum to
"A Question of Competence:
The Card Game in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*"
KATHRYN WALLS 34

*

"The road to happiness":
Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*
ANGELIKA ZIRKER 131

*

Whose are those 'Western eyes'?
On the Identity, the Role and the Functions of the Narrator
in Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*
CHRISTIANE BIMBERG 35

*

Worcestershirewards:
Wodehouse and the Baroque
LAWRENCE DUGAN 228

*

The Change of Hemingway's
Literary Style in the 1930s:
A Response to Silvia Ammary
KURT MÜLLER 155

*

Evelyn Waugh's *Edmund Campion*
and "Lady Southwell's Letter"
DONAT GALLAGHER 80

*

Lilies and an Olive Branch:
On Robert Lowell's *Lord Weary's Castle*
FRANK J. KEARFUL 248

*

Ambiguity and Ethics:
Fictions of Governance
in Geoffrey Hill's *Mercian Hymns*
RAJEEV S. PATKE 253

*

"The Jungles of International Bureaucracy":
Criminality and Detection in
Eric Ambler's *The Siege of the Villa Lipp*
ROBERT LANCE SNYDER 272

*

Artists as Parents in A. S. Byatt's *The Children's Book*
and Iris Murdoch's *The Good Apprentice*
JUNE STURROCK 108

*

Written Sounds and Spoken Letters, but All in Print:
An Answer to Bärbel Höttges
HANNES BERGTHALLER 289

*

Unlived Lives in Kazuo Ishiguro's
The Remains of the Day and
Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love*
BURKHARD NIEDERHOFF 164

*

Can the Indigent Speak? Poverty Studies,
the Postcolonial and the Global Appeal of
Q & A and *The White Tiger*
BARBARA KORTE 293

ISSN 0939-5482

