

# The Year's Work in Medievalism

Edited by Gwendolyn Morgan



XVI

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## Walter Charleton and the Matron of Ephesus: Chaucerian Parody in the Seventeenth-Century Anti-feminist Controversy

Brian Lee

The occurrence of Chaucerian quotations in two ambiguously anti-feminist narratives, *The Ephesian Matron* and *The Cimmerian Matron*, is a curiosity which suggests that Chaucer had a reputation in the seventeenth century as a controversial writer about questions relating to women. The passages selected are chiefly from *The Book of the Duchess* and *The Legend of Good Women*, and could be construed as favourable; there are also, however, quotations from *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, *The Merchant's Tale* and *The Shipman's Tale* which may hint at a different point of view. Chaucer's authority is used to endorse the authors' satire; the irony that it does not always do so is part of the joke.

Walter Charleton (1619-1707) is best remembered today for arguing that Stonehenge was a Danish coronation site, thanks to Dryden's commendation of him in his verse epistle "To My Honour'd Friend Dr Charleton" (1663).<sup>1</sup> He deserves better than to have his reputation rest on speculations about Stonehenge that are now known to be absurd. The *DNB* lists some 29 works of his (there are 48 items by or referring to him in the British Library catalogue), and comments, "In religion he was a high Churchman, in philosophy an epicurean, and in politics one of the last of the old royalists."<sup>2</sup> (As the author of a work on the immortality of the soul, he in fact refutes the epicurean doctrine of its corporality in a digression in his *Ephesian Matron*.) He was also a physician and a member of the Royal Society. Dryden's panegyric associates him with the leading scientists of his day.

But in 1659, in more diverting mood, he retold, in Euphuistic prose, Petronius's satire on the Matron of Ephesus,<sup>3</sup> a high-born widow who yielded typically but too readily to a common soldier who found her mourning over her husband's coffin in his tomb, and soon put an end to her sorrowing. In an ingenious mixture of satire and defence, Charleton pretends to excuse her on the grounds that sex is natural and that women are particularly prone to it. In 1668 a friend, P.M., Gent., published a somewhat new version of Charleton's text, with a commendatory critique, and a rather more grossly anti-feminist sequel, *The Cimmerian Matron*, translated from the *Comus* of Erycius Puteanus (Henri Dupuy, 1574-1646).<sup>4</sup> Both narratives contain apposite quotations from Chaucer; but those in *The Ephesian Matron* may have been inserted by P.M, since there are none in Charleton's first edition. It is therefore possible that Chaucer's

relevance to his satire never occurred to Charleton; he may, on the other hand, have approved or even suggested the insertions for P.M.'s reprint.

Achsah Guibbory, in the introduction to the Augustan Reprint Society's reprint of Charleton's *Ephesian Matron* (without P.M.'s sequel), concentrates on the author's debt to Hobbes's *Human Nature* (1650) for his view of love as an "imperious Passion" derived from man's animal rather than "rational" nature. Guibbory castigates this as a "totally reductive argument" that "obliterate[s] the hierarchical distinctions between human passion and animal appetite."<sup>5</sup> The resultant anti-feminism that Guibbory sees as merely one aspect of Charleton's satire on human nature in general was gleefully exaggerated by P.M., in a manner that makes it all the more interesting that he should wish to drag in Chaucer, whom Gavin Douglas called "all women's friend."

Both stories are amusingly grotesque examples of the *fabliau* genre in which Chaucer wrote some of his best tales. In Chaucer's *fabliaux* the woman whose husband is deceived escapes unscathed, whereas all the men involved receive more or less painful punishments.<sup>6</sup> But she is not the chief instigator of the trickery, except perhaps in *The Shipman's Tale*. In both these seventeenth-century versions, however, the woman is actively bent on securing her own sexual satisfaction, at whatever cost to propriety. She is partially exonerated in Charleton's story, and triumphantly and most undeservedly so in P.M.'s. The authors of this combined publication have produced an anti-feminist joke, which in its contemporary context may be considered either innocently diverting, or scandalously malicious.

Antiquity had its heroines, of course, but showed little compunction when it saw fit to denigrate women. Petronius's anecdote is a case in point. Nor were the Middle Ages more charitable. In the mid-twelfth century John of Salisbury needed only to copy Petronius almost verbatim into his *Policraticus* in order to illustrate the fickleness of women: how easily they fall in love, on what trivial grounds they turn to hatred, and how quickly they forget their natural affections even for their own children.<sup>7</sup> Jacques de Vitry, in the first half of the thirteenth century, summarizes the story in his preachers' manual of *exempla* (illustrative anecdotes) and concludes with the antifeminist moral: see how quickly this woman changed when another man turned up, so that she didn't only forget her love for her former husband, but even took his body out of his coffin and hung him up on a gibbet. *Varium et mutabile pectus femina semper habet*. A woman's heart is always a changeable and unpredictable thing.<sup>8</sup> According to the English version of *The Seven Sages of Rome*,<sup>9</sup> she was even willing to mutilate the body of her husband, so that it would look more like that of the robber stolen from the gibbet which the soldier was supposed to be guarding while he was making love to her in her husband's tomb. When he finds the lengths she's prepared to go to in order to preserve his life, the soldier decides "Pat sho was cumen of vnkind blode" (3008) and wants no more

to do with her. There is absolutely no sense of irony in the fact that his incompetence, cowardice and deceit incur no blame, and her generosity receives no praise: in fact, in some versions he cuts her head off, in what we are to understand is well-deserved disgust.

By the more respectful seventeenth century, it had become fashionable for misogyny to tease rather than attack the victims of its satire. George Chapman's *The Widow's Tears* (1612) is a comedy illustrating the unfaithfulness of women (following male trickery).<sup>10</sup> Acts IV and V utilize Petronius's story of the Ephesian matron; but here the soldier is the supposedly dead husband returned in disguise to see if his wife's vaunted devotion can be corrupted. He succeeds only too well, and returns the next night to "split her wesand," but by now she's been warned by his brother, who was party to the plot; and, pretending she and her maid knew him all the time, she denounces him as "a transforméd monster, / Who to assure himself of what he knew,/ Hath lost the shape of man" (V v 81-3). He gets, in other words, his well-deserved come-uppance. In the end all is forgiven. The comedy therefore concludes with the (moral) punishment of the man for his antifeminist demonstration of his wife's sexuality: in the end her forgiveness proves her constancy in spite of all his slanders and cruelty.

The play appeared at a time when the joke was wearing thin, and antifeminism provoked a heated controversy chiefly in response to an anti-feminist treatise by Joseph Swetnam. His *The Arraignment of Lewde, idle, froward, and vnconstant women: Or the vanitie of them, choose you whether* (1615), went through ten editions by 1637 and at least six more by 1880. Rebuttals with equally wonderful titles soon appeared: first Rachel Speght (a clergyman's teenaged daughter) wrote *A Mouzell for Melastomus* [A Muzzle for Black Mouth], *The cynical Bayter of, and foule mouthed Barker against Evah's Sex; or, An Apologeticall Answere to that Irreligious and Illiterate Pamphlet made by Io. Sw. and by him Intituled "The Arraignment of Women"* (1617); then Ester Sowernam (whose name may be a male's pseudonym, punning on Swe[e]tnam) extended Speght's defence of women with *Ester hath hang'd Haman; or, An Answere To a lewd Pamphlet, entituled, The Arraignment of Women. With the arraignment of lewd, idle, froward and vnconstant men, and Husbands* (1617); and thirdly the obviously pseudonymous Constantia Munda lashed out with the vituperative *Worming of a mad Dogge; or, A Soppe for Cerberus the Taylor of Hell*, also in 1617. All these had to be content with but one edition. Sales did not accord with merit. Women's faults were evidently more popular than men's.

As Linda Woodbridge points out,<sup>11</sup> the formal controversy was a genre and a literary exercise, in which defenders looked for historical and literary examples with which to rebut the latest witty slander upon womankind. The forces of fertility were on the side of women; misogyny represents the wintry intruder Sterility, who is ultimately driven away with contumely.

But centuries of slander must affect women's self-respect, and the response to Swetnam suggests that, by the seventeenth century, there were women emancipated enough to object that the joke had gone too far.

As might be expected, there is only the faintest implication of satire in Jeremy Taylor's retelling of the story at the end of his extensive religious manual, *Holy Dying*. He uses the Ephesian Matron as an *exemplum* of the brevity of immoderate emotion. "Those greater and stormy passions do so spend the whole stock of grief, that they presently admit a comfort and contrary affection," he begins, and concludes by remarking that the soldier, having hanged the husband's body, "escaped the present danger to possess a love which might change as violently as her grief had done."<sup>12</sup> But, in contrast, Charleton, whose dedication "to a Person of Honour" (his friend P.M.) evinces or pretends a fear of feminist censure, was deliberately playing with fire. He (or P.M. for him) emphasizes the sorrows of the mourning widow by quoting three times from the Man in Black's affecting laments in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, but then praises her submission to the soldier, on the grounds that the reader must be anxious for her survival.

It was great wonder that Nature  
Might suffer any creature.

To have such sorowe, and she not ded;  
Full piteous pale, and nothing red.  
She said a lay, a maner songe;  
Without note, withouten song;  
And was this, for full well I can  
Reherse it, right thus it began.

I have of sorrow so great wone,  
That joy get I never none;  
Nowe that I se my Husband bright,  
Whiche I have loved with all my might,  
Is fro me deed, and is agone.  
And thus in sorowe left me alone,  
Alas Dethe, what yeleth the,  
That thou noldest have taken me?

(*Book of the Duchess*, 467-82, from Thynne's 1532 edition, with feminine pronouns and "Husband" for "Lady." Thynne's line 480 is spurious.) With similar alterations of pronouns, P.M. subsequently inserts lines 509-18, referencing the passage "As Reverend Chaucer in his Dream", and later the three lines 529-31. The passages add little to Charleton's extended portrayal of the gradual submission of the lady to the blandishments of the Soldier and the enflaming effect of the wine he uses to resuscitate her. Charleton concludes:

And while they are busie at their silent devotions [they are making love on the dead husband's coffin], let us have recourse to the Oracle of Reason, and there consult about the powerful Cause of this great and admirable Change in our Matron, who (you see) is no longer either Mourner, or Widow.

To charge this suddain and prodigious Metamorphosis, upon the inherent Mutability and Levity of Womans Nature; though it may have somewhat of Philosophy in it, yet cannot have much of wisdom; as importing more Reason, than Safety. For, albeit, it be well known, that the softness and tenderness of their Constitution is such, as renders them like wax, capable of any impressions, and especially such as correspond with those their inclinations, that Nature hath implanted in them as goads to drive them on toward that principal End, for which it hath made them: yet, who is so rashly prodigal of his life, as to incense that Revengeful sex, by calling in question that Constancy in affection, which every Woman so much boasteth of, and is ready to defend even with her blood, and whereof every day produceth so many notable Examples?

Apparently, women are capable of anything, including revenge on men who say women are capable of anything. Charleton argues that neither “the Levity of Womans nature,” nor the wine she drank, accessory to her recovery though that certainly was, can account for the widow’s change of heart, which he puts down simply to the power of love. In time-honoured fashion, he adduces classical examples of this power, particularly those of Solomon, Appius Claudius, and Antony. Ironically, these are men, and they were all ruined by yielding to a weakness supposedly typical of women. The anti-feminist game seems to boomerang. Charleton may have taken the examples of Appius and Antony from Bacon’s essay *Of Love*; Bacon deplores love as an unworthy passion incompatible with statesmanship. Charleton, however, praises it precisely because it is excessive: “Being once in love, we believe our desires cannot be noble, untill they are extream; nor generous, unless they be rash.” The widow is to be excused because the soldier’s importunity was irresistible, and because the chance he offered her was one she could not afford to miss:

For the Souldier hath ikneled so  
And told her all his love, and all his wo,  
And sworn so depe to her to be true,  
For well or wo, and change for no newe;  
And as a false Lover so well can plain,  
The selie Matron rewed on his pain;  
And toke him for husband, and became his wife  
For evermore, while that hem last life.

(*LGW, Dido*, 1232-9, with “Souldier” for “Eneas”, and “Matron” for “Dido”)

“Why then,” Charleton asks, “should this Woman be accused of extream Levity, only for taking occasion by the Foretop, and, at first Encontre, making sure of what, perhaps, she otherways might have lost.”

When the soldier realizes that, while he was making love to the matron in the tomb, the corpse of the felon he was supposed to be guarding has been stolen, he proceeds to “vomit out blasphemies against women” (1668 says “belch out”, since “vomit” comes later): “Man who otherwise would be more than half-*Divine*; onely by being obnoxious to the corrupt temptations of Woman, is made lesse than half-*Human*.” (Here “obnoxious” has its now obsolete meaning of “liable.”) Then, since Charleton’s satire is not entirely gender specific, the soldier has the grace to vomit accusations against himself. Cleverly, the woman proposes that he mutilate her husband’s body to make it look like the hanged felon’s (she is not so abandoned as in some versions where she does the mutilating herself), and he obeys, remembering the proverb, “Women are always more subtle and ingenious at Evasions, in suddain Exigences, than Men.” P.M.’s 1668 publication inserts at this point, “Here I cannot but cry out with Father *Chaucer*, in his Ballad of the *praise of Women*, Lo what gentillesse these women have,” commencing two rhyme royal stanzas of perhaps ironic praise. The poem, included in early editions of Chaucer, is now recognized as apocryphal.<sup>13</sup> While not obviously ironic itself, its insertion here clearly is. The line “How busie thei be us to keepe and save” applies well to the matron’s concern for her new lover, but says little for her loyalty to the memory of her former husband, whose mutilated body must be publicly suspended for the sake of the object of her changed affections. Finally, as the lovers heave out the husband’s corpse, Charleton wryly comments that their ruse provides the first example of the proverb, “A woman’s Wit is alwayes best at a Dead-Lift.”<sup>14</sup>

Charleton’s satiric vindication of women is a quite brilliant example of condemnation through pretended praise, or, alternatively (for the treatise is nothing if not paradoxical), of praise that condemns not the usual objects of anti-feminist censure, but the unjustified excesses of such censure itself.

P.M., Gent.’s sequel begins with a letter to Charleton, explaining why he has dared to publish *The Ephesian Matron*, which Charleton had sent him, but which, in his 1659 preface addressed “To a Person of Honour,” he had coyly asked him to keep to himself. “Imprison her in your private Cabinet, so that she may be seen by no eyes but your own ... for fear she meet with *affronts* from the Ladies, who will never be reconciled to a Woman that is so weak, as to betray the *frailties*, and lay open the *secrets* of her own sex. Besides that, she is a professed enemy to their darling, *Platonick Love*.” The female affectation that women may love without sexual desire is a

primary target of Charleton's satire. In response, P.M. loses no time in quoting "our great Moralist, and beloved Author, Chaucer" (perhaps anticipating his own satiric intentions by choosing to refer to the Wife of Bath, who would certainly have given short shrift to the concept of platonic love), though only to show that Charleton would have been too niggardly if he denied his work the freedom of publication.

P.M. argues that to imprison women, as he facetiously calls not publishing *The Ephesian Matron*, is inhumane to them and, especially if they are handsome, uncomfortable for the Men deprived of their society; moreover, it is difficult, and counter-productive, as sure to provoke them to get loose somehow. Although some Ladies may feel slandered, Charleton, he contends, praises feminine virtues, shows that Love is a universal tyrant, and includes the soldier's reproaches of the compliant widow only by way of delineating his rough character; others, accordingly "will vindicate you from the infamy of a Woman-hater." In this last phrase, P.M. turns back upon Charleton an accusation he had himself predicted P.M. might incur if he published the tale, smugly confident that both he and Charleton will be able to survive any feminist counterblast.

Determined, indeed, to share any obloquy that Charleton's text may provoke, P.M. promises to tell the story of

a trick that pass'd for no less than a Miracle. Having found the Novel in the *Comus sive Phagesiposia Cimmeria* of that witty and erudite Noble Italian, Erycius Puteanus; and out of his elegant Latin translated into plain English; I now bring it as a Handmaid to wait upon the Ephesian, at least, if you think it worthy of that honour.

In turning this elegant Latin into plain English, however, P.M. allows himself considerable license of expansion. The anecdote in Puteanus's *Comus* begins:

Matrona quedam, ait, in finibus Cimmeriorum agebat, danistae non ignobilis uxor; si formam species, omnibus simulacris luculentior; si famam, pudica. Sed quam multae saepe maculae in occulto latent!<sup>15</sup>

This is rendered

On the Confines of Cimmeria, there not long since lived a certain Gentlewoman, of shape more exact than a Statue formed by all the rules of Leon Battista Alberti; of features and complexion more sweet and delicate than those of Venus her self; of reputation as clear and immaculate as Diana. Wife she was to one, whom Usury had made Rich, and Riches eminent; with whom she enjoy'd all the pleasures of conjugal Love and Fidelity; not so much as dreaming of any content but in his indulgence and embraces.

But, ah! how mutable are humane Affections! how many faults  
doth time discover, [&c]

The Cimmerian Matron's trick, or miracle, was certainly ingenious, if extremely implausible. Though happily married, she falls for a soldier and employs a bawd to bring him to her house when she expects her husband to be away. The jealous husband, however, returns before the soldier can get in, angrily strips his wife and ties her to a pillar on the verandah, and goes peacefully to bed. Finding the outer gate locked, the disappointed soldier goes back to the bawd, who has a key. She releases the wife and allows her to tie her up in her place so that the wife can sneak out to meet her lover. P.M.'s admiration is breathtakingly amoral:

'Twas a bold and adventurous Act this, for a Woman so lately surprized, so cruelly treated, so miraculously delivered; nay, not yet delivered from danger of greater torments, and perhaps of death; thus to throw her self into the Arms of her Adulterer, to force, even destiny it self to give way to the satisfaction of her desires. But Love inspires Audacity and Contempt of all perils into the Weakest and most timorous hearts.

Wakening from a dream of his wife's infidelity, the furious husband rushes out with a razor and slashes off what he thinks is his wife's nose, but of course the bawd is now tied up in her place. Then he goes back to resume his slumbers. The wife returns, unties and consoles the bawd (noselessness being as much a badge of honour in her profession as a soldier's wounds would be in his), and is tied up again in her place. The bawd goes off to find a surgeon, and the wife prays loudly to Diana to release her from the tyranny of her jealous husband. He overhears, as he is meant to. Then he hears her thanking Diana for vindicating her by a miracle. He comes down and is terrified to discover that the goddess has indeed restored his wife's nose as if it had never been cut off. Fearing judgement, he begs forgiveness, and all is well. "Thus, blest be the God of Love! Our witty Matron, hath at once recovered three most precious things, her Nose, her Honour, and her Husbands Love."

In typical *fabliau* fashion, the amorality of the conclusion helps to remove the characters from the real world of accountability and so reinforces the joke. Literature sometimes enjoins not only a willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, but also a willing suspension of moral responsibility.

P.M. commences the anecdote by quoting lines from Chaucer's *Legend of Dido* that shortly precede those with which Charleton celebrated the Ephesian Matron's marriage. The sight of the soldier bathing naked inflames the Cimmerian Matron exactly as Dido was by Eneas;

"Yet be not too severe in condemning the passion of a frail Woman, You, who know how strong and quick assaults Cupid

often makes upon Forts so weakly man'd, and with what unresistable Artillery he is provided."

Charleton also justified the Ephesian Matron by referring to the irresistible power of Love. P.M.'s justification, however, is qualified by the emphasis on female frailty. This frailty is more than made up for, however, by skill in repartee, for due acknowledgement whereof P.M. concludes his anecdote by quoting Proserpina's lines from *The Merchant's Tale*, in which she promises that a woman caught *in flagrante delicto* by her husband as May was will always be able to talk her way out of trouble.

In his appended sections entitled "THE Mysteries and Miracles of LOVE," P.M. uses again the *Legend of Dido*, this time to prove that, far from languishing, love may grow stronger by the possession of its object: "and our friend Chaucer therefore wisely fixes the Epoche of Æneas and Dido's love on the Jubile they celebrated in the Cave". Subsequently he quotes a pertinent Stanza of that incomparable Critique in Love, old Chaucer: who in most lively and never-vading colours painting the surprize and astonishment of Troilus, (till then a Woman-hater) at first sight of the fair Creseide, in her mourning habit, sparkling like a Diamond set in Jet; saith thus.

Lo, he that lete him selven so conning,  
And scorned hem that loves paines drien,  
Was full unaware that love had his dwelling  
Within the subtel streams of her eyen;  
That sodainly him thought he felt dien,  
Right with her loke, the spirit in his herte.  
Blessed be love, that thus can folke converte.

*(Troilus & Criseyde, I, 302-8)*

Thus he disarms adverse criticism and prepares the way for his conclusion in which he and Charleton, free of the charge of being Woman-haters, enjoy the pleasures of unruffled friendship. Disarmingly, he asks for indulgence in the words of "our dearly beloved Don Geffrey," quoting again from *Troilus*:

Beseeching every Lady bright of hewe,  
And every gentil woman, what she be,  
Albeit that our Matrons were untrue,  
That for that gilte ye be not wroth with me.  
Ye may in other Bokes their gilte se.  
And gladder I would write, if that ye leste,  
Penelopes truth, and faith of good Alceste.

*(T&C V, 1772-8, with "Matrons" for "Criseyde")*

He adds also the next stanza, and some lines from *The Legend of Thisbe* (LGW 910-11 and 920-1), commanding the superiority of women's

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affections to men's. P.M. ends astutely with the bawdy conclusion of *The Shipman's Tale*:

Thus endeth now my tale, and God us sende  
Taling enough unto our lives ende —

where the accounting metaphor “tallying” is also a sexual pun, “tailing.” There is also an obvious pun on “taling” in the sense of telling tales. Both “tallying” and “tailing” fit the *Shipman's Tale*, which is about a cuckolded Merchant, but only the latter the *Ephesian* and *Cimmerian Matrons*. The Cimmerian husband is a “hard-hearted usurer,” but Puteanus's anecdote shows little appreciation of the equation of sex and money that underscores Chaucer's tale.

The question remains why, in the later seventeenth century, with all the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline love poets to hand, to say nothing of classical and European authors, Charleton and his friend should have found Chaucer so congenial a love poet that they should wish to appropriate his work in their anti-feminist *jeu d'esprit*. (I assume that Charleton approved of the insertions, even if he may not originally have been responsible for them.) Though John Fisher says that “The seventeenth century is the low point in Chaucer's reputation, when knowledge of his language and prosody had been lost, and he was regarded as antiquated and barbarous,”<sup>16</sup> for P.M. he was “that incomparable Critique in Love” whose poetic descriptions were painted “in most lively and never-vading colours”. His and Charleton's names should be added to those collected by Caroline Spurgeon in her monumental three-volume work *Five hundred years of Chaucer criticism and allusion, 1357 - 1900*.<sup>17</sup> They show considerable familiarity with his work, being able to find apposite quotations in a wide range of poems, including the dream visions, *Troilus*, the lyrics, and certain of *The Canterbury Tales*. It is true that, by placing Chaucer's lines in a satiric context, they misrepresent a writer who is not unjustly described by Gavin Douglas as “all womanis frend,” and that chiefly because of his pity for Dido, whom Douglas correctly saw Virgil and his Roman audience disapproved.<sup>18</sup> If Chaucer was all women's friend, he was responding to the widespread idiocies of antifeminist diatribes in a world that must be peopled. Douglas was thinking primarily of Chaucer's compassion for Dido, deserted by the heartless Aeneas, but we might more readily think of how characters like the Wife of Bath expose the illogicalities inherent in the adoption of militant positions in the conflict between the sexes. Charleton's and P.M.'s chief motive, however, seems to have been to have fun at the expense of the opposite sex.

Chaucer also wrote, of course, some of the cleverest and funniest stories in the language. Even if the seventeenth century in general regarded him as antiquated and barbarous, Charleton and P.M. recognized his authority as an astute commentator on the place of women in home and society.

They appreciated his comic verve and were alive to the genuinely affecting pathos of apposite passages of his writing, which they utilized in contexts that mirrored, satirically and jovially, the outrageous fun which the greatest comic writer of the Middle Ages expressed so capably.

## NOTES:

- <sup>1</sup> *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. John Sargeaunt (Oxford UP, 1910, rpt 1952), p. 160.
- <sup>2</sup> "Walter Charleton," in *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Leslie Stephen. (London: Smith, Elder, 1887), pp. 116-9.
- <sup>3</sup> Petronius Arbiter, *Satyricon*, 111-12, ed. Evan T. Sage, rev. Brady B. Gilleland (New York: Irvington, 1982), pp. 95-8.
- <sup>4</sup> Henri Dupuy (Van de Putte), 1574-1646, who Latinized his name as Erycius Puteanus, lived in Italy and died in Louvain. See *Biographie Universelle* 18 (1814), 322-4: "Dupuy était un homme d'une vaste lecture, mais de peu de jugement."
- <sup>5</sup> Achsah Guibbory. *Introduction, The Ephesian Matron*, facsimile, Augustan Reprint Society (1975). The matron's behaviour is only human and natural, but Charleton's critique suggests a contempt for human nature: "Charleton could just as easily be describing dogs or horses. He has not only dismissed the differences between all kinds of heterosexual love as non-essential; he has obliterated the hierarchical distinctions between human passion and animal appetite."
- <sup>6</sup> There is a good account of Chaucer's *fabliaux* in Derek Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales* (London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 166ff. The defining characteristic, he finds, of Chaucer's comic tales is the assumption, shared by narrator and reader, "that there are no values, secular or religious, more important than survival or satisfaction of appetite" (p. 167). A very similar view underlies *The Ephesian and Cimmerian Matrons*.
- <sup>7</sup> John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, VIII, xi, ed. Clemens C. I. Webb (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), II, 301-4.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Exempla or Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. Thomas F. Crane (London: Nutt, 1890), No. 232, pp. 96-7 and 228-9.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Seven Sages of Rome*, lines 2811-3028, ed. Killis Campbell (Boston: Ginn, 1907), pp. 96-103, with over sixty analogues listed at pp. ci-cviii.
- <sup>10</sup> George Chapman, *The Widow's Tears*, ed. Ethel M. Smeak (London: Arnold, 1967).
- <sup>11</sup> *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620* (Brighton: Harvester, 1984). For the formal controversy, see pp. 13-136, for Swetnam, pp. 81-7, and for an anonymous play portraying the controversy Swetnam provoked, *Swetnam the Woman-Hater Arraigned by Women* (c. 1618), see pp. 300-22.
- <sup>12</sup> Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), *Holy living and dying: together with prayers containing the whole duty of a Christian . . .* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1851), pp. 516-8.
- <sup>13</sup> See Albert E. Hartung, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500*, vol. 4, p. 1083.
- <sup>14</sup> *OED* s. v. "dead lift": "The pull of a horse, etc., exerting his utmost strength at a dead weight beyond his power to move;" hence, figuratively, "a hopeless exigence" (Johnson's definition). This now archaic phrase was very common in the seventeenth century. For the proverb, see M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1950), W669: e.g., "No wit comparable to a woman's at a dead life" (Braightwaite, 1640), and, from Howell's polyglot collection of proverbs, *Paroemiographia* (1659): "A Woman's advice is best at a dead lift." Charleton wittily applies the proverb both literally and figuratively, and so brings his treatise to a neat conclusion.

<sup>15</sup> Erycius Puteanus, *Comus sive Phagesiposia Cimmeria de luxu somnium* (Louvain, 1610), pp. 100-118: quotation from p. 100.

<sup>16</sup> *The Complete Prose and Poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. John Fisher (Rinehart, 1977), p. 953.

<sup>17</sup> Cambridge UP, 1925.

<sup>18</sup> Gavin Douglas, prologue to the first book of his translations of the *Aeneid*. On this, see Richard Firth Green, "Chaucer's Victimized Women," SAC 10 (1988): 3-21, especially pp. 17-18.

# Freedom, Oppression, and Celebration: Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*.

Nils Holger Petersen

## Introduction

It is a commonplace that literary romanticism carried with it a marked interest in the Middle Ages, an interest also connected with the rise of nationalism. Similar to what is found in the period's literature, opera at this time often deals with chivalric themes from medieval literature and history, notably in operas by Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826) and Franz Schubert (1797-1828), but also (and in a number of cases earlier) by French and German composers like André Grétry (1741-1813), Jean Francois Le Sueur (1760-1837), Étienne Méhul (1763-1817), Peter Winter (1754-1825), and for instance the naturalized Danes Friedrich Kunzen (1761-1827), C. E. F. Weyse (1774-1842) and Friedrich Kuhlau (1786-1832).

Certainly, medieval history and narrative had been used in operas from the very beginning of the history of the genre, though early operas, to a large degree, seem to have been based upon medieval material first of all (but not exclusively) through two almost canonical literary works of the Italian Renaissance, the *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1575) by Torquato Tasso and the *Orlando Furioso* (1516-32) by Ludovico Ariosto. Moreover, neither composers nor authors of the librettos before 1800 seem to have put much interest in the medievality of the subject matter as it – for instance – is apparent in Joseph Haydn's *Orlando Paladino* from 1782 with a libretto that is set in what must be the Middle Ages but is only recognizable as such if by reference to the *Orlando Furioso*, on which it is remotely based.

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868) holds a unique transitional position between what is often identified as classical and romantic musical styles partly due to his Italian nationality. Rossini would not normally be rubricized as a romantic composer in spite of his birth date and the nineteenth-century attributes clearly in line with musical romanticism that can be found in much of his music. The work that I will be discussing here, his last opera *Guillaume Tell*, first performed at the Académie Royale in Paris on August 3, 1829, in many ways prefigures the romantic Italian operas by Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi. Opera in Italy in the early nineteenth century had not broken away from the old Metastasian *opera seria* genre as in Germany and France. At the same time, the temperament of Rossini was not a “romantic” one, but rather one of comedy and satire. Julian Budden – one of the major authorities on romantic Italian opera – thus characterizes Rossini as

the reluctant architect of Italian romantic opera ... a composer who sums up all the paradoxes and ambiguities of the ottocento (Budden I, 8).

Similarly, Rossini is not often associated with the medievalism of especially his German contemporaries, although a number of his operas are set in the Middle Ages. *La donna del lago* (1819) was based on a typically literary example of medievalism, Sir Walter Scott's chivalric poem from 1810, but also *Tancredi* (1813, based on Voltaire's play of 1760), *Otello* (1816, after Shakespeare), *Armida* (1817, after Tasso), and – the work under discussion here – *Guillaume Tell* indirectly constitute a reception of the Middle Ages.

Just as in the mentioned Haydn opera, there are virtually no direct suggestions of the Middle Ages in Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. Only the prior knowledge of the figure of William Tell makes the listener aware of the medievality of the subject. Conversely, *Guillaume Tell* shows a clear and loyal interest in the underlying narrative. It would be easy to detach the opera from its chronological context but not, in contrast, from its geographical or political "Sitz im Leben." The opera shows – in short – no sense of the alterity of its medieval subject matter in its historical presentation but a strong sympathy for the inherent aspect of liberation from oppression in this material.

The main theme of Rossini's opera concerns the Suiss people and their fight for freedom. The opera has appropriated the attitude of Schiller's famous drama (1804), which was also the immediate source for the original libretto by Victor Joseph Étienne de Jouy (1764? -1846) who may, however, have been influenced to some extent also by Grétry's opera on the same subject that was given in Paris in 1791 to a libretto by Sedaine. The libretto by Jouy was partly rewritten by Hippolyte Louis Florent Bis (Bartlet, XXII). The focus of the opera is not the psychological portrait of the protagonist William Tell – or other important characters.

It has frequently been noted how a *ranz des vaches* – a traditional Suiss tune – forms an important musical motif permeating the whole opera. This, among other things, creates in the opera a unity limiting the role of subjective feelings, well in line with Rossini's general tendency to compose in absolute musical forms thereby avoiding – or missing – the subjective dramatic feeling often associated with romantic opera. In *Guillaume Tell*, to the contrary, this objective feature is combined with a high level of emotional and dramatic intensity. Undoubtedly, for Rossini, the William Tell material was inviting for contemporary political reasons. The gradually rising consciousness of an Italian nationalism, also engaging Rossini's father in the years following the French revolution and during the Napoleonic wars and invasions (even if it did not at that time become an important political factor in Italy), must be noted as part of the background of Rossini's upbringing in spite of his later conservatism (Osborne, 2-3).

## Sources, Traditions and History

In Rossini's opera – in contrast to Schiller's play *Wilhelm Tell* – the figure of William Tell of Uri is not only the leading figure in the well known narratives about the individual confrontations between Tell and the bailiff Gesler centering on the famous episode where Tell is forced to shoot down an apple placed on the head of his son, an episode later leading Tell to kill Gesler. But he is, at the same time, depicted as a leading figure for the assemblies of the three cantons, Uri, Unterwald, and Schwyz, in the scene where an oathbound confederation between them is established at Rütli.

A pact between these three cantons from August, 1291 has indeed been preserved in a single copy found 1758 in Schwyz but with no mention of William Tell, who – as it has been pointed out many times by scholars – is difficult to place between fiction and history. The existing sources explicitly mentioning him are relatively late, none before the fifteenth century. The mentioned pact – in Latin – does not mention the names of its negotiants and is held in a very moderate tone, also emphasizing the need for law and order internally. It does reflect the fight against the Habsburg domain, however, as it is concretely manifested in the denunciation of judges, having bought their authority or of a judge who is

not our inhabitant or a member of our province (qui noster incola  
vel conprovincialis non fuerit) (Bergier, 336-37).

The establishing of the oath-bound confederation is mentioned in the Suiss chronicles preserving the William Tell narratives as well. The earliest of these, the so-called White Book of Sarnen (*Das Weisse Buch von Sarnen*) was brought to light in 1856 – and thus did not directly take part in the reception of the Tell legend that was the basis for Schiller's or Rossini's works. It is not properly speaking a chronicle but a register of public documents between 1315 and 1474 (with a later addition) that, at the end, has incorporated an account of the birth of the Suiss confederation, also including a version of the Tell legend (Bergier, 65-71; *Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wirz, 1-41).

The White Book is dated to approximately 1470, but textual details seem to indicate that the narrative part possibly was based on an account written half a century earlier (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wirz, LIII-LIV). Thus, the traditional material, for instance, as Schiller received it – mainly in the version of the sixteenth century chronicler Aegidius Tschudi – through the finding of the early chronicle was brought back about one hundred years closer to the historical events it seems to record. Tschudi's *Chronicon Helveticum* was finished before 1571, compiling all available information at his time (Bergier, 16-19; Feller and Bonjour, 78-79 and 263-76; Seidel, ed., 386; Mettler and Lippuner, 14-15).

The account in the White Book does not in itself make a strong case for the historicity of the legend of William Tell. Most importantly, the motif of the apple shooting has been shown to originate from much earlier Nordic narrative traditions (Bergier, 69-70). Helmut de Boor has discussed the traditions of this literary motif in detail. It occurs with some variations in the *Gesta Danorum* by the Dane Saxo Grammaticus (written before 1219), in the *Wielandroman*, as it was received in the Norwegian *Thidrekssaga*, compiled 1250-60, in two different versions in the Icelandic *Flateyjarbok*, compiled around 1360, also in Nordic ballads (but only preserved from much later), in the story of William of Cledesly in an English ballad only preserved from the sixteenth century, in some German narratives whose traditions cannot be followed back beyond the eighteenth century, and finally, in the Suiss legends of William Tell (De Boor, 3\*-5\*).

Helmut de Boor concluded that the Saxo version, in spite of being the oldest preserved literary source of the motif, must have employed an already existing Norwegian narrative. Saxo apparently transferred the story to a historic figure, Toko, fitting it into a fairly unprecise knowledge of the death of King Haraldus (Bluetooth) or *Harald Blaatand*, the tenth-century king who assembled and christened the Danes). According to the oldest sources (among them, Adam of Bremen in the eleventh century), Haraldus died of wounds obtained during a civil war between him and his son Sveno Forkbeard (or Sven Tveskæg).

Saxo, as it seems, let Toko be the murderer of his king as a consequence of the king's tyranny. The direct cause was the boasting of Toko (having drunk too much) that he would be able to hit a small apple with an arrow in one shot at a certain distance, but the king, upon hearing this, in an evil twist demands the apple to be put on Toko's son's head, announcing Toko to be killed if he misses the apple. Toko tells the child to remain absolutely calm and – as opposed to the later Tell stories – turns him around so that he will not be frightened by the approaching arrow. Saxo praises the courage of the son and the artfulness of the father equally as Toko hits the apple and thereby both avoids killing his relative and being killed himself by the king.

Before shooting, Toko had taken three arrows and when asked afterwards by the king why he did so when he was only allowed one shot, he – like William Tell some centuries later – answers:

So that if my first should miss, he said, I might avenge myself on you with the others; then my innocence would not suffer while your cruelty went unpunished. (vt in te (inquit) primi errorem reliquorum acumine vindicarem: ne mea forte innocentia poenam: tua impunitatem experiretur violentia) (Saxo, I, 12-13).

The king does not directly punish Toko for this as does Gesler with Tell. However, he later compels Toko to ski down the steep slope of Kullen (placed in what is now southern Sweden). Toko also survives this venture but, in the mentioned civil war, he sides with the king's son Sveno. The chapter goes on to tell about this civil war and how king Haraldus' own men deserted him because of the heavy burdens of his reign. It is, however, also made clear that the conflict between Sveno and Haraldus is one of religion, Sveno still adhering to the old Norse Gods (Saxo (Christiansen), 1, 12-15 and 175 n. 51).

Regardless of the questionable historicity of the account of Saxo and the origin of the narrative, Helmut De Boor sees the "Sitz im Leben" of the original "Apfelschuss" narrative as tied to the rise of the power of a Christian monarchy in the North in conflict with the former freedom of the large farmers, a conflict suppressed in a number of the literary versions as the viewpoint changed to side with the royal power. The Saxo version (among some others) remained surprisingly faithful to this original basic intention of the narrative. On De Boor's account, such a faithfulness lies behind the narrative's successful intertwining with the Swiss freedom fight (De Boor, 24\*-26\*).

The White Book is probably not the earliest preserved reflection of the penetration of the apple shooting episode in Swiss traditions, even though it does constitute the oldest extant manuscript containing the episode. But apart from the chronicles on the early history of the Swiss confederation, there exists another Swiss literary tradition dealing with this matter.

A large ballad – sometimes referred to as the *Bundeslied* – is preserved in several (to some extent varying) manuscripts and prints. The earliest of these is dated to 1499 (in the manuscript) and probably achieved its final stage in 1477 during the Burgundy War. Literary scholars have argued that the first nine stanzas of this ballad form a unit of their own – possibly a part of an earlier ballad about William Tell (these stanzas relate the apple shooting episode) – and that this unit seems to reflect a level of transmission of the Nordic narrative, which is closer to the origin than what is found in the White Book (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 5-10, 14-30, and 34-51; Bergier, 71-79).

Among the specific traits distinguishing the ballad text from the narrative of the chronicles, it must be noted that in the ballad there is no mention of the Rütti episode of the founding oath of the confederation between the three cantons – except for a brief, final, and general remark (maybe not originally belonging to the old ballad) about the early confederation as a result of the episode between Tell and the bailiff. The omission could, of course, be due to the fragmented preservation as the *Tellenlied* was incorporated into the later *Bundeslied*.

More reliable traits to note are the ones directly connected to the transmission of the apple shooting episode: The first name of Tell is mentioned here as *Wilhelm* (it is not mentioned in the White Book), while the name of the bailiff – oppositely – is not mentioned in the ballad. There is no hint of the episode with the bailiff's hat, no cause is given for the apple shooting except the despotism of the bailiff who also here threatens to kill Tell unless he hits the apple in the first shot. In opposition to the White Book, the ballad specifies the distance for the shooting (one hundred and twenty steps).

Further, in the ballad, Tell re-comforts his son and prays to God. His skill as a shooter is noticed and that he had set aside an extra arrow. Immediately after his successful shot, he also tells the bailiff how he would have shot him if the boy had been killed – but not as a response to a question from the bailiff. The bailiff arrests Tell and orders him thrown into the lake of Uri. The episode abruptly ends with a statement of how the bailiff's order hurt the heart of William Tell but that no one came to his rescue. It seems that Tell is killed in the episode and the consequence mentioned in the final stanzas of this (part of) the old *Tellenlied* is a riot leading to the first confederation in order to throw out the bailiffs (but no details are given). These stanzas celebrate the loss of power of the bailiffs, which was the outcome of this action through an oath-bound alliance and end with a prayer to God (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 14-16; Bergier, 73-75).

A play dealing with the Tell narrative, *Das Urner Tellenspiel*, seems to be based upon the ballad (and on Etterlin's chronicle, which was written and printed in 1507). It is dated to 1512-13, the earliest extant text of the play being a printed version from 1540-44; probably under the influence of the Reformation, some minor changes in certain parts of the original play seem to have been made. The printed version also mentions a performance of the play in the canton of Uri – probably in Altdorf (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 55-76, and 69-99; Bergier, 77-79).

The play follows the ballad in not giving the name of the bailiff (although Etterlin's chronicle did give the name *Grisler* as opposed to *Gesler* in the White Book) and in stating the first name *Wilhelm* for Tell. The playwright further gives the name for the place of the oath of the confederation, *Rütti*, which, in the White Book, is called *Rüdli* (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 70 and 77; *Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wirz, 15).

More importantly, the play combines the traditional Suiss chronicle version of the Tell narrative (as it is presented for the first time in the White Book), which motivated the apple shooting through the refusal of Tell to greet *Gesler*'s hat in Altdorf, with the rise of the confederacy of the three cantons and thus constructs Tell as a leading figure in the oath-

taking. This may be inspired by the *Tellenlied* in its unclear presentation (or incomplete preservation) of the confederation (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 19 and 67).

Interestingly, this is also the approach of the Rossini opera, as opposed to Schiller who, in his drama, made a point out of characterizing Tell as an individualist – and a man of action, not of words or political manifests – for what reason he does not participate at Rütti in Schiller's drama. On the other hand, he seems, through the apple shooting episode, to become aware of Gesler as a political evil and is brought to kill Gesler at the end of the drama (Mettler and Lippuner, 64-83).

### III. Dramatizing the William Tell Narrative

Max Wehrli, the modern editor of both the Tell ballad and play, has made the claim that the fact that both these – against the testimonies of the chronicles – present the apple shooting episode as the single direct cause for a confederate liberation movement is not the effect of a special tradition from Uri, but much rather connected to artistic demands for unity in the ballad and play (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 57). It must be noted, of course, that we have no knowledge of how the original ballad treated (if it did) Tell in connection with the Rütti oath.

The dramatic genre brought also with it traditions connected to the original proximity of medieval dramas to the Latin liturgy. One particular aspect seems to be a particular structure, characteristic for the so-called medieval Latin music dramas since their beginnings within the liturgy, and one that even seems to have been carried over to the music dramas or operas of later times, including, as we shall see, Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. It may also – to a smaller degree – have influenced the spoken dramas.

The short *Quem quaeritis* dialogues (between the women at the grave of Jesus and one or more angels named after the opening line of these early short texts) revealing Christ's resurrection Easter morning, which appeared in liturgical manuscripts from the tenth century onwards clearly functioned as introductory speech lines that concluded in a liturgical announcement of the resurrection. This is true, whether the dialogue was set before the introit of the Easter Mass, at a procession before Mass, or at Matins Easter morning. In fact, such a linear narrative representational use taking off from a seemingly more strict and traditional ritual use and concluding in such a ritual use again in the form of announcements, prayers, or liturgical praisings seems characteristic for all these Latin music drama during the centuries following the first *Quem quaeritis* ceremony. This feature also is detectable in the larger of the Latin religious music dramas of the high Middle Ages as, for instance, the *Visitatio sepulchri* play from the Fleury *Playbook*, the *Ordo Virtutum* by Hildegard of Bingen, both from the twelfth

century, and in the thirteenth century *Danielis ludus* from the Beauvais cathedral school (Petersen, 1996; Petersen, 1998; Petersen, forthcoming 2002; Petersen, forthcoming 2003).

In dramas of the medieval liturgy, this structure consists in the movement between two uses of the liturgy: the telling of the basic mythic narratives underlying the Christian faith and the celebration during the actual ritual time *hic et nunc* of the efficaciousness of these events from past or mythic times. The form type constituted thus typically takes its point of departure in the latter (which I have called the ritual) use of the liturgy from where it, at certain points, seems possible and relevant to fold out the narrative connected to the ritual celebration. Such a representational use of the liturgy could, as it was the tradition for centuries, take the form of narrative songs, readings, processional movements re-presenting in some way the original event (as, for instance, in the Palm Sunday procession, which reflected the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem and had been known since the fourth century). But – as it appears during the centuries following the Frankish import of the Roman liturgy in the eighth to ninth centuries – it could also be in the form of a deliberately acted representation, what we – in anachronistic terms – would now call a drama.

From the later Middle Ages – basically since the twelfth century – also a number of vernacular more or less devotional plays exist. These had a much less direct connection to the liturgical ceremonial and employed music to a much smaller degree, but even they do carry at least some marks of what I have just described, as for instance in the occasional use of liturgical songs in the so-called cycle plays (Rastall).

Around the time of the reformation (mainly out of educational concerns in both the Protestant and the Catholic worlds), school dramas and educational devotional dramas in general add to the picture at the same time as the number of liturgical plays decreases and these plays disappear many places (as they do, of course, in the Protestant world). They do not disappear everywhere in Southern Europe, however, and at the time of the creation of the opera in Florence around 1600, and even in the area surrounding Salzburg as late as the second part of the eighteenth century, one finds a living tradition of *Quem quaeritis* plays, as well as gradually arising genres of drama developing from the Jesuit plays, as for instance the so-called *Kloster Operetten*. These are *Singspiele* of a more or less devotional and entertaining character forming a genre to which, for instance, Joseph Haydn contributed. Similarly, the young Mozart – at the age of 11 – among a few educational-devotional music dramas also wrote a devotional (liturgical) dialogue (*Grabmusik*) much in the tradition of the so-called *sepolcro*, which since the baroque age had been an important

contribution to the oratorio in Vienna with dramatized performances during Holy week at a Holy Sepulchre in churches, attended by the imperial court (Smither I, 366-82; III, 35; Badura-Skoda; Fellerer, 116).

The *Urner Tellenspiel*, as it is preserved, starts with a prologue in three parts spoken by three heralds pointing forward to the presentation of the Tell narrative as well as back to the history of the Suiss people. The first herald, however, first addresses God:

O herre Gott im ho<sup>e</sup>chsten thron,  
Wir so<sup>e</sup>nd dir billich dancken schon,  
Dann du bist durch din barmhertzigkeit  
Den verlassnen allzyt zu<sup>o</sup> hilff bereit.

Correspondingly, the play concludes in a prayer-like formula spoken by the Jester (*der Narr*) after a sermon-like appropriation of devotional aspects of the related events:

...  
So wirt vns Gott ouch nit verlon!  
Vnsre altuordern hand sich thu<sup>o</sup>n massen.  
Darumb hat sy Gott nie verlassen.  
Ich hoff, wir so<sup>e</sup>llend nachfolgen jm,  
Des wir werdend han grossen gwinn.  
Darzu<sup>o</sup> helff vns die dryfaltigkeit,  
Das wir all la<sup>e</sup>bind in einigkeit.  
Sy hand vns noch nie verlan  
Vnd thu<sup>e</sup>nd allzyt trüwlich by vns stan.  
Wir so<sup>e</sup>llend vns all han zu<sup>o</sup>samen.  
Wa<sup>e</sup>r das begert, der sprech amen.

end diss spyls. (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 71 and 98-99)

When the bailiff has ordered Tell to shoot the apple from the head of his (youngest) son, prayers form part of the lines of William Tell (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 83-84). Prayers at this point would, of course, seem to be part of a normal contemporary piousness as well as natural to the disastrous situation he faces. At other important points, prayers are inserted, however, that seem to be due to a feeling of the needs of the dramatic genre as much as a reflection of the piousness of the time.

At the point where Tell has spoken and convinced the people to join him in the oath – also, certainly, in a pious manner referring to their faith in God – there follows the response of the assembled:

Ach herre Gott, wie gn<sup>e</sup>diglich  
Hast vns erho<sup>e</sup>rt in dinem rych!  
Darumb so wend wir zu<sup>o</sup> üch stan.  
Nun gebend vns schnell den eyd an!

Tell then gives them the oath:

Das wir keinen tyrannen mee dulden,

Versprechend wir by unsern hulden.  
 Also sol Gott vatter mit sim sun,  
 Ouch heiliger Geist vns helffen nun.

At this point, the fourth herald enters with a long – historic – appropriation of the consequences of the oath leading to the above mentioned conclusion (with the jester). In the first lines before his historical account, this herald addresses not the audience, but God:

O du rycher Christ von himmelrych,  
 Wa<sup>er</sup> mag dir dancken vollkommenklych  
 Der gnad, so du vns hast erzeigt  
 Vnd dich so va<sup>tterlich</sup> geneigt,  
 Vnsem altuordem sta<sup>eg</sup> vnd wa<sup>eg</sup> geben,

Das sy mo<sup>echtend</sup> fristen jr la<sup>eben</sup>! (Quellenwerk. Ed. Wehrli, 89-90)

It should come as no surprise if – at a time where the so-called liturgical drama and the processional (stational) liturgy of the medieval Catholic church were so near in time and place – it would have felt natural at certain points of the play, between a representation of the (mythic) narrative and devotional and educational appropriations of this narrative, to turn to a (representation of) a liturgical situation.

Before turning to a reading of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, I will note that even Schiller's spoken drama seems to have preserved reminiscences of such a structure, in a context, of course, where individual observations may be explained differently. The fact, on the other hand, that all five acts of Schiller's play end by reflecting in some way or other (in a stronger or weaker way) a (representation of a) kind of ritual situation as opposed to one of narrative representation might be taken to indicate some general underlying structure.

In the first act, Arnold vom Melchtal, who has been told about the blinding of his father through the Austrians, makes a solemn declaration together with Werner Stauffacher and Walter Fürst. These three apparently historical figures declare to work towards a confederation of their three cantons "Auf Tod und Leben!"

The act ends by Melchtal addressing a declaration to his father who is not present, a vow with clear ritual connotations:

Blinder alter Vater!  
 Du kannst den tag der Freiheit nicht mehr *schauen*,  
 Du sollst ihn *hören* - Wenn von Alp zu Alp  
 Die Feuerzeichen flammend sich erheben,  
 Die festen Schlösser der Tyrannen fallen,  
 In deine Hütte soll der Schweizer wallen,  
 Zu deinem Ohr die Freudenkunde tragen,  
 Und hell in deiner Nacht soll es dir tagen (Schiller, 29).

In the second scene of act two, the oath at Rütli takes place, a scene having in itself ritual connotations. It ends, however, even more solemnly at dawn; the rising sun is treated as a symbol of the dawn of freedom in a statement by Walter Fürst. The solemnity of the occasion that brings with it the experience of hope through nature itself is expressed in a rubric of the play:

Alle haben unwillktirlich die Htite abgenommen und betrachten mit stiller Sammlung die Morgenrote.

Similarly at the very end of the act an end rubric states:

Indem sie zu drei verschiedenen Seiten in grosster Ruhe abgehen, fällt das Orchester mit einem prachtvollen Schwung ein, die leere Szene bleibt noch eine Zeitlarig offen und zeigt das Schauspiel der aufgehenden Sonne tiber den Eisgebirgen. (Schiller, 51)

At the end of act 3 the apple shooting episode has led to the traditional results and as Tell is being brought away by Gessler's soldiers his son, Walter, in despair calls out for his father who - with equal despair - refers him to God in Heaven. The act ends, however, with a declaration of trust in God, as Tell exclaims:

Der Knab' ist unverletzt, mir wird Gott helfen. (Schiller, 72).

The fourth act brings the famous scene with the killing of Gessler. The act ends with the arrival of "sechs barmherzige Bruder" concluding the dramatic and (from Tells side) thoughtful scene in what clearly is a representation of a liturgical situation:

Barmherzige Brtider (schliessen einen Halbkreis um den Toten und singen in tiefem Ton). Rasch tritt der Tod den Menschen an, Es ist ihm keine Prist gegeben;

Es stirzt ihn mitten in der Bahn, Es reisst ihn fort vom vollen Leben.

Bereitet oder nicht, zu gehen, Er muss vor seinen Richter stehen!

(Indem die letzten Zeilen wiederholt werden, fällt der Vorhang.) (Schiller, 96)

Finally, the conclusion of act 5 (and the play) is an appraisal of Tell as a protector and rescuer - " der Schutz und der Erretter!" - ending with an announcement which constitutes the appropriation of the morale of the play by the nobleman Ulrich von Rudenz. To begin with he sided with the Austrians but not the least through his love for the rich Austrian heiress Berta von Bruneck who strongly sympathizes with the Suiss people he in the end comes to participate on the side of the freedom fighters. The last line of the play is his short unqualified announcement of giving freedom to all his servants, "und frei erklar ich alle meine Knechte" (Schiller, 112). It is narratively irrelevant although it underlines the morale of the play, but in its form of an unprepared declaration it also reads as a representation of a ritualistic announcement made the more evident by its position as the last remark of the play and Rudenz' only line in the whole scene.

#### IV. Rossini's William Tell

I will mainly concentrate on the way Rossini's opera deals with the apple shooting episode, but I will also briefly review the structure of the opera - referring to the version presented at the premiere. (Even more than many other operas Guillaume Tell underwent several changes laid out in the modern critical edition referred to here).

The first act on the whole constitutes an enormous appraisal of Suiss nature from which the political and human conflicts gradually emerge. The overture - with its four different sections - reflects: a meditative mood, a storm, and the Suiss nature (symbolized by the earlier mentioned ranz des 'lJaches), concluding finally in the triumphant (and exceedingly famous) march (Tell I, 1-89). The beginning of act 1 brings back at the same time the meditative mood and the ranz des vaches. But the introductory song is also a song of praise concluding with the following statement:

Par nos travaux, rendons hommage au Createur de l'univers. (Tell 1,104 ff).

Through the unfolding of smaller events - also including songs of praise as for instance the joyful and traditional celebration of marriage in no. 3 - the main conflict between Arnold and Guillaume is brought out (after which another song of praise for the wedding celebration, no. 4, puts everything in perspective). Through smaller events the major conflict is reflected and the Austrians and Tell are shown as the main adversaries of the plot. This in turn is contemplated by a song of prayer by the Suiss people at the beginning of the finale which - after Tell has saved the life of Leuthold from the Austrians - concludes in a choral stretta which I read as a representation of a quasi-ritual situation in its denouncing of the oppressors.

The second act treats one part of the main narrative, the oath at Rutli - though its first part focuses on the love of Arnold and the Austrian princess Mathilde (his reason for siding the with oppressors). This part begins on a note of ritualistic contemplation as the hunters' chorus takes notice of the end of the day with the ringing of the bell and a general meditative attentiveness to the surrounding nature (no. 8, Tell II, 553-58). From here the aria of Mathilde and her duet to with Arnold unfold after which follows the important terzetto between Tell, Walter Furst and Arnold where Arnold must give in to their patriotic demands on him as they tell him about the murder of his father. (His blinding in the traditional narrative which Schiller accepted was sharpened in the opera). At the point where he understands that they are telling him about his own father, his sorrow and pangs of remorse and despair almost bring the music to a halt in a meditative (but even so highly dramatic) subdued mood breaking up for a moment the narrative flow of the terzetto before resuming in a rather different mood (Tell II, 696-98). The narrative flow which here is

brought to a halt for a meditative purpose may also be read in the light of the ritual returns from narrative representation in the Latin music dramas of the Middle Ages.

The third act tells the famous apple shooting episode after a long series of introductory scenes. To begin with Mathilde and Arnold again meet. Mathilde has a deeply felt understanding of Arnold's situation and they decide to go apart. A march of terror and honour for Gesler follows. Here again representation of a ritual use is discernible, also in the words:

A recitative breaks up the terzetto after Arnold's flaming desire to avenge his father has brought it to a new climax. The wish for revenge is transformed to a solemn announcement - "au l'independance ou la mort!" - by the three leaders (from the three cantons) before the actual oath scene and clearly representing again a ritualistic situation before the music dramatic flow of the terzett once more is continued (Tell II, 720-22).

The second act finale represents in itself (like the corresponding scene in Schiller's play) a ritual manifestation with the coming of the three parties from the three cantons underlined by Rossini's use of a cappella settings in some choral statements - and the use of announcements as for instance the arrival of the inhabitants from Unterwald (Tell II, 76667) with an acappella choral statement and a following announcement of vengeance and the appraisal by the three protagonists. The conclusion of the scene with the oath marks the high point of this, bringing an a cappella setting of the announcement II Aux armes!" for the three leading figures followed by the people in a choral and orchestral climax (Tell II, 848-49).

The

Claire au pauvair supreme!

Crainte a Cesler qui dispense ses lais! (Tell III, 931-34).

Through a recitative (where Gesler announces the necessity of a pledge of the people towards the German Empire) the Altdorf scene unfolds with forced dancing also showing how Gesler's hat must be greeted by everybody. The very scene with Tell and his (only) son (here named Jemmy and sung by a mezzo soprano) contains most important traditional elements from the long history of the narrative. It is emphasized more clearly than normally that Tell is consciously provoking by not greeting the hat. Only at the point where he realizes that both he and his son may be in mortal danger he changes his tone to one of fear and concern for Jemmy urging him to leave as long as it is possible (Tell III, 1156-83).

loving admonition to Jemmy "Sois immobile" makes for an enormous contrast to the jubilant exclamation of "Victoire" by the Suiss people after the successful shot. The rest of the scene flows on dramatically with its tension between the parallel oppositions of the soldiers and the Suiss, and

Gesler and Mathilde. She manages to rescue Jemmy after the episode with the extra arrow which here prompts Gesler to arrest both father and son. The scene concludes in another

It turns out not to be possible. As Tell sends away Jemmy and tells him to give the signal to the rebellion, Gesler decides to play the horrible game of the apple shooting. For Tell this is the low point of the narrative. He loses all courage and even kneels down in front of Gesler. The dramatic flow is brought to a stop at this point in an attitude of terror (and subordinate supplication) to the accompaniment of a series of chords which were later (1833/42) to be reflected in Rossini's *Stabat Mater* (Tell III, 1195, bars 206-11, cf. 1189, bars 175-76). Thereafter the drama resumes its flow again.

Jemmy brings back Tell to his strength by showing courage as well as his confidence in his father. Also here what may be perceived as a quasi-ritualistic halt in the flow is used to obtain the effect of conveying the *hic et nunc* efficacy of what is happening.

Jemmy's act of faith and love seems to be the redeeming factor for the outcome of this part of the action, in this respect totally different from the much more realistic medieval narrative (notably the version of Saxo where Toko - as mentioned - must protect his son to minimize the boy's terror of the arrow). In the opera Jemmy even rejects being tied as he is able to manage the situation. But before this his announcement of fearlessness and confidence may be heard to be represented as an almost sacramental action. It is given a significant emphasis detaching it from the narrative function through the repeated tone C, as he addresses his father, taken over by the sustained C of the oboe and bassoon altogether causing a musical halt. Tell clearly responds to this in his benediction of the boy (Tell III, 1198-1201 cf. also Tell IV, 1677-1714 showing the originally planned aria of Jemmy which was left out before the premiere).

The meditative tone of Guillaume's famous the opera concludes in victory announcements opening again into the appreciation of the magnificent nature with another appearance of the *ranz des vaches*, present at so many important points of the opera, in a song of praise of God and liberty (prayed to descend from Heaven):

representation of a ritualistic outbreak as the chained Guillaume (who no longer fears Gesler) announces his II Anatheme a Gesler!" followed up by the Suiss people and even by Mathilde and contrasted by the II Vive Geslerll of the soldiers (Tell IV, 1287-1311).

The fourth and last act clears up the plot concerning Arnold and the confederates and - not least - through Tell's advantageous and courageous liberation from Gesler's boat and the killing of the tyrant (original version:

Tell IV, appendix III, 1716-1886). During the dangerous boating Tell's wife, Hedwige, sings a prayer for him - followed up by Mathilde and the chorus (Tell IV, 1763-82).

And finally, as everything has been resolved,  
A nos accents religieux, Liberte, re descends des cieux.  
Et que ton regne recommence! (Tell IV, 1875-86).

Rossini's opera is not a particularly religious work. Rather, that the formal devices used by Rossini - as it is true for many other operatic works earlier and later - can be read in a meaningful way as representations of reflections of centuries of liturgico-dramatic traditions used in the opera to highlight the dramatic points which the composer wanted to emphasize.

In this way a certain kind of a medievalistic distant perspective is put on the narrative. Through this structure the opera becomes to some extent marked by the alterity of the Middle Ages which otherwise does not surface in the treatment of the narrative material.

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## The Medievalism of Paul Hindemith

Magnar Breivik

When Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) began making himself felt in German music life, he was soon acclaimed as one of the most promising composers of a new generation. Already from the early 1920s, he came to the fore as a musician of many parts, and his early reputation as a *Bürgerschreck* of the day intermingled with recognition of his extraordinary compositional talents and musical skills. In 1927, Hindemith found himself as a professor at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik. The year before he had met with the massive German amateur music movement, *Die Musikantengilde*. This organization was especially dedicated to the cultivation of old music and the German folk song tradition. In this movement, Hindemith soon envisaged great prospects for the salvation of a modern music that seemed to be heading towards esotericism and isolation. He was convinced that one prosperous remedy could be to include suitable music from contemporary composers in the amateur repertoire. A subsequent broad and active participation in new music would give possibility to diminish the expanding gap between the art and its audience. This thought would become one of the important inspirations for Hindemith's lifelong belief in musical activity as the foundation for any genuine dealing with music -- including the study of music theory.

Hindemith's Hochschule appointment of 1927 initiated his extensive career as a teacher. At the Berlin conservatory, he also had the opportunity to pursue his growing interest in old music and historical instruments, supported by the musicologist Georg Schünemann. At that time also, an interest in the musical past had started to permeate Hindemith's professional attitudes. A combination of the need for musical expansion and profound reflection was to be the mark of his maturity. The musicologist H. H. Stuckenschmidt points to the double side to his nature:

Paul Hindemith's breast was always the abode of two souls, totally without suffocated or suffocating apology: one for the playful boy, we might well say the naughty lad, and one for the strict, incomparably industrious and reflective seeker of perfection and truth.<sup>1</sup>

One important reason that the progressive young composer developed in a contemplative direction seemingly lay in a profound wish, through thoughts proving resistant to the march of time, to control and restrict what he saw as contemporary musical alienation. That this trait started becoming obvious at the time when he first made contact with the amateur organizations and undertook the responsibilities of teaching was surely no

coincidence. It also seems that Hindemith's early interest in old, not least medieval, music, its foundations and practices, also developed as a common base and epistemological anchorage for his own manifold musical activities and talents. This was in accordance with the tendencies toward objectivity at the time, the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, in which he became a leading figure. What is typical for Hindemith, however, is that his interests proved to extend far beyond the turbulent Weimar years. As time went by, an ever-increasing engagement in the music and thoughts of the Middle Ages would form a solid foundation for his life's work. It seemed to offer valid answers to fundamental questions pertaining to the art of music.

Hindemith's practical activities in the medievalist field reached their zenith after he had come to the U.S.A. as a 45-year-old exile in 1940. On his arrival, he was already engaged as a teacher at music theory courses in Buffalo, Aurora, and Ithaca. He had also been appointed by the newly founded summer academy of Boston Symphony Orchestra in Tanglewood, Massachusetts. Only a month after his arrival, Hindemith was invited to lecture at prestigious Yale University. From August the next year, he was a full professor at Yale. A common attitude among the German exile composer-teachers was that American students lacked skills, traditions, and knowledge of European musical heritage. This may be one contributing reason why he soon began furthering his persistent interest in the performance of ancient music. For the Tanglewood event of 1941, he gave a course in which the participants, through active singing and playing, were introduced to music ranging from Gregorian chant to French 17th-century compositions.

Hindemith would continue his ideas from these summer weeks in the *Collegium Musicum* at Yale.<sup>2</sup> The Yale *Collegium Musicum* was established around 1941, essentially as a reading group for the musicology students of another German in exile, musicologist Leo Schrade. In 1943, the group decided to give a concert of early 17th-century music together with the Bach Cantata Singers. Hindemith is often characterized as the arch musician of 20th century composers. On this occasion, he played the bassoon and the viola da gamba. For the concert of 1945, Hindemith had even taken charge of preparing an orchestra of old instruments borrowed from the Metropolitan Museum.

From this 1945 event, which became the first in a series of annual *Collegium Musicum* concerts with Hindemith as director, the use of authentic historical instruments was one remarkable trait. For the concert of 1946, the group consisted of fourteen different instruments, an orchestra for which the Flemish painter Hans Memling's (1430/35-1490) panel *Christ as Salvator Mundi Amongst Musical Angels*, of the late 1400s, served as a model.

The press release stated that this was the first time that such an authentic orchestra of the 15th century had ever been assembled in the U.S.A. for actual performance.

By the time of Hindemith's resignation from Yale in 1953, quite a number of his students had given their own concerts on historical instruments. Some of them had even started spreading their enthusiasm and technical knowledge to other universities. Today, the heritage from Hindemith and the Yale *Collegium Musicum* is acknowledged as an important branch of American performance practice.

Although a modernist at heart, Hindemith regarded main trends in 20th-century music as vain experiments leading away from the genuine foundations for the art. Holding Arnold Schoenberg in high esteem as a major composer, he was still heavily opposed to the twelve-tone procedures of the Schoenberg School. This basic attitude applied to every serial system and any cerebral calculation relating to it. Hindemith believed in music as a means for universal human communication. In his opinion, the advance of experimental, avant-garde music had gone too far. In response to this critical situation, Hindemith was convinced that the musical development of his time could benefit from musical views of medieval times. One reason was that these two ages, albeit situated so far apart, seemed to have such important traits in common. In different ways, they might be seen as representing two sides of the same coin. Hindemith's own writings reveal this attitude in different ways. There are also some general, basic conditions for such a view. Tonally, the development from Middle Ages to Modernism may be seen as an expansion from a pre -- functional -- or pre-major/minor -- musical material, to a post-functional musical material.

\*Middle Ages \*Renaissance \*Baroque \*Classicism \*Romanticism \*Expressionism \*Modernism  
Pre-functional -- *Musica ficta* -- functional (major/minor)-----chromaticism-----post-functional

*Musica ficta* and chromaticism both denote the additions of halftone steps: the first, historically speaking, leading *towards* functional major/minor, while the extensive use of the other is leading *away* from it. This is why some, not least in Hindemith's times, might regard music history *not* primarily as a development from a more delimited tonal scope towards tonal expansion, but rather as a mirroring motion in which functional major and minor form the axis. According to such view, the non-functionality of Middle Ages and the non-functionality of Modernism might be seen as mirror images of each other:

\*Middle Ages  
Nonfunctional

\*Baroque/\*Classicism/\*Romanticism  
Functional

\*Modernism  
Nonfunctional

Although this particular explanation does not stem from Hindemith himself, it may illustrate an important aspect of the foundation for his overall contemporaneous approach to medieval music. It also indicates why Hindemith, in so many respects, seemed to wish to build a bridge between the medieval period and modern times.

Hindemith's foreword to the work of still another German in exile, Willi Apel's collection of *French Secular Music of the Late Fourteenth Century* (1950), is evidence of this attitude. In the second paragraph, Hindemith states that

[T]he modern musician's problems, of which there are so many, will lose some of their puzzling oppression if compared with those of our early predecessors, as they appear in this volume. It is rewarding to see those masters struggle successfully with technical devices similar to those that we have to reconquer after periods in which the appreciation of quantity exaggeration, and search for originality in sound was the most important drive in the composer's mind . . . To the performers the immediate contingency with this music will open up new horizons. They will learn to understand the short-sighted attitude of our present musical culture, which adores only those idols of audible beauty that are not much older than two hundred years. They soon will find it necessary to replace our contemporary ways of performing, which oscillate between two extremes -- over-individualistic exhibitionist on the one side and the dullest metric-dynamic motorism on the other -- with the altruistic devotion which alone can revive this old music.<sup>3</sup>

These two paragraphs are laden with polemics against phenomena in their author's present. A particularly interesting point in Hindemith's foreword is the way in which he draws parallels between the Middle Ages and the musical challenges and requirements of his own time. Medieval music is put forward as an ideal model for the composer as well as the performer. In this foreword, we thus find one of the most important overall traits in Hindemith's relationship to medieval music: his view that the degenerate music of the 20th century may be regenerated through attitudes inherited from medieval times.

Thus, these few paragraphs also become an example of how Hindemith tends to interpret attitudes of the past in the light of his own reflections and musical experiences. Rejection of quantity and exaggeration in musical sound, and the requirement of a profound sobriety and objectivity on the part of the performer, are matters with which Hindemith was concerned throughout most of his career. Even his criticism of only relating to the

music of the past 200 years is typical for his wish to build a bridge from his own time over the periods of Romanticism and Classicism, back to the Baroque, Renaissance, and preferably the Medieval periods.

Hindemith sees the musical development and compositional challenges of his own century as a reflection of the pre-functional times of the medieval masters. To musicologists, Hindemith is especially known for his theories of tonality. The first volume of his theory book, *Unterweisung im Tonsatz I* (1937), later translated as *Craft of Musical Composition I*, was written while he was still in Europe. Hindemith's aim is to explore, prove, and apply the supposedly universal laws of tonality. In his opinion, these laws are valid for all music in every culture and for all times. Accordingly, the fundamental bases of medieval nonfunctional music and the nonfunctional music of his own modern times are unavoidably identical -- a fact which every contemporary composer should realize.

In the introductory chapter of *Craft of Musical Composition I*, Hindemith writes about the fundamental importance of traditional musical craftsmanship and the ancient recognition of a relationship between music, numbers, and the cosmos.<sup>4</sup> In this book, Hindemith also suggests that his own theories on a universal basis of tonality may be seen in light of the threefold *musica* concept, transmitted to the Middle Ages through Boethius (480-524).

Musica mundana  
Musica humana  
Musica instrumentalis

In this model, *musica mundana* denotes the *musica* that governs the heavens, time, and earth, *musica humana* the musical principles controlling our human body and soul, and finally the *musica instrumentalis*, the earthly music, as sounding through voices and instruments. The basic idea is that corresponding musical principles are supposed to govern each individual part of this triple *musica* concept. "For to us there is no longer, thanks to our understanding of their common physical basis, a fundamental difference between *musica humana* and *musica instrumentalis*, and even as concerns *musica humana* and *musica mundana*, we may concentrate our attention today rather on those aspects which they have in common than those in which they differ," Hindemith says, continuing: "we shall observe in the tiniest building unit of music the play of the same forces that rule the movements of the most distant nebulae."<sup>5</sup> From the allegedly natural bases of musical material and the human, physical disposition of hearing, Hindemith deducts a lawfulness supposedly embedded in principles that accord to this model. This gives strength to Hindemith's cosmological point of departure, a decisive overall factor in his musical thought. The symphony and the opera *Die Harmonie der Welt*, (*The Harmony of the World*), of 1951 and 1957 respectively, represent the creative culmination of his cosmological attitudes.

The music of Hindemith's maturity seems to be closely connected to his ideas as presented in *Craft of Musical Composition I*. His magnificent solo piano work *Ludus tonalis* is particularly illustrative in that respect. This collection of fugues and interludes was written during Hindemith's stay at Yale. The basic principles of his theories, into which we shall go no further, are present already in the tone row depicted on the font page:



Naturally, the overall ancient flavor of this graphic representation does not indicate that the piano pieces are meant to sound like medieval or other ancient music. It rather visualizes an aspect of Hindemith's contemporaneous approach to music of the past: his wish to give a signal of the profound traditions and even universal foundations of his own compositional procedures. First, the fugues and interludes of this work are based upon principles of tonality supposedly valid for every musical culture in all times. Second, he has put to use contrapuntal techniques initiated in the Middle Ages. The message is that what has been valid for, for instance, medieval music is also valid today, although in an up-to-date modernist idiom. As for the title *Ludus tonalis*, it may in itself carry associations with both ancient foundations and timelessness. Hindemith scholar David Neumeyer suggests that the title may even have been inspired by the *ludus* expression connected to the liturgical drama of the medieval age.<sup>6</sup>

In Hindemith's oeuvre, one may find musical themes from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the German folk song repertory. The relationship with medieval thought, however, becomes most obvious in his book *A Composer's World Horizons and Limitations* (1952), written towards the end of his stay in the U.S.A. In this book, one of Hindemith's bold objectives is to advance the authentic, philosophical foundation of music as an art. The opening chapter, called "The Philosophical Approach," is a discussion inspired by the expression "a composition of everlasting value."<sup>7</sup> Once again, thinkers of the early Middle Ages are those supposed to give support to Hindemith's views. When it comes to a discussion of Boethius

and the triple *musica* concept in this *Composer's World* context, Hindemith still regards him as a noble advocate for the universal dimensions of the technical side of music. However, he goes further by stating that a highly developed compositional technique may also be misused in music without any real spiritual value. Hindemith sees many examples in his own present, overflowing with diversities of techniques and compositional systems alien to genuine, human appreciation. There is even an abundance of well-constructed but, alas, valueless entertainment music. A main feature of Hindemith's present seems to be compositional degeneration, not due to lack of technical skill, but rather to an insufficiency of spiritual content. And, according to Hindemith, this has no other than pious Boethius's thoughts as its origin. From Boethius's statement that "music is a part of human nature; it has the power either to improve or to debase our character," Hindemith deduces that music by diverse technical means has the possibility to force upon people an ethos to which they are vulnerable and against which they are defenseless.<sup>8</sup> Hindemith claims to witness many negative effects from this attitude in his musically turbulent and culturally precarious present. Typically enough, he applies ancient thinking directly to his own century: Boethius' thoughts are valid also in his turbulent age, but contemporary music has degenerated to such an extent that Boethius now needs spiritual support. And this support is to be found in Augustine's *De Musica: Libri VI.* (354-430). In *De musica*, Augustine's divides the fulfilled musical experience into occurrences that all relate to so-called sounding numbers and their dependence on each other. He describes their manifestations in five levels, considering

- 1) the physical sound in itself,
- 2) the listener's faculty of musical hearing,
- 3) the act of performance,
- 4) the listener's ability to imagine mentally and remember music, and
- 5) the listener's ability to evaluate and judge music.

The fifth level, pertaining to the evaluation and judgement of music, is regarded as the highest division of musical experience. Still, the recognition of sounding numbers and musical order is not to be seen as an end in itself. The vital point is the recognition of *musical* order as an image of a *higher* order. A profound comprehension of this perspective leads to what Hindemith puts forward as a level six: "our enjoyment of the order of the heavens and the unification of our soul with the divine principle."<sup>9</sup> This leads Hindemith to regard Augustine above all as the noble advocate of the spiritual qualities of music. Music is supposed to have the capacity to stimulate a mental activity that can lead to the betterment of our soul. This is what Hindemith describes as the *Augustinian attitude*. He is aware that *De musica* applies especially to religious music. However, secular music of the 20th century may also benefit from Augustine's views, he claims. If our music is going to be anything more than sheer entertainment,

it cannot exist without their support. Music has to be converted into moral power, it must elevate our minds, and it must be able to turn our soul towards everything that is “noble, superhuman, and ideal.”<sup>10</sup> Undoubtedly, this attitude makes heavy demands both on us as listeners and on the actual music submitted to appreciation. Hindemith fully admits that Augustine’s noble ends may be difficult to attain. He also recognizes the problems of perceiving all music according to such a stern imperative. “Even the most cultured mind sometimes feels a desire for distracting entertainment, and, as a principle, music for all possible degrees of entertainment ought to be provided,” he says, and, accordingly, even different kinds of entertaining light music must be justified.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, at least a slight effort towards stimulating the receiving mind into moral activity must always be undertaken.

Though Boethius and Augustine share the same philosophical traditions, Hindemith sees them, interprets them, or reconstructs them in light of musical antagonisms of his own time. He regards Boethius as the representative of the technical side of music, so evidently in vogue by contemporary composer colleagues, and Augustine of the spiritual qualities so rarely encountered. The consequence of Hindemith’s viewing these two giant thinkers of the past in the light of his own age is his proposed solution that the Boethian *musica* concept ought to be united with the Augustinian attitude. This will in turn make way for “a composition of everlasting value.” Hindemith’s interpretation of Boethius and Augustine in *A Composer’s World* serves well as an introduction to the foundations of his own musical thought -- more so than to the history of Western philosophy. It is also another example of Hindemith’s wish to build a bridge between medieval times and his own.

Hindemith regarded Gregorian melodies as “the most perfect, the most convincing one-line compositions ever conceived.”<sup>12</sup> They also represented the most sophisticated example of how active participation in performance becomes the key to genuine musical recognition. We have touched upon Hindemith’s basically pessimistic attitude towards the music of his present in different ways. Apparently, he even sees the huge preponderance of instrumental music in his present as a token of decline. The Middle Ages, on the contrary, he regards as a period of vocal lavishness. In *A Composer’s World*, he says:

Our own time, with its overweening estimation of instrumental music, possibly in its most obtrusive orchestral form, will perhaps, in a later evaluation of music history, count as a period of lowest artistic culture, compared with those epochs in which the art of ensemble activity with the emphasis on vocal participation flourished most noticeably. I refer to the period of Machaut, Dufay, and Josquin; the time of Isaac, Senfl, Finck, Hofhaimer,

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and many contributors to the art of the German *Liederbücher* in the sixteenth century; the madrigalesque style of Marenzio, Monteverdi and other Italians; the English madrigalists; and finally, the cantatas of Bach.<sup>13</sup>

This quotation makes an indirect reference to the repertoire Hindemith had studied together with his *Collegium Musicum* at Yale. The more interesting point, however, is that, in regarding this music as a reflection of the society in which it was made and performed, he also sees those very societies as ideal communities. Hindemith's firm belief is that that kind of ensemble singing, which in fact does not include the choral singing of later periods, requires a mutual understanding between human beings that seems to be totally absent in his own present. He thus succumbs to the belief that medieval music not only provides fundamental guiding lines for the music of his own time, it is also a token of an ideal community of a more harmonious past.

This type of idealization was very much prevalent in the philosophies of the German music amateur movements, not least in the *Musikantengilde*, and even in the Bauhaus environment. Hindemith's views thus fit into a broader cultural context of his time, where a warm and all-inclusive *Gemeinschaft* is believed to have the possibility to arise as an alternative to the prevalent mechanical *Gesellschaft*. Before judging the possible naivetés of Hindemith's idealism, one should remember that his experiences from active participation in World War I, his departure from his native country, and his view of the horrors of World War II from a distance had made him an ardent pacifist. He strongly believed in the furthering of human understanding across any border. On referring to the German proverb *böse Menschen haben keine Lieder* ("bad men don't sing"), he maintained that "there is no nobler way of making music than ensemble singing, we may nourish the conviction that with a clear recognition of man's collective desires a new epoch of madrigalesque musical art will spring up as an encouraging model for other collective enterprises."<sup>14</sup>

By way of a conclusion, one may state that Hindemith's medievalism makes itself felt on different levels and in various musical fields. According to him, the performance of medieval music may direct the basic attitudes of contemporary composers and musicians in a more fruitful direction. Medievalism also pertains to his historically important considerations of the timeless principles of tonality. Foundations of medieval musical thought even seem to have a profound validity in questions of the eternal values of music. One should, however, never forget that Hindemith was indeed a composer of his time. This is one obvious reason why he connected his medievalism so closely to the musical situation of his present. This is also the reason why Hindemith's considerations shed such an interesting light not only upon his own music and thoughts, but upon even the music history of the 20th century.

## NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> “[...] in Paul Hindemiths Brust wohnten allezeit und ganz ohne gequältes oder gequälendes Ach zwei Seelen: die des verspielten Jungen, sagen wir ruhig, des Lausbuben, und die des Strengen beispiellos fleißigen und nachdenklichen Suchers nach Vollendung und Wahrheit.” H. H. Stuckenschmidt, “Paul Hindemiths Aufbruch und Heimkehr,” *Hindemith-Jahrbuch/Annales Hindemith 1974/75IV*, (Mainz: B Schott’s Söhne, 1975), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> See Howard Boatwright: “Hindemith’s Performances of Old Music,” *Hindemith-Jahrbuch/Annales Hindemith 1973/III*, (Mainz: B. Schott’s Söhne, 1974), pp. 39-62, and Eckhart Richter: “Paul Hindemith as Director of the Yale Collegium Musicum,” *Hindemith-Jahrbuch/Annales Hindemith 1978/VII*, (Mainz/London/New York/Tokyo: Schott, 1980), pp. 143-174.

<sup>3</sup> Apel, Willi (Ed.) *French Secular Music of the Late Fourteenth Century*, Paul Hindemith, Foreword. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Mediaeval [sic] Academy of America, 1950.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Hindemith, *The Craft of Musical Composition, Book I Theoretical Part*, English Translation by Arthur Mendel, (London: Schott & Co. Ltd., 1945), pp. 12-13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> D. Neumeyer, “The Genesis and Structure of Hindemith’s *Ludus Tonalis*,” *Hindemith-Jahrbuch: Annales Hindemith 1978/VII*, (Mainz/London/New York: Schott, 1980), p. 73.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Hindemith, *A Composer’s World: Horizons and Limitations*, (Boston, MA, Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 1-26.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

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## Re-envisioning Medieval Allegories of Death for a Post-Darwinian Cosmos: Time, Death, and Judgement in the Art of G. F. Watts

Marilynn Lincoln Board

And now I think the meaning of the evolution of civilization is no longer obscure to us. It must present the struggle between Eros and Death . . . as it works itself out in the human species. This struggle is what all life essentially consists of . . . And it is this battle of the giants that our nursemaids try to appease with their lullaby about Heaven.

-- Sigmund Freud

Scholarship on the Victorian painter George Frederic Watts (1817-1904) has contextualized his *oeuvre* primarily in relationship to Victorian ideologies that look backward to conservative cultural traditions rather than forward to modernist progressive notions of cultural transformation. Indeed, Watts' symbolic paintings on the theme of death and its relationships to time, eros, and morality, which I will examine here, adopt a conservative medieval system of allegorical representation that assumes a fixed correspondence between the notational system of art and an ideally structured universe. However, while Watts presumes that the viewer is aware of the original theological references in his allegories, he does not appropriate them merely to re-embody them in the present, but as a strategy for rewriting them to accommodate modern concepts of scientific evolutionary theory. Following Frederic Jameson's general argument in *The Political Unconscious* (1981), I will argue here that Watts' strategy of rewriting opens the allegorical form to multiple meanings and supplementary interpretations that undermine the medieval presumption of a single master narrative or divine transcendental signifier (58). As Jameson observes of New Testament reinterpretations of Old Testament texts, when sacred allegories are rewritten, the "illusions of religion are read as the complement of a positive social functionality and decoded as the figure and projection of an essentially human energy" (70), at least on an unconscious level. Because allegory as a form inherently implies the absence of presence, it is a particularly appropriate for evoking death. Indeed, Walter Benjamin describes it as a melancholy cult of ruin, a "death's head" that signifies "an appreciation of the transience of things, and the concern to rescue them for eternity..." (183-184, 223).

By all accounts, Watts was by temperament a melancholy pessimist,<sup>1</sup> thus, it is not surprising to discover that death is *lietmotif* that recurs in his work throughout his career. According to Mrs. Russell (Emilie) Barrington, his friend and biographer, he had felt its presence within himself from his earliest days (154). His obsessive preoccupation with tropes of death doubtless originated in circumstances of his grief over the deaths of his three brothers from measles and his mother from consumption before he was nine years old (Blunt 2-5). Mary Watts, his second wife and biographer, described these events as remembrances “fought with pain” (*Annals* I 36), and in later life he seldom spoke about them or about his subsequent unhappiness living under the care of his worry-worn father, an unsuccessful piano-tuner and manufacturer, and with two elder step-sisters with whom he felt little rapport. However, his youthful existential angst is clearly visible in *The Wounded Heron*, his first exhibited painting, painted in 1837 at the age of twenty. A large bird in the throes of death fills the foreground of the canvas. Its silhouetted claws, extended in an expressive gesture that conveys the agony of mortal pain, puncture the line of a ragged curve created by the contour of its wings. The suffering of the bird, a traditional symbol of the soul, conveys Watts’ intense sensitivity to the vulnerability of beauty to dissolution, a theme that would pervade his future art. The claws of the dying heron also direct the viewer’s attention to a distant horse and rider in a pocket of deep background space. Through preparatory drawings Watts scholars have identified this lonely rider as a self-portrait of the artist, who was an avid horseman and falconer (Watts, unpublished catalog; Loshak 121). The specific psychic origins of the painting may lie in a childhood accident in which Watts was responsible for the death of a pet bird. Fifty years later, he would recall that this incident caused him intense guilt and the “acutest suffering” he had ever felt (Barrington 145). It seems likely that this unusually intense response to the death of his pet was, at least in part, a displacement of suppressed irrational feelings of responsibility for the death of his mother, a frequent syndrome in children who lose a parent at an early age. In any case, *The Wounded Heron* elicits empathy, not only for the doomed bird’s agony, but also for the isolated, distant hunter adrift on an empty horizon beneath a vast and overwhelming sky.

Given Watts’ melancholy nature, achieving a tone of optimism in his work was a constant struggle, yet, along with Matthew Arnold, whose writings he admired, he argued that it was necessary for the modern artist to provide public icons of hope and compassion rather than dwell on inner suffering and uncertainty (Arnold, “Preface to Poems, 1853” in *Poems*; Watts, *Annals* III 3). His theological perspective on death was unorthodox. Although he had been raised as an Evangelical, as a young man he had lost his faith in religious dogma. However, he also repudiated the utilitarian

materialist empiricism that permeated Victorian culture. The mystery of death and the loss of Christianity's promise of transcendence haunted him, and he envisioned his art as a quest to provide a spiritual substitute for the lost certainties of the past. Like Arnold and John Morley, the Liberal editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, he aspired to adapt the medieval allegorical language of traditional Christianity to the task of articulating a vision of the cosmos that would be compatible with modern science yet continue to supply an ethical and spiritual basis for modern life (Arnold, "The Bishop and the Philosopher" 346, Morley's *Rousseau*, quoted in Knickerbocker, 154; Watts, *Annals* II 243). He referred to his modernized theological allegories as his "suggestive" paintings (Watts, *Annals* II 215), contending that "the sense of the beautiful in the highest manifestation is religious" (Watts, *Annals* I 240). Unlike well-known contemporary images of death by French artists, such as Gustave Courbet's *Burial at Ornans* (1849) or Claude Monet's *Camille on her Death Bed* (1879), Watts wanted, he said, to "paint ideas, not things" (West and Pantini xxi). He wanted to paint the idea of death rather than the event itself, creating images that would be "in every sense the very reverse of realistic" (Barrington 135). Although his early public successes as an artist were based upon his portraits and history paintings, he declared that it was only by his "suggestive" pictures that he wished to be remembered (Watts, *Annals* I 228).<sup>2</sup>

Watts painted his earliest "suggestive" painting, *Time and Oblivion*, in 1848 during an especially difficult period of loneliness and despair. He described it as "solemn and sad and hard, for solemn, sad and hard are the conditions, an organ chord swelling and powerful but unmodulated" (Watts, *Annals* II 244). According to Mrs. Barrington, Orcagna's late medieval *Triumph of Death* in the Camposanto in Pisa (1325-50, now attributed to Francesco Triani) had made an "indelible impression" on him, not only because of its obvious horror but also for its "solemn mystery," and its representation of death as an "all-powerful will" that carries out "the laws of nature . . . to which men should resign themselves without fear and with the trust of children who accept with obedience their father's control" (Barrington 135). *Time and Oblivion* likewise contemplates death with stoic implacability. Over the top of the painting, Watts inscribed the words "Whatsoever the heart findeth to do, do it with all the might, for there is not work or desire, not knowledge nor wisdom in the grave where thou goest." The allegorical figures of Time and Oblivion are represented as abstract emblems set on an eternal backdrop, posed in mid-air above a terrestrial globe. Time is shown as an ageless, idealized youth rather than the more usual old man, although he still holds the conventional scythe. His torso is classically bare, and he is clearly lit by an orb of light. He symbolizes the always fresh and creative present moment. Oblivion, her face hidden and her body concealed in Greek garments, steps forward,

lifting her dark, enveloping cloak. Her lower body ends in a spiraling swirl, which frames a deep black hole that symbolizes the impenetrable mystery of death. Time's hand rests familiarly on her shoulder, and they wade together through the rhythmic sea of life. They are presented as aspects of the same remote, incomprehensible power which has little concern for individual human needs or desire.

In 1868, after a hiatus of twenty years, Watts returned to his "suggestive" pictures, producing three more major paintings on death that elaborate upon the theme of *Time and Oblivion: Love and Death, Orpheus and Eurydice*, and *The Court of Death*. Love and Death was a popular symbolist subject, but Watts' rendition of the theme differs dramatically from other contemporary interpretations, such as Edvard Munch's *Death and the Maiden* (1893) or Odilon Redon's *Death: I am the one who will make a serious woman of you; come let us embrace* (1896). It represents the figures of Love and Death as adversaries rather than as lovers and avoids the erotic components, as well as the horrific elements that would become standard fare in symbolist iconography. Moreover, Watts' Death figure is not the macabre yet magnetic male skeleton, which Munch and Redon have adapted from medieval and Renaissance works like Albrecht Dürer's *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1497-98) or Hans Holbein the Younger's *The Dance of Death* (1538), but a forceful matronly figure in Greek dress.<sup>3</sup> Watts' Death is mysterious; her back is turned toward the picture plane, and her face is hidden. She dominates the composition through the unswerving vertical line of her body, which is enforced by the rippling plunge of her gown as it cascades to the ground. This empathetic downward thrust is slowly reversed by a mounting rhythm in the deep folds of her shroud-like dress, which direct the eye gradually backward toward the opening in a door — a symbolic passageway from life to death.<sup>4</sup> Watts accelerates the backward motion toward the door with the strong, adamant gesture of Death's right arm. In the area between the figure of Death and the door, Love, not a voluptuous nude, but a child-like Eros, makes an impassioned counter-thrust to bar Death's entry. Clearly, there is no contest in this unequal confrontation. All the youthful beauty and emotional sincerity of love cannot halt the relentless approach of Death. Death casts a literal shadow over Love, and some of the forget-me-nots growing near the door have been plucked and scattered on the steps. In the lower right corner, a bird, an emblem of the human soul, observes the universal drama. These are rather heavy-handed allegories, but the import of the painting can be read abstractly, and more compellingly, in the tension filling the narrow, curving space at the heart of the painting between the massive figure of Death and the fragile form of Love. This delicate crescent shape is created when Love instinctively recoils as he gazes into the face of Death. Mary Watts aptly observes that the contour of the wing of "young love

impotent against the inevitable" in *Love and Death* repeats the tragic pathos of the bird's wing in his first exhibited picture, *The Wounded Heron* (Watts, *Annals* I 27).

Watts' passionate visions of Death as a sublimely beautiful but unapproachable Greek goddess, and of Love as a romantic Eros figure raging impotently against an emotionally indifferent universe, were inspired by his desire to express sympathy for the grief of his friend and patron, Lady Lothian, over her inability to prevent the premature death of her husband from consumption.<sup>5</sup> Its sonorous color harmonies, its thick, sensuous impasto, and the tremulous lines of its drapery convey an aura of solemn sorrow. Intended to provide consolation for this senseless tragedy from an agnostic perspective, the painting offers no particular hope of immortality to the bereaved. Indeed, another of Watts' patrons, Manchester businessman Charles Rickards, asked him to soften his austere view of death by inserting a cross into the picture to signify the possibility of hope for an afterlife, but Watts refused (Watts, *Annals* I 307). However, while the unyielding figure of Death evokes the inexorable force of natural law,<sup>6</sup> her feminine gender implies that she is part of life's perpetual renewal. Indeed, it was a common observation among Victorian intellectuals influenced by scientific thinking that death's purpose in the wise design of creation must be nature's way of maintaining a fresh and hopeful tone, thus making possible the continuation of life by relieving the old and worn with fresh replacements (Watts' catalog notes for his one-man exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 1884; Barrington 135).<sup>7</sup> Watts' Death is implacable, yet there is consolation for the sufferings of the individual in the contemplation of the welfare of the race as a whole, and, if youthful Love will not embrace Death in the symbolist prescription, neither, as his instinctive recoil reveals, will he allow himself to be suicidally buried beneath her insistent bulk. Death has come for another, and Love will ultimately move aside with melancholy grace. Watts is deeply sympathetic to the pain of the anguished lover in a pitiless universe, but, in the end, he counsels a stoic acceptance of death and dissolution.

In *Orpheus and Eurydice*, Watts reconfigures his meditation on love's tragic inability to vanquish death, this time in a mythological guise with personal undertones. Orpheus is the mythical counterpart of the creative artist, and, as such, he can be read as an idealized self-portrait. Watts' characterization of Eurydice is similar in type to Ellen Terry, the teen-aged actress he had recently married in a determined effort, at the age of forty-seven, to attain a cherished dream of love and family. In any but the legal sense, the marriage lasted less than a year,<sup>8</sup> and the artist's grief over its collapse is evidenced in the emotional tenor of the picture. Watts depicts the climactic moment in the Greek myth when Orpheus' passion for his wife, whom he has just rescued from the underworld, causes him to look

back at her, breaking the conditions of her release and resulting in her irrevocable return to the land of the dead. A heart-rending gap between the two figures, a motif we have already noted in *Love and Death*, is the compositional and emotional crux of the picture.<sup>9</sup> The agitation of Orpheus' emotions are evoked by the wind-whipped, frazzled edge of his drapery. The curve of his hard, powerful back is limply echoed in Eurydice's soft, dropping trunk, leading the eye downward in wave-like intervals that parallel the descent of Orpheus' hopes. Eurydice's left arm still hovers over her lover's head, but her right arm falls lifelessly toward the underworld and her head turns to follow. She has already lost the flush of life, and a shadow falls between Orpheus, rigid with desire, and his fading dream, producing a sexual tension that demonstrates that the symbolist strain of deadly eroticism was not a totally alien concept to the Victorian painter. Behind the figures a flame-like cypress, which simultaneously suggests burning passion and consuming death, reinforces the downward motion of the composition. A vacant-eyed owl, symbolic of the unconscious and of death, looms in the background. A wilted flower falls across Eurydice's leg, and Orpheus, in his grief, has dropped his lyre, suggesting that even art, the source of his spellbinding power, cannot compensate for the loss of love.

*The Court of Death*, Watts' third painting on the theme of death, from 1868 (reworked until 1881), transforms the medieval vision of Death as a horrifying skeleton into a regal but comforting maternal figure who embraces her children. This colossal painting, which measures 67" x 108" and occupied an entire wall of the largest gallery at the New Gallery exhibition in 1886, was originally executed for placement in a mortuary chapel in a cemetery for paupers. Watts was told of a project to open such a cemetery where coffins would be collected for a mass burial service to save expense. He was disturbed by such cold calculation and began to work, unasked, on a design to help dignify the building. The scheme for the paupers' cemetery was ultimately dropped, but he continued work on his design, attempting to produce an agnostic icon for the masses (Watts, *Annals* I 228), stating:

I hope to be able to paint and present [it] to public institutions at Manchester or elsewhere; wherever, in fact, I might feel they would best perform their mission . . . I have about twelve or fifteen very large pictures which it will be a great point of conscience to paint, and I can only hope to succeed by giving up the rest of my life to them (Watts, *Annals* I 284).

*The Court of Death* is an enlargement of the courtly juries arrayed behind the figure of Christ as divine judge in paintings like Giotto's *Last Judgment* fresco from the Arena Chapel (1305). Outraged since childhood by orthodox Christianity's vengeful God who threatened errant humanity

with eternal damnation, Watts sought to counter the terror of punishment after death by replacing the figure of Christ as a vengeful judge with a winged angel of death who resembles an enthroned madonna. A frontal, hieratic female deity lit by a shaft of heavenly light dominates the center of the huge canvas. Two guardian powers, Silence and Mystery, stand on either side, protecting the secrets of the unseen world. They partially lift the veil that divides the realm of the living from the realm of the dead, uncovering a glimpse of everlasting light and purity. Dressed in a green mantle with red lining, which suggests the conflation of fertility with sacrificial blood, the figure of Death sits regally above her subjects, holding a new-born babe on her lap. The child rests upon a blanket of white grave-clothes that unwinds from Death's lap to the floor. When Watts' patron, Manchester businessman Charles Rickards, objected that the painting was too grim, Watts was unpersuadable, declaring that

the suggestion that even the germ of life is in the lap of Death, I regard as the most poetic idea in the picture, the key-note of the whole. You say it produces disagreeable impressions! This proves that the picture is not one for a drawing-room — the fastidiousness of modern tastes being taken into account. It is a work of great gravity and character, and — as with a dramatic poem or an epic — it cannot be made up wholly of delightful fancies (Watts, *Annals* I 308).

Indeed, the array of symbolic figures which Watts depicts at the foot of Death's throne meet their fate with solemnity and sense of weary relief (Macmillan 235). There is a warrior, an aged king (who resembles the artist), and a cripple. According to Watts, they represent the world of pomp and pride, "all sorts and conditions of men, who have come to render their last homage to the Universal Queen" (Mullen and Gage #34). A lion, the strongest and most dignified of all beasts, sits humbly, like the rest, at the feet of Death. A young girl, pale and suppliant, lays her head on the shroud. Beneath her, in dark shadow, a hunched and wrinkled old woman is silhouetted in profile. According to critic Hugh Macmillan, the touch that contemporaries found most pathetic was the toddler, who plays on the floor with the train of the shroud in innocent delight (234). These three female figures, the young girl, the old woman, and the toddler, form a chain that represents the three stages of life. The fact the Death is also female links her to this chain of life and suggests that death is an integral part of nature's process of renewal and evolutionary growth. Thus, the figure of Death is not simply a ghostly echo of Mary, Queen of Heaven, stripped of dogmatic overtones; she is also a redeemed Queen of the Night.

Watts painted many variations on the theme of *Time, Death, and Judgment*. The image was originally conceived in the mid 1960s as a two-figured composition called *Time and Death* and was later elaborated upon

with the addition of a third figure, as in the version dating from c. 1895 from Sheffield City Art Galleries (42" x 32"), which I will discuss here).<sup>10</sup> Like the Sheffield painting, most of these variations bear the same warning of the imminence of oblivion that appeared on his earlier *Time and Oblivion* along with the adage, "He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap."<sup>11</sup> According to Mrs. Barrington's catalog for Watts' New York exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in 1884, it was the only painting that Watts conceived in a vision. It shows monumental figures of Time, Death, and Judgment emerging from a lighted area beneath a sacred arch formed by the darkness of oblivion. The scene is set in a celestial realm; the sun, a symbol of light and consciousness, rises and sets behind Time on the left, and a crescent moon, a symbol of darkness, the unconscious, and transformation, rises at the lower right behind Death. Time is depicted as a vigorous ever-youthful male with an aloof, dispassionate expression and an ideally proportioned nude, bronzed torso. His lower body is wrapped in a dark red swath of cloth with deep, expressive folds that spiral around him in heavy waves. Beneath this voluminous drapery, his left foot strives forward into the viewer's space with a stately gait. With his right arm he extends a scythe for reaping. On his head, he wears a delicate, winged crown with a large, sparkling jewel that emits a star of white light over his third eye. Death is represented as a beautiful young woman with a melancholy countenance. Her body is passive; she lowers her head and closes her eyes. Her pale marble pallor and the darkly shadowed, rhythmic folds of her ashen gray drapery evoke the ruins of the Elgin Marbles.<sup>12</sup> Together, they wade through the stream of life. An electrically charged flame-red sliver of agitated negative space between the upper torsos of Time and Death draws the viewer's eye downward, like a divine arrow, toward the bottom center of the composition, where, hidden in the shadows, Time and Death clasp hands. Thus, they are seemingly antithetical, cosmic twin powers who are clandestinely mated, and their union is the secret knot at the heart of creation.<sup>13</sup> While Death's face was hidden in *Time and Oblivion*, his impassive countenance is revealed here. On her lap, she gathers the plucked flowers of humanity in all stages of development, ranging from the incipient bud to the wilted blossom (Spielmann 24).

Judgment, the third allegorical presence in the composition, is represented as a powerful, red-haired, Amazonian deity clad in flame-red clothes that billow back into space on the right side of the canvas. She hovers in the air above the matter-bound figures of Time and Death. With one hand, she brandishes an avenging sword; with the other, she suspends a scale, a symbol of "Eternal Law," behind the head of Time. Her muscular, outstretched, Michelangelesque arm conceals her intentions by obscuring her face. However, there is a thin line of brown trim on her monumental

bodice that focuses the viewer's eye on her breasts, making a cross pattern over her heart at the axial center of the canvas in an area directly above the clasped hands of Time and Death. This visual link suggests that, despite the appearance of nature's indifference to human suffering and loss, a benign altruistic force is shaping the unfolding of the cosmos and nurturing it toward a condition of spiritual perfection. Watts had always been outraged that orthodox Christianity's vengeful God eternally punished people for what they couldn't help. He rejected the dogma of eternal damnation, asserting of his pictures that "they should appeal purely to human sympathies, without reference to creed or dogma of any kind" (Watts, *Annals* I 307). He saw this imposition of mental suffering as an abomination and tried to counteract the terror of punishment in death. As an agnostic last judgment, the painting is an admonition to humanity that life is brief and death is unswerving, but that a moral force which evaluates ethical behavior dwells within the cosmos and shapes its destiny.

In response to the sudden deaths in the late 1980s of his friend Matthew Arnold and the Emperor Frederick, as well as to his own approaching mortality, Watts became increasingly uncertain whether death was a dreamless sleep or a new beginning. He speculated, "perhaps the incompleteness argues for that other existence," adding that "life here, with its intimation of perfections, could never be all that man is intended to know; he must develop elsewhere. I feel sometimes as if the human being was an atom in a great whole—that we are all but as people moving in a dream, and that the dream is from One Brain" (Watts, *Annals* II 118). The softening of his conviction that death is synonymous with oblivion is reflected in works like *The Messenger of Death* (1884-85) and *Death Crowning Innocence* (1887), which expand upon his earlier conception of Death in *The Court of Death* as an enthroned mother deity. *The Messenger of Death* is specifically addressed to those who mourn an aged loved one. An old man who resembles the artist has collapsed with exhaustion into a chair, surrounded by symbols of his worldly interests. The messenger of death is conceived as a stately maternal figure wearing a crown that implies victory over human suffering. She approaches him and places her hand on his arm with commanding gentleness. At her breast, she holds a child, who will replace the spark of vitality that has faded from the body of the old man. He is framed by a dark, impenetrable wall, but behind the regal representative of death there looms a brilliant light that suggests the presence of benign cosmic intentions which are hidden from the gaze of the living. Watts did not fear death. Mrs. Barrington states that his personal dread of it consisted only of a fear of leaving before his work was complete, observing that he referred to death as his "own familiar," hoping to encourage those who feared it to see it as an inevitable pilgrimage in a journey home (Watts, *Annals* II 191).<sup>14</sup> Mary recalled that he referred to death as the "great

white angel" (Barrington 191), or "the gentle nurse that puts the children to bed" (West and Pantini xxi). He admonished her that she should not mind "when the day comes for me to take that journey," because "it leads to better things." He made an analogy between human life as a candle and the soul as a flame, "the material consumed by the air until at last it disappears," declaring that he wanted to be cremated. This was a controversial decision since, because the Church objected to its pagan associations and feared that it would impede the reunion of the body with the soul at the time of the resurrection, it was technically illegal in England until as late as 1902.<sup>15</sup> Watts, however, saw it differently. He contended that cremation "proves how little of us is really material. We go into flame and air, and what is left is but a handful of ashes," adding, "I like the thought that the material is compelled to follow the spiritual. The older I grow the more I am aware that the only real existence is the spiritual (Watts, *Annals* II 317).

*Death Crowning Innocence* was intended to console the grief of a mother whose child had recently died (Barrington, 194). Such an event is always an inexplicable tragedy, but especially traumatic for parents who could not accept the Christian presumption that the child had been called by God to heaven. While Watts' figures are more generalized, his composition alludes to a popular fashion (often photographic) for commemorating an infant death by showing the child's grieving mother holding her dead baby, a convention, which, like Watts' painting, was a modern adaptation of the Renaissance *mater dolorosa* image. Watts depicts a motherly figure of Death cradling a lifeless child who seems only to have drifted into a peaceful sleep. She is a tender and strong mother who exhibits no grief. Her wings form a comforting, protective mandorla around the child. With one hand, she gently holds the baby's hand; with the other, she crowns him with a halo. Mother Nature, in the form of death, reabsorbs the tiny child into her matrix with a tender embrace.

In an attempt to give visual form to divine mystery, Watts developed this maternal angel of death in a variety of paintings during his last years.<sup>16</sup> Prominent among these is *The All-Pervading* (1887-c.1893). This huge painting, which measures 162.6" x 109.2" and is now in the Tate Gallery, was inspired by the play of light and shadow on the walls created by the glass bead and decorative drops of an elaborate chandelier in a drawing room he used as a studio during a visit to Malta (Watts, *Annals* II 104-105). It features a monumental figure with her impenetrable face in shadow that bears a disconcerting resemblance to Watts' earlier representations of Death. Her folded wings form the almond shape of a mandorla, a symbol of the transfiguration of material fecundity into transcendent spirituality. Seated under an arch of pale gray light that emerges out of the depths of the void, she wears voluminous white and gold garments, which vaguely

suggest classical dress and envelop her body in veils of mysterious inner white light that inexplicably glow in the darkness. A dark halo, created by the rounded space between her folded wings, frames her bowed head. In her lap, at the level of her womb and at the mathematical center of the picture, she holds a luminous green orb with vaporous edges and patterns of star-like points of light that suggest the spirals of the galaxies. Watts described it as “the Globe of the Systems” (Winter Exhibition of the Works of G.F. Watts, New Gallery, 1896, not traced, cited in Bryant, 268), implying its relationship to the modern science of astronomy. He envied the astronomer’s capacity to see the universe from a non-egocentric viewpoint and his immersion in the immensities of space and time. At Sara Prinsep’s salon at Little Holland House in 1857, he had cultivated a friendship with the astronomer Sir John Herschel, and in later life he liked to visit the astronomer Sir James South at his home in Camden Hill, where he looked at the rings of Saturn through a telescope, marvelling that it was a sight that dwarfed all others (Watts, *Annals* I 201).<sup>17</sup> However, the painting also has connotations of psychic prophecy. Barbara Bryant suggests that Watts’ “Globe of Systems” resembles a crystal ball, citing his abiding interest in spiritualism and his election to the Society for Psychical Research in 1884 (72). Moreover, like Mary Watts, she notes that Watts’ conception of *The All-Pervading* alludes to Michelangelo’s Sistine Sibyls (Watts, *Annals* II 230-31; Bryant 26).<sup>18</sup> By conflating the figure of Death with traditional representations of the compassionate Madonna and an ancient seer who foresees humanity’s fate, Watts suggests that human destiny unfolds through cycles of birth, death, and renewal in an ongoing natural process of evolution that moves toward the development of ethical feeling. He often spoke of the “solemn mystery” inherent in the carrying out of the laws of nature by an all-powerful will (Barrington 29), declaring that “religion is the constant desire to do right” (Watts, *Annals* II 221-222), and that conscience constitutes dignity here and reward or punishment hereafter (Watts, *Annals* II 324). He asserted that science, with its sublime perspective, is spiritual and that spiritual experience is compatible with a scientific inquiry (Watts, *Annals* II 242-243), and envisioned *The All-Pervading* as a secular altarpiece. In 1904, the year of his death, he installed a smaller replica of the painting in an arched compartment in the Watts Chapel at Compton, where it remains today (Bryant 268).

Watts described these “suggestive” paintings as “ethical reflections” (Watts, *Annals* III xii). In them, he sought to construct an abstract language of emotionally laden color and line with which to paint his feelings about the presence of a moral intention within the cosmos. “Art,” he asserted, “is not illusion, but something else entirely . . . I don’t want to be anecdotal, or fanciful, or realistic, not even poetic; what I want to paint is spiritual” (Watts, *Annals* III 6; II 258). He had a theory of curves in which he saw

every part of the contours of figures in Phidias's panathenaic frieze on the Parthenon as fractions of great circles. In the flatness of these curving outlines, he perceived a suggestion of immensity, observing that

The circle is the only perfect form, equal in all its parts and complete. All lines bounding any form whatever will, if absolutely followed to the end, resolve themselves into circles; hence it will result that the impression of magnitude in complex form (the human form for example) will depend upon the sweep of the line composing the parts of the form. Lines with a visible sweep suggest vitality, movement and direction. Circles imply centers. All creation is full of circles which revolve into each other. The divine Intelligence must be the center of all (Watts, *Annals* I 317).<sup>19</sup>

He applied his theory of circles not merely to the sphericalization of the figural form but to the composition as a whole. Thus, in works like *The All-Pervading*, the very arrangement of the shapes of the painting imply a benign force at work behind the universe. Moreover, he wanted his "suggestive" paintings to explain themselves "as the solemn effect of music." He referred to them as "anthems" and hoped that they would arouse a higher spiritual and emotional response through their harmony of line and color, like "an organ tone" (Barrington 41; Watts, *Annals* II 244).<sup>20</sup> "I do not know," he mused, "whether the world has grown out of or not yet come to my view that the highest art is that which, taking for its means of expression line and colour descriptive of human form, should perhaps, more like music than poetry, suggest the highest emotions, sentiment, and phrases of thought as the outward manifestation of humanity (Watts, *Annals* III 21). He declared that "religion is nothing unless it is the music that runs through all life" (Watts, *Annals* II 245), and his aspiration to lift art to the level of music equated it with the divine act of creation.

Watts' radically unorthodox explorations of the expressive possibilities of abstract line and color were intimately entwined with his quest to envision death in cosmic terms as an aspect of a spiritualized natural law rather than a merely individual experience bound to historical time. His images of death comprise a modernized teleological narrative of humanity's destiny that replaces a Judeo-Christian omnipotent, external deity with a naturalized, more fragile, internal divinity, an essentially human energy that is gradually revealed in time as humanity's ethical and aesthetic sensibilities evolve.<sup>21</sup> This narrative is inherently transgressive because, like all stories of desire, it inevitably defines itself against the repressive law of tradition. Moreover, because it retains ghostly traces of the superseded certainties of the past, it unsettles and destabilizes the assumption of a single, fixed Truth, while endorsing a forward-looking trajectory of developmental growth. For these reasons, I would propose that Watts' "suggestive" paintings on the theme of death have stronger affinities with

twentieth-century modernist agendas of utopian liberation from the bonds of the past and with avant-garde conceptions of art as an agent of psychic and cultural transformation than has generally been acknowledged.

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#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Watts once told his friend Mrs. Barrington that “no one but the fanatic is happy.” She reveals that Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), a treatise on all aspects of the disease, was one of his favorite books (Barrington 154, 71). Throughout his life, Watts suffered from periodic bouts of despondency, at one point, even considering prussic acid as a suicidal solution (Chapman 45).
- <sup>2</sup> Ironically, Watts’s present reputation rests primarily on his numerous portraits of famous Victorians rather than on his allegorical “suggestive” pictures, which have been criticized for their vagueness.
- <sup>3</sup> The mourning figures on classical sarcophagi are likely sources for this image. Allen Staley has also noted a resemblance to the central figure in Antonio Canova’s monument to Maria Christina, Duchess of Saxe-Teschen, in the Augustiner-Kirche in Vienna (*The Victorian High Renaissance* 78).
- <sup>4</sup> In his catalog for the 1974 Watts’ exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, Christopher Mullen observes that both the symbolic door and the female death figure have precedent in Gustave Moreau’s *The Young Man and Death*, which was on display at the 1865 salon. Although Watts was not in Paris at this time, he may well have known of the painting through reproductions (entry #24). However, unlike *Love and Death*, Moreau’s picture retains the sexual component in the relationship between the allegorical figures. Staley has aptly suggested that the idea of a doorway to the soul may have derived from a painting closer to home, Holman Hunt’s popular *Light of the World*, painted between 1851 and 1853 (78). Both pictures, of course, respond to similar doorway metaphors in earlier works like Hans Baldung Grien’s *The Young Woman and Death* (Musée d’art ancien, Brussels). Significantly, Jungian psychologist Erich Neumann identifies the gateway or doorway image as an archetype for the transition from life into the earth womb of the underworld (*The Great Mother*, 1963, pp.157-158).
- <sup>5</sup> The man was the eighth Marquess of Lothian, whose portrait Watts began in 1862. The Marquess died in 1870.
- <sup>6</sup> D. H. Lawrence lauded the painting for “the blurred idea that Death is shrouded, but a dark embracing mother, who stoops over us, and frightens us because we are children” (47).
- <sup>7</sup> Bishop Paley first proposed this idea in *Natural Theology* (1814) as an example of the wise design of creation. In “In Memorium A.H.H.,” Tennyson echoes Paley’s ideas, if less serenely, writing of nature as “careful of the type,” but “careless of the single life.” George Meredith likewise worshipped the earth as a cruel mother who was both protective and destructive in poems such as “Ode to the Spirit of Earth in Autumn,” where he detects the “smells of regeneration” in autumn’s “breath of decay.” In “Woods of Westermain,” Meredith sees man as Nature’s experience, her consciousness and her voice. He urges that man focus his animal energies as a foundation for his spiritual life in a harmony of blood, brain and spirit. These arguments had the advantage of allowing nature an overall benevolence of intention in spite of numerous and obvious specific instances of her cruelty.

<sup>8</sup> Watts married Ellen Terry in February of 1864. By January of 1865, they were legally separated for reasons that were deliberately obscured. They were divorced in 1877 so that Terry could remarry, which she did shortly after the final decree.

<sup>9</sup> This composition recalls the Hellenistic Pasquino group, which depicts Menelaos with the body of the dead Patroclus. A version of this statue stood in the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence where Watts, who lived in the city from 1843 to 1847, would likely have seen it.

<sup>10</sup> There is an oil sketch in the Ashmolean Museum for the sixties. Watts sold a design with only two figures called *Time and Death* to Charles Rickards in 1868, which is now in the Chicago Art Institute. There is a large version of the theme in the National Gallery of Canada dating from some time between 1865 and 1886. There are two other large versions that Watts gave to St. Paul's Cathedral in 1893 and to the Tate Gallery in 1900. The composition was also executed in mosaic on the facade of the Church of St. Jude in Whitechapel, and Watts included it in the background of his self-portrait, painted for the Uffizi Gallery in Florence in 1879 (Staley and Coffey 87-88).

<sup>11</sup> The third background figure of Judgment in the Chicago picture appears to have been an afterthought, since it is rather awkwardly positioned and incongruous with the proportions of the rest of the painting. There is another large version of *Time, Death, and Judgment* (43" x 32") in the Sheffield City Art Art Gallery dating from 1895, as well as one in St. Paul's Cathedral, and yet another at the Tate Gallery in London.

<sup>12</sup> Watts adored Phidias and kept casts of his work in his studio throughout his life (Watts, *Annals* II 82).

<sup>13</sup> In the initial picture, there were only two figures, with the figure of Judgment (originally called Nemesis) added later, thus allowing the element of morality to enter this rarefied world of deified natural power (Barrington 92).

<sup>14</sup> For further discussion of the theological and psychological implications of Watts' semi-conscious transformation of the gender of his deity, see Board, "Modernizing the Grail Quest."

<sup>15</sup> The law was finally changed after a long battle by the Cremation Society and through the influence of an article by Sir Henry Thompson in 1874 entitled "Cremation: The Treatment of the Body After Death." Even after the law had changed, cremations in England were rare. By 1912, there were only about one thousand per year (Morley 91-101).

<sup>16</sup> These include *The Recording Angel* (1890), *Dweller in the Innermost* (1885-86), *The Sower of Systems* (1902), and *Destiny* (1904).

<sup>17</sup> Watts began a drawing for a portrait of Herschel at Little Holland House but never completed it.

<sup>18</sup> Bryant also notes Watts' assertion, made while he was working on *The All-Pervading*, that Michelangelo's Prophets and Sibyls were equivalents of "the noblest poetry" (26).

<sup>19</sup> He originally published these ideas in 1879, in an article in *The Nineteenth Century Magazine* called "The Present Condition of Art."

<sup>20</sup> In his popular *History of Modern Painting* (1896), Richard Muther, the keeper of prints at the Munich Pinakothek, compared the style of "the great Watts" to "Whistler's misty harmonies dissolving in vapour" (III 644).

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# Synge/Yeats/Beckett/Murphy: The Afterlife of an ‘Old French Farce’ in Modern Irish Drama

Martin W. Walsh

## Synge’s *Well of the Saints*

During work on his mid-career play, the neglected masterpiece *The Well of the Saints* (1905), John Millington Synge indicated to W. B. Yeats and Padriac Colum that he had picked up important thematic cues from a pre-Moliere farce whose title he had forgotten. In 1921, in a *North American Review* article, “John Synge and his Old French Farce,” Gertrude Schoepperle identified this play as the *Moralité de l’aveugle et le boiteau* (Morality of the Blind Man and the Cripple). This *moralité joyeuse* (whence its designation “farce”) served as afterpiece to a three-day saint’s play, *Le mystere de Saint Martin* by Andrieu de la Vigne, which was produced for the Burgundian town of Seurre in 1496.<sup>1</sup>

The ancient motif of the Cripple riding on the Blind Man had attached itself to the posthumous miracles of Martin of Tours by the mid-twelfth century, and the pair appeared briefly at the end of an anonymous, mid-fifteenth-century St. Martin play from Tours.<sup>2</sup> In de la Vigne’s self-contained work, the two handicapped beggars, both abandoned and in distress, recognize each other’s plight and grope toward each other. They agree to form a symbiotic unit with the frail but sighted Cripple riding on the shoulders of the sturdy Blind Man and serving as his guide. Thus together they form one complete beggarman. They rest by the road and discuss the recent death of a powerful saint, i.e. Martin of Tours. They are not at all certain that being cured by the saint would be a good thing, for they would then have to work for their living, a pity now that they have come to this ideal mendicant partnership. Sounds of a religious procession cause them to resume their piggyback arrangement, but in their haste to get away they inadvertently run into the funeral procession and are instantaneously cured. The Blind Man is piously thankful for his sight, but the Cripple bemoans his former life of ease and vows, moreover, to create artificially distorted limbs and erupting skin to keep the alms money flowing in. Thus, the piece ends with a deliberate ironic juxtaposition of sacred and profane attitudes towards the miraculous, the feature that Synge found particularly attractive.

Synge had encountered the piece during his studies at the Sorbonne where he attended classes by the great medievalist Louis Petit de Julleville. He took fairly extensive notes in French on the piece, including several direct quotations in his Notebook #30, as uncovered by Synge editor Anne Saddlemeyer.<sup>3</sup> Synge focussed upon the element of miraculous cure as

personal calamity for his old blind couple, Martin and Mary Doul (“doul” is simply “blind” in Irish, not a family name). *The Well of the Saints* tells the story of this pair of “travelling people.” When their arrival on stage coincides with that of a wandering ascetic and his miraculous holy water, the local peasants coax the couple into being cured. On gaining their sight, they immediately fall out, realizing that they are nowhere near as handsome as they had been picturing each other. Martin, especially, finds gainful employment in the sighted community to be less than a blessing. He is tormented, moreoever, by the flirtatious Molly Byrne, whom he had originally mistaken for his wife. In the final act, the miraculous cure has worn off, due to the Dousl’s deep disappointments with the experience of sight. When the villagers force them to be cured again, Martin, at the climactic moment, upsets the holy water can. He and Mary return to the roads, blind again but content with their vivid life of the imagination — they will spin out great tales of their betrayal and of the “wonder” of their long white hair.

It is clear from the above that Synge did not borrow much of de la Vigne’s plotline, other than the episode of the comically ineffectual flight to avoid being cured (in this case re-cured) by the Saint. There are many tonal similarities, however, as Schopperle argues. The name “Martin” might also be an indirect acknowledgment by Synge of his medieval source.<sup>4</sup> But the “old French farce” remains more a springboard for independent development than a quarry for incidents and characters. It should be remembered that, in de la Vigne, it is the Blind Man who is piously grateful for the Saint’s cure and the Cripple who bemoans his new situation. The “old French farce,” then, merely intersects with the Irish folklife material and late Romantic/Decadent empathy with the Outsider, which is at the heart of Synge’s drama.

### Yeats’ *Cat and the Moon*

Yeats’ verse play *The Cat and the Moon*, written in 1917 but not performed until 1931, serves as a kind of Kyogen comic-relief to the poet’s more solemn appropriations of Noh drama.<sup>5</sup> It also appears to be indebted to de la Vigne’s moralité, although there are instances in Old Irish literature of the same Blind Man and Cripple motif. In the *Adventures of Nera*, an introductory tale to the *Tain Bo Cualinge*, for example, there is an account of the daily visitations of a blind man carrying a cripple to a well in which reposes the crown of the king of the *sid* of Cruachan, a tale later retold by Padriac Colum. This pair likewise make two brief appearances in Eva Gore-Booth’s play *The Triumph of Maeve* (1902).<sup>6</sup> Yeats certainly also encountered the motif in Lady Gregory’s *A Book of Saints and Wonders* (1906), where a blind man and cripple (in some versions they are monks) each dream of a healing well by an ash tree. They meet and form their

piggyback arrangement. When they arrive at the site, there is no spring in evidence, but they find a strangely illuminated patch of green rushes wherein they discover the newborn St. Colman. Wishing to baptize the babe, they pull up some of the rushes and release a gushing spring, which cures them of their maladies.<sup>7</sup> The center of Yeat's play, however, involves the ironic fallout of the pair's miraculous cure, which seems to call for a grafting of Synge's "old French farce" on Lady Gregory's straightforwardly pious tale. The perverse logic of the handicapped French beggars is specifically recalled by Yeats: "There is many gives money to a blind man and would give nothing but a curse to a whole man . . ." But, like Synge, Yeats does not follow de la Vigne all that closely.

Yeats focusses on the Saint and his cure. The symbiotic unit of the frail Cripple riding on the sturdy Blind Man has already been formed as the plays opens — this does not happen until a good third of the way into de la Vigne's play. Unlike their medieval counterparts, Yeats' pair are on deliberate pilgrimage to a healing site, the St. Colman curative well from Lady Gregory. Yeats' Saint is represented by a disembodied voice up in an ash tree, and is played by the First Musician in a neat appropriation of Noh technique. There is nothing in de la Vigne resembling the choice of "will you be cured or will you be blessed?" posed by this mysterious voice. The medieval pair are cured instantaneously and against their will as the remains of St. Martin pass them by, Yeats' pair by purposefully answering the Saint's question. Nor is there any comic drubbing in the medieval play. Yeats' ever-suspicious Blind Man, taking the option of being cured as opposed to being blessed, finally sees that his lost black sheep is indeed the very fleece on the Cripple's shoulders, the fleece which the latter had always insisted was dazzlingly white. The Blind Man beats the Cripple, who has yet to make his choice, and exits abruptly.

As in the old French play, however, Yeats makes dramatic capital out of the ironic split of attitudes after the cure. The Cripple, having chosen blessedness and the perpetual companionship of the Saint, seems to be victimized even further as the Saint commands him to carry him on his back, bow to the four directions and, impossibly, to dance. But the invisible Saint is as "light as a grasshopper," and the ritual of blessing the road transforms the earlier choreographed drubbing (beating-off-stage being a common ending in Kyogen) into a celebratory dance as the Cripple achieves his own cure after all. "Aren't you a miracle?" crows the saint of his new disciple. It is important to remember, again, that, in de la Vigne, the Blind Man is the pious exemplar. Not so with the Irish playwrights. Synge's unpleasant, anti-heroic Martin Doul is coarsened even further by Yeats into a brutal materialist who takes his cure of blindness for granted, exacting his petty revenge against his crippled companion, and stomps off in righteous indignation. "That is a soul lost, Holy Man," comments the Cripple. "Maybe so," replies the Saint.

### Beckett's *Theatre I*

Recent criticism has come to recognize Beckett's admiration for Synge. James Knowlson, particularly, has argued for Synge as an important source for and influence upon Beckett.<sup>8</sup> *The Well of the Saints* was a Synge work that Beckett particularly singled out. Once, when asked his opinion on Shaw's status, Beckett asserted that he would rather "give the whole unupsettable apple-cart for a sup of the Hawk's Well, or the Saints," referring to Yeats' *At the Hawk's Well* and Synge's prose comedy, as preferable to the Shawian dialects in such plays as *The Apple Cart*.<sup>9</sup> As a young man, Beckett had seen the Synge play revived at the Abbey Theatre in the 1920s.

It will be the contention here that Beckett also had contact with Synge's late medieval source for *The Well of the Saints* in connection with his one-act play known as *Theatre I*. It seems that all three, Synge, Yeats, and Beckett, made quite different and very selective uses of the old French play independent of each other, but that each held the medieval work in common as a source after Synge's initial appropriation.

Beckett's *Theatre I* (also titled *Rough for Theatre I*) was written in French in the late 1950s and translated by the author for his *Ends and Odds* collection of 1976. Knowlson speculates that it was drafted between *Fin de partie* and its English translation, *Endgame*. But it descends directly from a lengthy, unpublished English-language manuscript, *The Gloaming*, dated December 1956.<sup>10</sup>

*Theatre I* can also be viewed as an avatar of de la Vigne's medieval play. Beckett, as we have seen, was quite familiar with *The Well of the Saints*, and he probably knew *The Cat and the Moon* first hand as well, given his appreciation of Yeats' plays and the fact that he was resident in Dublin in 1931, the year of its first performance. But it is clear that Beckett would also had to have been familiar the de la Vigne piece itself because he develops aspects of the old play that Yeats and Synge ignore, namely the formation of the central symbiotic relationship of Blind Man and Cripple. This is all that Beckett chooses to develop. True to his grimmer vision, he never comes near the moment of miracle. Nevertheless, what he does appropriate more closely parallels the "old French farce" than those other efforts by his fellow Irishmen. In Beckett, moreover, the medieval relationship of "pious" Blind Man vs. "cynical" Cripple is maintained.

Beckett realizes his sketch fully within the opening phases of de la Vigne's play and imagines the medieval mendicant pair in modern terms with corresponding technological advances. His scene is obviously post-War Europe: "*Streetcorner. Ruins.*" The Blind Man (A) is a contemporary street-musician with violin, and the one-legged Cripple (B) moves about in a wheelchair propelled by a pole (cf. Hamm's gaff and armchair on casters). Despite its slight dimentions, de la Vigne's piece achieves a degree of poignancy in its opening moments as the two abandoned beggars

recognize each other's isolated lamentations and attempt to come together to form a symbiotic union. Beckett seizes on this. B is drawn onto the scene by A's plaintive music and his traditional beggar's whine, "A penny for a poor old man!", which is exactly the way the old French play begins: *Laumosne au pouvre diseteux/ Qui jamas nul jour ne vit gouete!* (Alms for one penniless and blind/ Who never yet hath seen at all!). Both A and B have lost their women and care-givers, just as their medieval counterparts have been abandoned by their *serviteurs*. The medieval Blind Man, particularly, mourns the loss of an earlier, faithful servant "Giblet," who is so unlike the recent scamp who robbed him and took off (de la Vigne was probably recalling here the famous farce of *Le Garçon et l'aveugle* of the late thirteenth century). Beckett's A recalls "my woman. . . a woman," the sharp-tongued Dora, towards the end of his play. De la Vigne's beggars deliver their opening laments as an antiphonal chorus, only gradually becoming aware of each other. Beckett's A and B likewise have their symmetrical moments of recognition:

B: *He advances, halts, looks into [alms] bowl. Without emotion.*  
Poor wretch.

.....  
A: Cripple? *Without emotion.* Poor wretch.

The medieval Blind Man comes up with the idea of a possible partnership as he gropes his way toward the sound of the Cripple's voice:

*S'a oy aller droit je pouvoye,  
Content seroye de te porter  
(Au moins, se la puissance avoye),  
Pour ung peu ton mal supporter,  
Et, toy, pour me reconforter,  
Me conduyroye de lieux en lieux?*

[If I could walk in your direction  
I'd gladly carry you a bit –  
(At least, if I had strength for it)-  
To give me easement and protection.  
And you could succour me in turn  
By guiding me from place to place.]

Beckett's Cripple toys with the same idea from his opening moments on stage: "Now I may go back, the mystery is over . . . Unless we join together, and live together, till death ensue." And soon after, "If you ask me we were made for each other." B dramatizes the advantages of the proposed union at exactly the same point as the medieval play, that is, just before the Blind Man gropes toward the Cripple:

B: And if you care to push me about I shall try to describe the scene, as we go along.

A: You mean you would guide me? I wouldn't get lost any more?

B: Exactly. I would say, Easy, Billy, we're heading for a great muckheap, turn back and wheel left when I give you the word.

A: You'd do that!

B: *Pressing his advantage.* Easy, Billy, easy, I see a round tin over there in the gutter, perhaps it's soup, or baked beans.

A: Baked beans!

It is at precisely this moment that the medieval play achieves a real sense of pathos within its grotesque comedy. The Blind Man, so as not to stumble, gets down on all fours and approaches as the Cripple corrects his somewhat erratic course with shouted instructions. We must picture the latter with atrophied, distorted limbs, rocking about on the stage as a literal “basket case.” The de la Vigne beggars finally meet in a warm embrace: *Je suis hors de moy/ Puisque je te tiens, mon beau maistre* (I'm beside myself,/ Good sir, at last to hold you tight), and proceed with great enthusiasm to form their piggyback arrangement.

Beckett brings out darker possibilities. As A overenthusiastically lurches the wheelchair about exalting, “It's a gift! A gift!,” B panics and swipes him with the pole, instantaneously asking for or rather, like Hamm, demanding forgiveness. With Blind Man A now dislodged and disoriented, a second approach is required:

A: Make a sound. *B makes one. A gropes towards it, halts. . . . He stretches out his hand.* Am I within reach of your hand? *He stands motionless with outstretched hand.*

De la Vigne's Blind Man likewise extends his hand – *Quant seray pres, la main me baille?* (When I come near you,/You'll give your hand?) In a sense, Beckett transposes the “Miracle” of the Blind Man and Cripple to precisely this moment of human contact. We have a seeming epiphany of *charitas*:

B: Wait, you're not going to do me a service for nothing?

*Pause.* I mean unconditionally? *Pause.* Good God! *Pause.*

*He takes A's hand and draws it towards him.*

A kneels before B, tucking in his blanket, caresses B's grotesque features with his gentle blind man's hands, eventually coming to a beatific rest:

*A clasps his hands on the rug and rests his head on them.*

B: Good God! Don't tell me you're going to pray?

A: No.

B: Or weep?

A: No. *Pause.* I could stay like that forever, with my head on an old man's knees.

B: Knee!<sup>11</sup>

But, of course, such "miracles" do not exist in the Beckettian universe, as B's perverse insistence on grim anatomical accuracy makes clear. B progressively "incommode" and "embarrassed" by the Blindman's caregiving, finally shakes him off roughly, and "*A falls to his hands and knees.*" We seem to have here a deliberate reversal of de la Vigne's theatrical gesture. The medieval Blind Man is reduced to crawling, but in the interests of achieving human contact. A is reduced to this posture of humiliation, having been rejected from the symbiotic union. Thrown out of his demi-paradise, A releases all his hostile memories of Dora, railing in her voice:

You and your harp! You'd do better crawling on all fours, with  
your father's medals pinned to your arse and a money box round  
your neck. You and your harp! Who do you think you are? And  
she made me sleep on the floor.

B seizes upon this former harp and rubs A's face in the devolutionary processes of the Beckettian universe – A will go from a harp to a violin (the present situation), to a mouth-organ, finally to "croaking to the winter wind," the original condition of the medieval Blind Man. This releases the latent violence in the otherwise pacific A in the final tableau: "*A whirls around, seizes the end of the pole and wrenches it from B's grasp.*" James Knowlson is perhaps right in finding this ending somewhat unsatisfactory. It seems more like early Pinter than mature Beckett. Having demolished the symbiotic relationship of the Blind Man and Cripple, Beckett had nowhere to go for another "miracle." The most he can suggest is a perpetual series of failed attempts at this archetypal symbiosis.

It has been the contention here that Andrieu de la Vigne's *Moralité de l'aveugle et le boiteau* has had a significant afterlife in the modern Irish drama from Synge and Yeats through to Beckett. Beckett, moreover, appears to have had direct knowledge of the piece, given the close parallels in the opening third of the work discussed above. A writer's minor works often exhibit a more derivative character, and *Theatre I* appears to be just such a piece. Beckett's route to de la Vigne was probably the same as that of Synge, that is, through the formal or informal study of early French literature at Trinity College or in Paris. Beckett was very familiar with Rabelais, for example, who refers to the farce in the *Tiers Livre*. Beckett might even have been the beneficiary of Schoepperle's work on identifying Synge's "source."<sup>12</sup> This is not to say that Beckett had a copy of de la Vigne's work before him when composing *Theatre I*, but it is very likely that he took in its essential dramatic gestures at some point. To the wide range of references in Beckett drawn from literature, art, music and philosophy, we should be able to add at least one piece of late medieval comic drama.

## Conclusions

And the influence of the Blindman and Cripple farce continues. Orkney poet, novelist, and occasional playwright, George Mackay Brown, gives more than a nod to Synge's play in fashioning the miraculous healing of his blind tinkers, Jock and Mary, in his St. Magnus play, *The Loom of Light* (1972).<sup>13</sup>

Recent Nobel laureate, Dario Fo, probably had little exposure to Synge, but he also incorporated the de la Vigne farce into his elastic monodrama *Mistero Buffo* (1969-1974), using the medieval material for quite other purposes, to illustrate his rather ahistorical theory of the proletarian consciousness of the medieval *joculares*. Fo adheres to the de la Vigne scenario quite closely but substitutes the Way of the Cross for the procession with St. Martin's body. Typical of his sloppy scholarship are such assertions as that the play is by an Italian, Andrea della Vigna!<sup>14</sup>

To come full circle, contemporary Irish playwright Tom Murphy included nearly the whole of de la Vigne's farce, apparently in his own translation, in a biographical collage of Synge material entitled "Epitaph Under Ether," which plays on the title of an essay by the ailing playwright. The piece was staged as a curtain-raiser to Murphy's 1979 production of *The Well of the Saints* at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. Murphy adds a humorous, scatological moment in the Blind Man and Cripple cure:

(Blind Man and Lame Man crouch together attempting to hide.

The funeral procession returns and, as it passes the pair, St. Martin cocks his leg in the air.)

Blind Man: Oh-oh-oh. Oh-oh-oh-oh!

Lame Man: Oh-oh-oh. oh-oh-oh! . . . Damn and blast that St. Martin, the son of a bitch!

Blind Man: Oh noble Saint Martin, you deserve your halo.<sup>15</sup>

The dying Synge would no doubt have appreciated this carnivalesque aspersion in his honor, demonstrating as it does the continuity of medieval Gallic and contemporary Gaelic *grotesque*.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Gertrude Schoepperle, "John Synge and his Old French Farce." *The North American Review* 214 (1921): 503-13. For the French text, see P.L. Jacob, ed., *Recueil de farces, soties et moralités du quinzième siècle* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1905), pp. 209-30, with an English translation in *Representative Medieval and Tudor Plays*, ed. Roger Sherman Loomis and Henry W. Wells (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1942), pp.49-60. This translation has been adapted toward a more literal sense of the original for this article.

<sup>2</sup> For a summary of the motif, see Martin W. Walsh, "St. Martin's Clowns: The Miracle of the Blind Man and the Cripple in Art and Drama." *The Early Drama, Art, and Music Review* 17 (1994): 8-21.

<sup>3</sup> The relevant pages are reproduced in "Appendix C" of *J. M. Synge: Collected Works III* (Plays I), ed. Anne Saddlemeyer (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 265-6. Petit de Julleville included a complete bibliography of the *moralité* in his *Répertoire de théâtre comique en France au Moyen-Age* (Paris, 1886). The text of the *moralité* was reprinted at least four times between 1832 and 1872 in various anthologies of French medieval drama and so was fairly accessible to Synge.

<sup>4</sup> Synge was familiar with popular aspects of the Martin cult. He alludes to "St. Martin's Summer," the period of mild weather around the saint's November 11 feast, in the famous Act I wooing scene of *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907). There, Christy Mahon says he would be "as happy as the sunshine of St. Martin's Day."

<sup>5</sup> It was not included, however, in the *Four Plays for Dancers*, where such a Kyogen piece would have been most welcome, argue Masaru Sekine and Christopher Murray in *Yeats and the Noh: A Comparative Study* (Savage, MD: Barnes and Noble, 1990), pp. 5, 19 & 118. For the text, see the *Collected Plays of W. B. Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 296-302. Curiously, the Kyogen repertory provides a close analogue to Synge's *Well of the Saints*. In "Blindness, Sight and Blindness Again," a pious man is cured of his blindness but with the strict stipulation that he divorce his wife as they are not well-matched. The termagant wife, however, will have none of this, and the man lapses back into blindness. See Hirashi Hata, *Kyogen*, trans. Don Kenny (Osaka: Hoikusha, 1982), p. 105. There is no indication, however, that Synge (or Yeats at the time) had any extensive knowledge of Japanese theatre.

<sup>6</sup> J. A. MacCulloch, *Celtic Mythology [1918]* (New York: Cooper Square, 1964), p. 68. Colum's retelling can be found in *The Frenzied Prince, being Heroic Stories of Ancient Ireland* (New York, 1943) and the dramatic version in *The Plays of Eva Gore-Booth*. Ed. Frederick S. Lipisardi (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> "The Birth of Colman of Aidhne" in *A Book of Saints and Wonders* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1972), p. 95. Since Lady Gregory sets her story in her own Kiltartan area of southern Galway (Yeats refers to the Kiltartan River in his play), she probably confused Colman of Aidhne with the hermit Colman MacDuagh (d. 632, Feast: 3 Feb.). The latter founded the monastery of Kilmacduagh, in the neighborhood of Kiltartan, and is honored as well at *Temple Macduagh* on Inishmore. Colman Mac Aidhe, on the other hand, is associated with County Tyrone not Galway. See Laurence Flanagan, *A Chronicle of Irish Saints* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1990), pp. 26 & 30. For St. Colman wells, see Janet and Colin Bord, *Sacred Waters: Holy Wells and Water Lore in Britain and Ireland* (London: Granada, 1985), pp. 2, 89, & 205, and for the Kiltartan Colman well itself, Anna Rickard and Liam O'Callaghan, *Fish, Stone, Water: Holy Wells of Ireland* (Cork: Atrium, 2001), pp. 122-23. Yeats could hardly have picked a more "generic" Irish saint name since "Colman" is borne by close to a hundred Irish holy men.

<sup>8</sup> "Beckett and John Millington Synge" in James Knowlson and John Pilling, *Frescoes of the Skull: The Later Prose and Drama of Samuel Beckett* (London: John Calder, 1979), pp. 259- 74.

<sup>9</sup> Knowlson, p. 259.

<sup>10</sup> Knowlson, pp. 228-31 and Rosemary Pountney, *Theatre of Shadows: Samuel Beckett's Drama, 1956-76* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1988), pp. 133-36.

<sup>11</sup> Both Knowlson and Pountney compare this moment with the blind beggarman's discovery, from the legs upward, of the wounded Cuchulain bound to a standing stone in Yeats' *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939). Yeats' blind man, however, is there to take Cuchulain's head for a bounty. The de la Vigne parallel is much closer.

<sup>12</sup> Since Synge's day, there was also Gustav Cohen's major essay "Le theme de l'Aveugle et du Paralytique dans la littérature français" in *Mélanges offerts à M. Emile Picot* (Paris: Damascene Morgand, 1913), ii, 393-404, as well as a full length study of the medieval playwright by Edouard L. de Kerdaniel, *Un auteur dramatique du quinzième siècle: André de la Vigne* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1923).

There is a chance that Beckett may have encountered a modern French derivative of de la Vigne from the pen of “Gringoire” (pseud. Louis Albert Bourgault-Ducourdray (1840-1910)). This is entitled *Un miracle de Saint Martin. Pièce en 1 Acte, d'après un vieux fabliau. Adaptation musicale de M. l'Abbé Courtonne* (Niort: H. Boulard, 1928), and first performed in Nantes on 28 December, 1927. The characters are Tiburce the Blind Man, Mathias the Cripple, and a Hermit, with the scene set in the fifteenth century. It is much more likely, however, that Beckett knew the de la Vigne piece directly, particularly in view of the Synge connection discussed above.

<sup>13</sup> Scene 7. Harvest, *The Loom of Light*. In George Mackay Brown, *Three Plays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1984).

<sup>14</sup> *Mistero Buffo/Comic Mysteries*, trans. Ed Emery (London: Methuen, 1988), pp. 26-34.

<sup>15</sup> Tom Murphy, “Epitaph under Ether,” p. 20 of unpublished typescript from the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. With thanks to the Abbey’s Artistic Director at the time, Joe Dowling. The couple can also be found in pulp literature, for example, the crime novel *Falconer and the Face of God* by Ian Morson, who sets his mysteries in medieval Oxford (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), pp. 95-96.

## Medievalism and Australian Gothic

Stephanie Trigg

Within the discipline of Australian studies, the term “gothic” has some considerable currency, though principally in the field of architectural history. English Gothic was the main style of ecclesiastical architecture in nineteenth-century Australia, with the result that this style dominated the material and symbolic landscape of a great many Australian cities and towns. It is not surprising, then, that “Australian gothic” can be used without qualification to refer to architectural styling. It is the title of a recent book on the subject, for instance (Andrews). But the term “gothic” also has currency in the fields of Australian literary and cultural studies, where it is used in discussion of a range of forms: exploration narratives; prison and convict literature; nineteenth-century poetry; modern fiction, especially the “domestic gothic” of Christina Stead and Elizabeth Jolley, for example; and some contemporary forms of Aboriginal cultural production (Turcotte).

“Medievalism” on the other hand, has relatively little currency in Australian studies. While some work has been done on the pedagogy and institutionalization of medieval studies in Australia (Barnes, Clunies Ross and Quinn; d’Arcens), “Australian medievalism” names an only barely established field. In the hope of extending this field, I am currently editing a collection of essays provisionally titled *Medievalism and the Gothic in Australian Culture*. In this collection, I am encouraging my contributors to articulate some possible relations between these two terms, “gothic” and “medievalism,” both as disciplinary formations, and as a means of understanding Australian culture, especially in its relations with its European, or more specifically, its British colonial past. A second aim is to think about what might be distinctive about Australian medievalism; that is, what might distinguish it from American medievalism, for example, or from British heritage culture.

The two terms “gothic” and “medievalist” do not exist in any easy relationship, however. “Gothic” is the more extensively theorized term, and certainly has the longer history. Its trajectory is traced most recently by Chris Brooks, who writes powerfully of the ways in which “the semantics of Gothic” could be deployed to a range of radical or conservative ends, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While his principle concern is with architecture and design, Brooks also discusses gothic fictions and their fascination with extreme sensibilities, with imagined states, the supernatural, the unconscious, and so forth. And in a brief epilogue, “Twentieth-century Gothic,” he writes that “gothic has effectively moved

from being a literary genre to being a category of the consciousness, one way in which we experience and shape the world" (412).

The very conceptual mobility and fluidity of gothic, permitting its easy invocation in a range of global contexts, provides a suggestive model for thinking about medievalism. At a thematic level, Chris Baldick warns against "any inflexible identification of Gothic with specifically medieval settings" (xv). However, it is precisely that capacity of Gothic to move beyond its initial medieval forms and scenes of representation (the abbey ruins or the castle, for example) that is so suggestive for medievalism, especially in non-European contexts. Once medievalism is released from such literalism, it can become a much more fluid and flexible category, less tightly tied to notions of revivalism, and more evocative of different forms of signification, including the more playful, improvisatory modes typical of much contemporary medievalism. In such modes, medieval culture becomes a source of images, narratives, styles and fashions that can be recombined and used in a freefloating system of signs, tied only loosely to their original referents, and less firmly linked to self-conscious attempts to represent or to revive medieval intellectual, social or cultural forms. That is, contemporary medievalism often belongs, not to the order of representation, but to the order of the simulacrum, in Jean Baudrillard's sense.

Another way of conceptualizing this difference, perhaps, might be to distinguish between a first-order medievalism (the mode of conscious revivalism), and a second order medievalism (post-medievalist responses to that more earnest mode). Nineteenth-century medievalism, then, isn't important or interesting just as a reflection of nineteenth-century ideas about the past: the architecture, the designs, the fiction and poetry of the nineteenth-century all have their own cultural afterlife in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This, too, is part of the story of medievalism. Postmodernist, or secondary medievalism is not peculiar to Australian medievalism; it is a feature of contemporary global culture, which thrives on appropriation, on play, on fantasy, and on anachronism. However, the particular circumstances of European settlement in Australia render it especially interesting for a comparative study between these different modes.

The most dominant aspect of Australian medievalism probably is its gothic architecture, but these beautiful cathedrals, churches, banks and university quadrangles don't signify either "the medieval" or "the gothic" in any straightforward way. In fact, from the first voyages to New Holland at the end of the seventeenth century to contemporary and post-modernist cultural bricolage, European culture in Australia is roughly coterminous with the general shift in the gothic from its first conception as a version of medieval revivalism to its more diverse contemporary sense as a hybrid form, concerned with the uncanny, with deracination, with a particular

set of sub-cultural styles, and so forth. Similarly, examples of Australian medievalism are scattered across a range of cultural forms and practices, in addition to its nineteenth-century architecture. Moreover, because Australia still experiences itself very much as a post-colonial nation, with a very vexed and troubled relationship with British culture, Australian medievalism has the potential to offer a very distinctive set of meanings about heritage, tradition, and cultural recuperation.

In spite of this complexity, however, the dominant discourse on "Australian gothic" is still bound closely to a fairly restricted sense of architectural history. Brian Andrews' book of that title focuses principally on ecclesiastical architecture in the English Gothic style. Andrews takes his main point of orientation from what he calls "the earnest, archaeologically informed, self-conscious approach to the style of A.W.N. Pugin and his followers that began in the late 1830s" (xx), in Australian design, that is, roughly fifty years after the First Fleet arrived to establish the first penal colony in New South Wales in 1788. While Australian patrons and clients commissioned building designs in a wide range of styles, it was Gothic, under the influence of Pugin and his followers, that came to be associated principally with ecclesiastical architecture. Over fifty such examples of designs for churches and their fittings, dating from the 1840s to the first decade of the twentieth century, were built from plans commissioned by Australian clients from English architects, most famously, Pugin himself. But there were also many such designs executed by Australian architects. From this period date William Butterfield's two Anglican cathedrals (St. Paul's in Melbourne and St. Peter's in Adelaide), William Wardell's St. Patrick's Catholic Cathedral in Melbourne, and Edmund Blacket's designs for a number of churches and cathedrals in New South Wales, as well as countless other smaller churches and similar buildings in Australian suburbs and country towns.

These designs are underwritten by a number of conflicting desires and impulses. Many of them reflect an uncritical internalization of Pugin's idea of gothic as the "natural" style for ecclesiastical architecture; others reflect more integrated models of urban design; still other impulses simply reflect the architectural fashion of the time. Many represent the desire to make Australian towns look as English as possible, part of a desire to rebuild a sense of home and to construct a tradition, in a terrain where everything seemed so unutterably modern, and where daylight must have seemed so unutterably bright. Before St. Mary's cathedral in Sydney was destroyed by fire in 1865, one writer commented that Archbishop Therry had introduced too much light: for him, the columns, canopies, seating and galleries with their Gothic decoration

would have been calculated to afford a pleasing mellowness, were not this effect interrupted by the flood of light which is admitted

on every other side by the double row of windows (Kerr and Broadbent, 85).

To the gothic imagination, this church made a more pleasing subject of contemplation once it had been destroyed. Andrews quotes from a letter to the editor, in the *Tasmanian Catholic Standard*, of 1869, four years after its destruction.

Dear Sir - To a Catholic visiting Sydney, the ruins of St. Mary's Cathedral constitute the most interesting sight in the city. Whilst gazing upon them he is filled with feelings of veneration and awe ... Seen on a calm moonlit eve, these ruins forcibly remind the beholder of one of England's ruined abbeys; the stillness of the night and the celestial rays of Diana giving a serene air to the pile, and rendering the visitor for a while oblivious of the fact that he is in Australia, where all works (excepting Nature's) are modern (Andrews 4).

This letter displays a kind of second order nostalgia: a gothic nostalgia for an English gothic nostalgia. Such heightened feelings of veneration and awe are inaccessible in the relentless Australian sunlight, but under "the celestial rays of Diana," the ruins become a powerful mnemonic for England, and gothic England at that. But the "oblivion" praised here is also a longed-for forgetting: forgetting one is actually in Australia.

Much nineteenth-century architecture can be seen in this way, as an attempt to fill up what was seen as an empty landscape. After all, Australia was known as "terra nullius": a legal concept that was overturned only as recently as 1992 in the Mabo judgment of the High Court (this judgment recognized native title based on the continuous practice of traditional laws and customs). While church architecture is certainly the most visible sign of the gothic revival and medievalism in Australia, a number of other public and private buildings also used gothic-inspired designs to a more ostentatious effect, as Andrews shows. The ANZ bank (1883-8), in Melbourne, designed by William Wardell, is a famous example. From the same period in the 1880s, a period of great prosperity in Melbourne, also date a number of spectacular, "boom-style Gothic" buildings by William Pitt in central Melbourne: the Melbourne Stock Exchange, the Safe Deposit, and the Rialto Buildings. These buildings seem to make more of a statement about architectural fashion and the capacity for elaborate display, in gothic style, than the highly motivated, earnest choice of gothic for ecclesiastical building.

Andrews concludes that Australian Gothic "fills a small and perhaps increasingly *irrelevant* [my emphasis] corner in our national consciousness. It is centered around those ubiquitous and generally commonplace churches of our suburbs, towns and villages" (142). While it is true that gothic style no longer dominates Australian architecture, such a statement reveals the

risks of letting one aspect of gothic - in this case, architecture - seem to stand as a synecdoche for the much broader range of complex cultural movements that such a label could describe. Moreover, the purer forms of architectural historicism that emphasize the moments of genesis and original design can tend to obscure the social and cultural meanings those buildings take on, well after their initial inception and first decades of use. Wardell's Melbourne bank, for example, was voted by readers of *The Age* newspaper as Victoria's favourite building as recently as 1987 (Andrews 25). The afterlife of gothic or medievalist artifacts also has its own story to tell. This second-order aspect of medievalism is a very promising area of study, but ecclesiastical architecture will give us only a very partial and limited picture here.

Andrews does not discuss university architecture in detail, though most early Australian examples were resolutely gothic. The Universities of Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, founded in 1850, 1853 and 1874 respectively, all feature elaborate gothic architecture, while Sydney's Great Hall was designed as a smaller scale replica of Westminster Hall in London. Melbourne and Sydney also both feature a quadrangle system modelled on the Oxbridge colleges, while Sydney's coat of arms tellingly combines features of the arms of Cambridge and Oxford. The four great stained glass windows at Sydney's Great Hall map the allegiances and affiliations of the university beyond dispute: they feature images of the founders of the Oxford and Cambridge colleges; the succession of British royalty from William to Victoria; and a series of artists, writers, scientists, lawyers, and men of letters, from Bede, through Chaucer to Milton, William Harvey, John Locke, Edmund Burke, and finishing with James Cook, who, of course, "discovered" the east coast of Australia in 1770.

Now, it is true that like the churches discussed by Andrews, these universities belong to a particular period of architectural fashion and design that has long been superseded. Contemporary university architecture in Australia bears little resemblance to these designs. And yet it is also important to look at the afterlife of these buildings, too, to consider their role in the intellectual and cultural life of their cities. These structures are deeply photogenic, for example, and bespeak a strong sense of tradition, while also embodying a very distinctive English idea of what a university should look like. They are in high demand for conferences, theatre, film, and for advertising (especially fashion) and wedding photography. Their gothic features figure prominently on the universities' websites, in promotional material directed at alumni, and at the very lucrative markets for full fee-paying students from South-East Asia. In this light, Australia is seen as closer, cheaper, and, increasingly, safer than the UK or North America as a study destination. Sydney and Melbourne have a distinct advantage, stylistically, in this competitive market, and many students comment,

walking through the quadrangles or past the residential colleges, that these two campuses, in particular, look like “a real university.”

Paradoxically, questions of historical authenticity very quickly drop away in this context, forgotten in a willing embrace of simulation. No one expects Australian university campuses to be “really” medieval, but at least this part of the nineteenth-century university looks and feels like a “real” university. Where representation assumes a minimal equivalence between the sign and the real, the image in the order of simulation “bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulation” (Baudrillard 11). So, for example, the nineteenth-century Law quadrangle at the University of Melbourne belongs to the first order of medievalism as representation, that aspect of the Gothic revival that naturalized medieval style for university architecture in the nineteenth century, just as the University of Melbourne as an institution was itself modelled on the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. But for contemporary tourists and photographers, the quadrangle signifies a rather different notion of tradition, or perhaps nostalgia: nostalgia for the nineteenth century. As Baudrillard remarks, “When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning” (12). Here, the cultural afterlife of the medievalist artefact participates in the order of the simulacrum.

The university context is a very particular site for such simulation. I think it is not unreasonable to say that, as an institution, the university has undergone more radical change than the church over the last hundred years. It is more accessible to rewriting, more open to re-invention and re-modelling, more exposed to popular culture, mass media, and so on. It thus becomes a very productive site on which to consider the second-order medievalism I have briefly introduced in this paper.

In the 1920s, the fourth side of the quadrangle at Melbourne was added to match the nineteenth-century buildings on the three other sides. And in the 1970s, an underground carpark was built almost directly beneath part of this quadrangle. The carpark extends out underneath a formal lawn and a number of European plane trees, while the design of the carpark features concrete vaulted arches that echo the sandstone arches of the quadrangle above. Cunningly, the plane trees are planted directly above these columns, while the roots of the trees seek water down the columns themselves. This is a very popular site for advertising and film-making. The Mel Gibson film, *Mad Max*, shot a number of scenes here (a piece of futuristic gothic cinema, if ever there was one), and the carpark currently features in a local car advertisement. Here, the gothic signifies both futuristic minimalism and also a complex citation from the more traditional structures not too far away, above ground.

This kind of post-modernist gothic, as we may call it, has taken us a long way from the narrower, more academic understanding assumed by

Andrews, asking us to think in quite a different way about the forms of medieval representation that are possible in non-medieval spaces, or in countries with no medieval history of their own. Walking through a nineteenth-century university quadrangle, or worshipping in a nineteenth-century gothic cathedral in Australia, offers just enough verisimilitude to allow the willing subject to imagine himself or herself in, at least, a nineteenth-century English university or cathedral, and possibly even a medieval one. Driving into a concrete vaulted underground carpark offers a different experience altogether. There's no real attempt here to "represent" the medieval, in the nineteenth-century sense, of an architectural space we might inhabit in ways reminiscent of medieval uses of space, ways that might revive some aspect of medieval spiritual or intellectual tradition. Rather, the medieval functions here as a site of images to be plundered and recombined in quite different contexts, images that owe as much to pastiche, to quotation and to re-invention, as they do to representation, with the added pleasure for the university community of recognizing this learned architectural quotation.

Much of English and European medievalism is predicated on inhabiting medieval spaces, but the medievalism of post-colonial countries enjoys a rather more complex relationship with the medieval past. In many cases, that relationship is grounded not just on differences in time and space, but on a different kind of cultural relationship. I want to discuss an example I have considered elsewhere, in a different context (Trigg 7-8), but one I still find both productive and suggestive. Like the underground vaulted carpark, it invokes medieval tradition while also insisting on its resolutely modern context. The motto of Macquarie University, founded in 1964, in northern Sydney, is "and gladly teche." The motto was suggested by the first Chancellor, A.G. Mitchell, the author of *Lady Meed and the Art of Piers Plowman* (1957), a medievalist and linguist who also specialized in the Australian language. The university's historian comments on his "suggestion of genius":

"In words of great simplicity and directness," Mitchell told the Council, "it describes the two inseparable interests and responsibilities of the university scholar." To select part was not to obliterate the rest of the line but to adopt a device long familiar among classical scholars, in quotation from the scriptures and in modern English poetry -- "that of quoting part of a line of verse, or part of a sentence and leaving to the reader the pleasurable satisfaction of supplying the context". . . . He was offering the Clerk of Oxenford as the institution's ideal and symbol (Mansfield and Hutchinson 58).

Chaucer provides the focal point for the university community's potential to imagine its relationship to tradition, by recognizing and completing a

Chaucerian text. At the same time, Macquarie was being established as a comparatively radical institution of tertiary education, giving due importance to new subject areas and the break-up of traditional disciplinary formations. Medieval poetry serves as a reassuring link to an older world of scholarship, while the juxtaposition with the University's coat of arms, featuring the Macquarie lighthouse tower, signals its very local resonance in the "new" world.

Interestingly, the very specificity of this lighthouse caused problems when the University sought to register its arms in a heraldic blazon: "The arms of the University shall be on a field vert, the Macquarie lighthouse tower, masoned proper, in chief the star Sirius, or. Motto: And gladly teche." Mansfield and Hutchinson quote the letter from the Lord Lyon King of Arms in Edinburgh, Sir Thomas Innes of Learney: "Where people ask us to include a representation of this or that building, or even send us a photograph asking us to reproduce their beloved dog, we have to point out that this would not be regarded as efficient or satisfactory heraldry" (58). This contemptuous response from the heart of empire is a good indication of the complex negotiations faced by postcolonial nations seeking to articulate a sophisticated relationship with tradition. As the final blazon shows, the University went ahead with the Macquarie lighthouse anyway, in spite of Sir Thomas's strictures.

This is in many ways an exemplary story about modern relations between Australia and British tradition. In contrast to the early colonists' desire to build Gothic cathedrals in a way that might help them forget, for a moment, where they were, here we see the Australian desire for British recognition, for continuity with medieval heraldic and literary tradition, yet a willingness to adapt those traditions to their own needs, and their own very local landmarks. We also observe the British rejection of Australian claims to that continuity; and the Australian insistence on following its own path, regardless.

This dialectical aspect of postcolonial culture needs to be taken into account in discussions of Australian medievalism. It is too often tempting, perhaps, to think of medievalism as operating in only one direction, as we focus our attention on postmedieval attempts to revive, to recreate and even to re-invent aspects of medieval culture. The medieval is so clearly the past, for us; acts of medievalism so clearly take the medieval as a starting-point. Yet as we know, medievalist acts of recuperation also take place in specific social and cultural contexts, bringing together both an idea about the past and an idea about the present. As the field of Australian medievalism develops, it will be an important aspect of this work to take sufficient account of all those contexts. We need to consider not only the original medieval narratives, traditions, and cultural forms that are invoked in Australian acts of medieval recreation; but also the complex cultural

relationships between medieval culture, British “ownership” of that culture, the nineteenth-century revival of that culture, and more local struggles for cultural autonomy.

### *University of Melbourne*

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## Modern Artistic Responses to Pre-Modern Miniatures of the *Divine Comedy*<sup>1</sup>

Karl Fugelso

As Barbara J. Watts has thoroughly demonstrated, Botticelli's illustrations of the *Divine Comedy* largely depend on pre-modern miniatures of Dante's text.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Watts notes that Botticelli's drawings of the mid-1480s turn even more towards the manuscript tradition than do his engravings from prior to 1481.<sup>3</sup> For example, while the engraving of *Inferno* IX is generally consistent in terms of perspective and depicts Virgil and Dante at left after just entering the gate of inner hell, the drawing of this episode joins British Library MS Yates Thompson 36 in locating that gate in the center foreground, employing a thin strip of landscape between the lower edge of the frame and the walls of inner hell, and tilting those walls to reveal their contents.<sup>4</sup> The drawing thus departs from the timing and illusionism of its most immediate forerunner to return to the pace and clarity of the miniatures. That is to say, it favors the expressive and explanatory power of its earliest predecessors over the artistic fashions of its own time.

Yet, though Botticelli may be the first post-medieval artist to have based *Commedia* images on those of the illuminators, he is certainly not the only one to have done so. Indeed, he may not even be the most faithful one to have done so. During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, John Flaxman, William Blake, and Gustave Doré borrowed heavily from the miniaturists' compositions, and, in Doré's case, from their tone. And during the 1960s and 1970, Renato Guttuso, Rico Lebrun, and Leonard Baskin repeatedly invoked the visceral immediacy of those pre-modern prototypes. While all six artists thus drew on the miniatures in such a manner as to resist traditional models of art history, the last three painters treated the *Commedia* far more expressively and intimately than did the first three. Although Guttuso, Lebrun, and Baskin worked in a modern age often characterized by cynical detachment, they returned to the spirit of the late Middle Ages, of an era in which the *Commedia* was treated as hardly less sacred and perhaps no less important than Scripture. And, though Flaxman, Blake, and Doré emerged from a period that is often labeled "Romantic" and is usually characterized by overt expression of the artist's personal response to a subject, their illustrations seem far more detached from the *Commedia* than do those of their twentieth-century counterparts. They privilege subjects that foster aesthetic expressiveness rather than emotional reaction, and their compositions, which are, in fact, often blatantly stylized, draw on the miniatures only insofar as those models

will facilitate idiosyncrasies in the artist's mode of expression. Thus, Flaxman, Blake, and Doré produce more mannered illustrations than do Guttuso, Lebrun, and Baskin, and they depart farther from the spirit of *Commedia* miniatures and pre-modern commentaries than do those twentieth-century artists.

The earliest of the six illustration series, Flaxman's engravings of 1793, sometimes echoes the composition of the miniatures. For example, his frontal view of the Devil in *Inferno* XXXIV with two faces perpendicular to a third recalls the illuminators' most common response to Dante's rather ambiguous description of Lucifer, and Flaxman's floating, encircled busts of the blessed in *Paradiso* echo those of British Library MS Egerton 943 and Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal MS 8530.<sup>5</sup> But, more often than not, he departs from the subjects and compositions of the miniatures. In his illustration of *Inferno* XXIII, for instance, pairs of hypocrites march across Caiaphas and into the distance, rather than flanking him, milling about him, or stepping across him from left to right.<sup>6</sup> In the engraving of *Inferno* XXVII, Flaxman omits the flames that surround the false counselor Guido da Montefeltro in almost every miniature of this scene.<sup>7</sup> And, alone among *Commedia* illustrators, he shows a fallen angel hovering over Guido's body and "defending" that sinner's soul from Saint Francis. The engraver thus substantially departs on many occasions from the subjects and compositions of pre-modern models that he otherwise follows quite closely. That is to say, in his references to the miniatures, he employs an overt selectivity that would seem to reflect a specific agenda.

The precise nature of that agenda is debatable, but many of Flaxman's echoes of the miniatures and departures from them facilitate masterful displays of linear economy and control. Although he sometimes deploys line to articulate great emotion, as when portraying the swirls of drapery around ascending souls in *Paradiso* IX or the bursting rays around Peter's arrival in *Paradiso* XXIII, he generally uses line to embody restraint and authority.<sup>8</sup> In some instances, the discipline suggested therein is completely appropriate, as when the hypocrites' carefully controlled outlines convey the deliberation of their steps beneath cloaks of lead. But, at times, Flaxman's measured line departs from the most fundamental character of a subject, as when the crisp, highly symmetrical contours of Lucifer render him more decorative than intimidating. And rarely do Flaxman's line and composition suggest the same degree of emotional engagement with Dante's subjects as that found in the pre-modern miniatures. For example, as Flaxman's line closely and eloquently articulates the idealized body and rather feline head of the "black cherubim" above Guido da Montefeltro, it belies the supposedly vengeful nature of that guardian, particularly in relationship to the jagged contour that defines the no-less bitter Ulysses as he snarls at Virgil and at the pilgrim in Bibliothèque Nationale MS italien 74.<sup>9</sup> And

the thick black line that differentiates Flaxman's blessed souls in the triumphal column of *Paradiso* XVIII conveys far less heavenly harmony than do the merged contours of faces in Giovanni di Paolo's mid-fifteenth-century illustration of the imperial eagle in *Paradiso* XIX.<sup>10</sup> That is to say, like the lines in many of Flaxman's other *Commedia* illustrations, those that define the blessed column and Guido's guardian privilege aesthetic effects that not only depart from the more overt tones of the episodes in which they appear but, in some instances, even contradict those tones.

In thus favoring virtuoso displays of linear articulation over visceral expression of Dante's themes, Flaxman's work foreshadows the style of Blake's *Commedia* illustrations, which were executed between 1824 and 1827 in watercolor and/or pen and ink, often over pencil and black chalk. Some of Blake's subjects and compositions are rather close to those of Botticelli. For example, both artists depict multiple figures waiting at left amid a sparse stand of trees as Virgil meets Matilda in the sacred woods of *Purgatorio* XXVIII.<sup>11</sup> And some of Blake's other subjects and compositions directly recall those of the illuminators, for they are even closer to the miniatures than are Botticelli's subjects and compositions. For instance, Blake's *Inferno* V illustration of Minos as a white-bearded wise man, rather than a demon, echoes the manner in which that mythical figure is characterized in many fifteenth-century manuscripts.<sup>12</sup> And Blake's illustration of *Inferno* I, with the pilgrim running towards Virgil at left and away from the three beasts stacked on a hillside at right, closely parallels miniatures in Musée Condé MS 597, Bodleian MS Canoniciani italiani 109, British Library MS Additional 19587, and Tübingen MS Depot Breslau 6.<sup>13</sup> But, on many occasions, Blake departs from Botticelli and his pre-modern predecessors, as in giving us a posterior view of the divine messenger opening the gates of inner hell.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, even when Blake does echo his early forerunners, he often seems to do so for a different purpose than theirs, for the pursuit of extraordinarily expressive line and color. For example, in closely imitating the clear but rather awkward and simplistic pre-modern composition of the pilgrim's confrontation with the three beasts of *Inferno* I, Blake exploits an opportunity not only to play with expressive drapery as the pilgrim flees but also to respond to a sudden shift in the usual vector of the composition, for the figure of Dante signals retreat by emphatically reversing the left-to-right flow that predominates elsewhere in this illustration cycle.<sup>15</sup>

Yet, even as Blake evidently joins Flaxman in selecting models on the basis of their potential for linear expression, he differs from him by more closely approaching the narrative pace of the illuminators. Although Blake's elegant line and texture somewhat depart from the emotional range of his pre-modern predecessors, he shows not only many of the same subjects as do the illuminators but also many of the same moments in each episode. Like almost all of his pre-modern forerunners, he depicts the pilgrim passing

into hell and observing the damned cross Acheron in *Inferno* III, fainting as Francesca concludes her tale in *Inferno* V, feeding mud to Cerberus in *Inferno* VI, watching Virgil dunk Argenti in *Inferno* VIII, having his eyes hidden as the heavenly messenger opens the inner gates of hell in *Inferno* IX, talking to a tree in the wood of the suicides in *Inferno* XIII, and participating in the narrative climax of many other episodes.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, while Blake may not fully capture the miniaturists' emotional engagement with Dante's narrative, he does echo their dramatic timing and thereby differs from that of the next *Commedia* illustrator, Doré.

Although Doré's engravings of 1868 may convey even greater foreboding than do the *Commedia* miniatures, much less the illustrations of Blake and Flaxman, they do so through a different pace and greater suspense than that of their predecessors. Rather than depict the apex of action or shock in each episode, Doré dwells on the penultimate moment in each scene, on the anticipation of horrors yet to come. For example, whereas most of the miniaturists, such as that of the Yates Thompson *Inferno*, depict Virgil and the pilgrim amid the woods of the suicides in canto thirteen, Doré portrays the protagonists merely approaching that forest.<sup>17</sup> His Virgil and Dante do not yet seem aware of the many harpies that are nesting in the menacing, anthropomorphized trees, for the two advance without any signs of hesitancy. Indeed, they step with such boldness that they seem to have forgotten the pilgrim's preceding foray into a wooded setting. In canto one of Doré's *Inferno*, Dante finds himself in a forest as dark and almost as anthropomorphic as that of the suicides.<sup>18</sup> The tangled roots of the tree just above the pilgrim and the vines curling around his feet seem to be reaching for him, trying to ensnare him. And, judging from the sharp turn of the figure's head and the nervous expression on his face, he seems to suspect that danger is imminent. In fact, he may have just seen the leopard that, along with the lion and wolf, challenged him in canto one. Yet, even if that is the case, the scene is not so much one of confrontation as of foreboding, of threats only just sensed, for, rather than show the pilgrim retreating from the three beasts, as do Blake and most of the miniaturists, Doré merely implies that the worst is about to happen. That is to say, in this and most of his other *Commedia* illustrations, he chooses subjects that privilege setting a mood over advancing the plot.

Moreover, he often adapts his lighting and other stylistic means to those moods. Indeed, his images of the *Inferno* largely revolve around extreme tenebroso, around dramatic contrasts in light and dark. For example, as Virgil and the pilgrim travel aboard Geryon to the Malebolge at the end of canto seventeen, this normally uneventful episode is rendered ominous by the sublimity of tonal juxtapositions in the jagged landscape.<sup>19</sup> Sharp contrasts of light and dark define not only the dynamic curves of Dante's zoomorphic mount but also the craggy teeth of the rocky promontories around him. In fact, the lighting contributes to the suggestion

that we are peering out a pair of jaws closing on the figures. Yet, though the monochromism of Doré's medium encourages such extreme tonal juxtapositions, he departs from those contrasts in many of his images for Dante's third cantica. His illustration of the Crucifixion in *Paradiso XIV*, for instance, only approaches dark tones in the figure of Dante at lower right, for Christ and most of the angels supporting Him on a glowing crucifix are portrayed in a light, narrow range of tones that depart from convincing illusionism and resist the association of these figures with terrestrial tangibility.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, even when Doré's images of heaven do employ sharp contrasts of light and dark, they often do so in a manner that reinforces the joyous line of their composition as a whole. The juxtaposition of bright souls against dark skies in *Paradiso XII*, for example, reinforces the ring formation of the figures, and the contrast between the shading on the blessed in the foreground of *Paradiso XVIII* and the brilliance of the sunlight reflecting off their colleagues in the distance underscores the figures' exuberant swirl, their echo of the dancing figures in many late fourteenth-century miniatures of this cantica.<sup>21</sup> Thus does Doré reinforce the mood of his subjects through the selective application of chiaroscuro within each image and within the illustration cycle as a whole.

Yet, even as Doré conveys the character of each cantica by different means than those of the illuminators, he joins those predecessors in depicting the pilgrim's experiences with extraordinary narrative clarity and pictorial expressiveness. Although Doré's engravings are elaborately worked, particularly in relationship to those of Flaxman, their compositions are ultimately as efficient as are those of Flaxman or any other *Commedia* illustrator. For instance, as Doré's myriad carnal sinners trail into the distance of *Inferno V* and attest to the endemic nature of their sin, they form a dark, poignant backdrop to the brightly lit figures of Paolo and Francesca.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, in conjunction with the angle of the ground and the tilt of Virgil and the pilgrim, with the dynamic diagonal of the composition, they convey the motion to which these sinners are continually subject and against which Paolo and Francesca must fight in telling their tale. As these two lovers hover in the central foreground of the image, they convey their sin and their suffering by means of a nearly nude embrace that recalls those in many miniatures of this scene and contrasts with the failed attempts at union among all of Doré's other carnal sinners.<sup>23</sup> They distinguish themselves clearly and efficiently from their fellow sinners yet overtly and economically embody the sin for which they suffer.

In thus echoing the simplicity and foreboding of the miniatures, Doré substantially differs from most twentieth-century *Commedia* illustrators, particularly Guttuso, Lebrun, and Baskin. Working at various times from 1960 to 1970, all three of these artists join their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century predecessors in looking to pre-modern prototypes. But, rather than

draw primarily on the clarity and ominousness of the *Inferno* miniatures, Guttuso, Lebrun, and Baskin invoke the explicit horror and visceral immediacy of their pre-modern models. Like many illuminators, they too privilege the most gruesome moments of the pilgrim's underworld adventures and often skip *Inferno* episodes that do not describe or at least allow particularly brutal scenes. Moreover, they too portray their horrific subjects in an especially graphic manner. They frequently focus on wildly contorted figures, sometimes cover those figures in dark shadows or bloody shades of red, and usually deploy other extraordinarily expressive colors and dramatic lines to pictorially echo the victims' desperation. That is to say, they depart from the cynical detachment that characterizes much of modern art and turn towards a more pre-modern approach to the *Commedia*.

In fact, even in comparison with the subjects of Lebrun and Baskin, those in Guttuso's watercolors are extraordinarily graphic. For example, rather than join Lebrun in depicting the sowers of discord in *Inferno* XXVIII as symmetrically dismembered figures sculpturally rendered with great precision, with classical muscularity, with beautiful proportions, and with no evidence of blood, Guttuso displays their misshapen bodies literally torn to pieces.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, relative to Blake's depiction of this episode, Guttuso's is almost obscene, for, rather than center his image on an ideal nude, rather than gloss over the corporeal dismemberment of the sowers of discord, Guttuso literally and figuratively foregrounds the suffering of those who dismembered the body politic or religious.<sup>25</sup> As the amputated limbs of his Bertrand de Borne and other sowers gush with blood, the most frontal and central figure in the composition pulls apart his chest and shouts, "See how mangled is Mohammed!" (*Inf.*, 28.31). With disturbing detail and no shortage of body fluids, the founder of Islam confronts us with the visceral horrors of hell. But this is not the only figure of him to do so, for this image of Mohammed spilling his entrails closely echoes those in Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale MS Palatini 313, Biblioteca Laurenziana MS Strozzi 152, British Library MS Additional 19587, Vatican MS latini 4776, Biblioteca Angelica MS 1102, Padua Seminario MS 1, Bibliothèque Nationale MS italien 74, Bibliothèque Nationale MS italien 2017, and British Library MS Yates Thompson 36.<sup>26</sup> In fact, Guttuso often seems to quote the miniatures, as in his depiction of the tyrants in *Inferno* XII.<sup>27</sup> Drowning in bright red blood and pierced with arrows, frequently in the eyes or other particularly tender locations, their bobbing heads and shoulders recall those of the tyrants in Vatican MS latini 4776, a late fourteenth-century manuscript from Florence.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, both images sharply tilt the bloody pond towards us and depict little outside of it. That is to say, they focus on it and leave little opportunity to ignore the torment of its occupants.

Indeed, in Guttuso's choice of subjects, he sometimes goes beyond the graphicness of the miniatures. For example, in seeking a theme for his illustration of the wrathful in *Purgatorio* XVI, he ignores all preceding images of that canto and concentrates on extreme manifestations of anger.<sup>29</sup> Where Doré and most of the illuminators show Marco Lombardo approaching the protagonists and announcing "I will follow you as far as is allowed me" (*Purg.* 16.34), Guttuso completely omits that sinner, as well as Virgil and the pilgrim, and invokes miniatures of the violence among Lombardo's counterparts in hell, of the wrathful in *Inferno* VIII.<sup>30</sup> As Guttuso's mob races from a burning cross in the background towards a writhing figure in the foreground, whom they kick and beat, they echo the rage of Filippo Argenti biting his own forearm in the Yates Thompson *Inferno*, of other wrathful souls beating Argenti in British Library MS Egerton 943, and of the wrathful attacking each other in Budapest University Library MS italien 1, Bodleian MS Holkham *Miscellanae* 48, Morgan Library MS 676, Biblioteca Angelica MS 1102, and Imola Biblioteca Comunale MS 32.<sup>31</sup> Thus do Guttuso's sinners depart from the text and from miniatures of *Purgatorio* to invoke far more violent pre-modern images, to privilege a far more graphic subject.

Moreover, Guttuso underscores the violence of his subject by means of an extraordinarily expressive composition, for he crowds the illustration with layer upon layer of flailing figures. Indeed, there hardly seems sufficient room for the sheer volume of each body, much less the space required by their extreme range of motion. The woman in the yellow dress seems almost to spring from the brown figure behind her and to barge into the figure of the man to her left. The profile figure in the upper center of the image would have to be extraordinarily thin to fit between the brown figure who overlaps him and the black and brown figure whom he overlaps. And the small, dark-skinned figure at right is evidently about to be smashed between the large white man racing behind him or her and the green man bending over in front of him or her. Although there is, in fact, a somewhat measured recession into space, as depth is articulated by controlled diminishment of figural size and by careful layering of contrasting hues and tones, there is a seeming chaos to the composition, a disorder that suggests the irrationality of the wrathful.

The violence of that irrationality is reinforced by the coloring of the work, for, though the hues and tones may contribute to the three-dimensional ordering of the composition, they simultaneously participate in a two-dimensional accentuation of emotion. The red of the flaming crucifix is echoed by the blood on the victim in the foreground, and, together, they bracket and highlight the extraordinarily expressive woman in the center of the composition. The yellow dress on her twisted torso is balanced by the slightly browner pants on the kicking legs of the figure at lower left and, to a lesser degree, by the flesh-colored head of the round figure to her

right. But, as that dress departs from the patches of white and brown around her, as well as from the relatively subdued diagonal that extends from the blue figure at upper left to the muted green shirt at lower right, it imparts a discordant spirit to the heart of the composition. Hardly varying in tone or hue, it joins the other, largely unmoderated passages of color in rather flattening the image, in reducing its volume to a pattern of sharp contrasts that echo the jagged emotions of the subject.

Indeed, the shape of the color blocks contributes to an extreme dynamism that is fundamentally conveyed by the lines of the composition. The diagonal axis running from the outstretched arm of the figure at upper left through the blue shirt of the figure below it, through the arm of the woman in the yellow dress, and through the left leg of the figure in green is echoed by the right leg of the man in yellow pants and competes with the diagonal that begins in his lower left leg and runs up through the right leg of the figure to his left, through the yellow dress of the woman in the center of the composition, and through the shadowed arm to the upper right. The vertical axis running from the crucifix down through the yellow dress to the victim in the foreground is thereby destabilized, and the composition is energized to an extraordinary degree. That is to say, while the overt expressiveness of line in this image undermines the volumetric implications of the composition, the arrangement of that line echoes the dynamism embodied by the spatial compression and inconsistencies of the image.

Moreover, the control and dynamism embodied by those lines are often echoed by their media, for Guttuso deploys his ink and paint with great efficiency and subtle deliberation. The short, thin brush strokes that carefully define the flaming cross in the background contrast sharply with the large, overt strokes representing the immediate foreground, particularly the gray terrain at lower left, and with the lack of evident brushwork in the blocks of color among the mob. Furthermore, the thick, scalloped pen strokes on the right leg of the kicker effectively convey the telescoping of his pants as his leg completes its arc; the layered strokes on the pelvis of the figure in the green shirt capture the deep creases and muscular exertion of his downswing; and the thin, isolated strokes on the yellow dress and on the round head of the rotund figure at right refine their form without undermining the expressive power of their bold color. Thus, through width, denseness, and location, many of Guttuso's strokes carefully define shapes and promote a hierarchy of subjects among the somewhat crowded and seemingly chaotic field of the picture.

At the same time, through fluttering and at times a seeming randomness of direction, through qualities that seem to depart from calculation and control, Guttuso's pen strokes and brush work often convey texture, motion, and emotion. In contrast to the sure, steady lines that define the head of the figure at right and the yellow dress of the woman in the center of the

image, the wavy lines of the stomach on the obese man at left and the flickering lines on the back of the kicker's shirt may seem to depart from description. But, while those two groups of line do not define a body at rest or at one end of a range of motion, they do convey texture and action, for they suggest the rippling of fat and the billowing of cloth. Moreover, in capturing those motions, in representing the violence with which the obese man flails and the kicker lunges, they embody emotion. They suggest the depth of each man's wrath and the degree to which he has lost his self-control.

Indeed, Guttuso's strokes imply a loss of control twice over, for, in their waviness and almost arbitrary direction, they suggest that the illustrator, too, has lost his composure. Though Guttuso may in fact have executed the illustrations with cool deliberation, the flickering lines suggest a flickering hand, which, in turn, suggests a lack of mental control. That is to say, they convey a sense of agitation in Guttuso, of a rush to express fleeting thoughts and of little time or inclination to correct departures from optical realism. Moreover, they are reinforced by the arbitrary direction of some strokes in the work, for as such lines snake around the right thigh of the obese figure at left or vertically slash across the right thigh and buttock of the figure in green, they seem to privilege expression over description, to put the emotion of the artist ahead of optical realism. They thus stand in marked contrast to the extraordinarily smooth and controlled transitions in Guttuso's illustration of the "serene face of the sky" in *Purgatorio* I, and they suggest an attempt to convey the mindset of the Wrathful.<sup>32</sup>

In fact, Guttuso's most arbitrary strokes usually appear in conjunction with figures of anger. For example, while his lines in *Purgatorio* XIII do not deviate from describing the physical contours of the envious, who are more resentful than wrathful, some of Guttuso's strokes in *Inferno* V blatantly depart from merely defining the physical form of Minos.<sup>33</sup> As the former king of Crete and current guardian of the underworld whips his tail around his own body to denote which circle of hell is deserved by each sinner, a seemingly random stroke of ink bisects his upper arm and tail, while two other lines conspicuously veer across the broad white expanse of his protruding belly. Indeed, both of those lines could be perceived as actively resisting description, for the bottom one inverts the crease denoting lumpiness in the lower right contour of Minos's stomach, and the upper one literally and figuratively foregrounds the surface of the image. As that stroke crosses not only the belly of Minos but also two loops of his tail, it defies the illusionism suggested by the shading on the underside of those rings and highlights the fact that we are looking at ink on paper. It declares itself to be not a part of an underworld guardian but, rather, an artistic response to the notion of such a figure, to be Guttuso's reaction to the role, values, and mindset of Dante's Minos.

In thus departing from describing the physical form of that underworld guardian to suggest his emotional state, to echo the grotesque scowl of this notoriously harsh king and to recall the gnashing of teeth with which he performs his infernal duties, Guttuso's seemingly arbitrary lines contrast sharply with the unerringly descriptive strokes of his eighteenth- and nineteenth-century predecessors, such as Blake. In the latter's illustration of Minos, for example, line only departs from defining physical form insofar as it privileges compositional flow.<sup>34</sup> The strokes constituting Blake's seemingly sorrowful king continue the diagonal of the protagonists at lower left and parallel those of the sinners prostrate before this rather hoary yet heroic echo of Michelangelo's muscular Moses. Indeed, the grace of Blake's composition so completely undermines the mass of Minos that it drains him of the menace embodied by Guttuso's stern judge. As the latter figure lashes his tail in front of a fiery background and grimaces with a face creased by anger and protruding from a torso that represents the artist's response to his anger, he confronts us, as both imaginary participant and viewer, with the proximity and dangers of damnation. That is to say, though he may not have prostrate victims in front of him, as does Blake's Minos, he seems far more likely than does the latter to have us melting at his feet.

Less confrontational but perhaps no less intimidating are the lines and figures of Rico Lebrun's early 1960s drawings of the *Commedia*. While Guttuso paints one diviner from *Inferno* XX striding directly at us from the middle of a crowd and another staring almost directly towards us from the foreground, Lebrun depicts these sinners in profile.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, though the two diviners on the left side of his image sit on each other's lap, they do not even confront each other, for, in accord with Dante's punishment of them for daring to see into the future, for rendering God's judgment passive, they have their head on backwards. Moreover, Lebrun has made substantial efforts to graphically distinguish them. The figure on the right side of the pair is echoed in two faint drawings to the right of him, in two studies of his form by itself. And, even in his partnership with the other figure, his form is distinguished to an extraordinary degree from that of his companion. The man at right is silhouetted with an exceptionally confident, series of thick strokes that almost merge into one sweeping line from the toes on his left foot, around his heel, up his calf, across his hamstring, around his posterior, and up his curved spine to the base of his skull. There, the strokes meet a finely articulated bald head with light, highly defined features that turn away from the figure's rather robust chest and from a muscular left arm that clings to the other man. That embrace is returned by a less defined arm springing from the carefully shaded torso at left, from a body with hatching so closely controlled and so subtle that the variance of proximity and tonal effect of its strokes effectively articulate the intercostal muscles and distinguish them from the armpit just above them and the oblique muscle just below them. The legs of the figure at left are not as

clearly or boldly articulated as are those of the figure at right, but they thereby establish a pointed contrast to the heavily defined torso and head of the figure at left, and, as they fade into the distance, they foreground the legs of the man at right. That is to say, they too contribute to the distinction of these figures from each other, to the graphic borders that resist the efforts of the figures to defy their separation and to intertwine their bodies.<sup>36</sup>

They thus depart completely from the function of the lines constituting Lebrun's figures of Count Ugolino and Archbishop Ruggieri, two traitors to their homeland or party who are compositionally and graphically united more than either might wish.<sup>37</sup> While Doré devotes his illustration of *Inferno* XXXII-XXXIII to the pilgrim stepping among the almost completely submerged traitors to their kin as he crosses the frozen river Cocytus, and while Blake relegates Ugolino and Ruggieri to the side of an image that concentrates on the pilgrim pulling the hair of Bocca degli Abati, Lebrun devotes his entire image of *Inferno* XXXIII to the bishop and count.<sup>38</sup> To the right of a faint, frontal figure of Ruggieri, another, bolder figure of him appears in a three-quarters pose with a figure of Ugolino draped over his back and gnawing on his skull. The illustrator has taken literally the narrator's claim that he saw "two frozen in one hole so close that the head of the one was a hood for the other" (*Inf* 32.125-26), and, in departing from tendencies by Blake and other late predecessors to distinguish the count from the bishop, he has returned to the conflation of them in Biblioteca Riccardiana MS 1005 and other fourteenth-century manuscripts.<sup>39</sup> That is to say, while Blake distinguishes Ugolino from Ruggieri by coloring and contour, Lebrun joins the miniaturists in folding one sinner closely over the other.

Moreover, he has commingled their form. Although this image contains contours as bold as those in his illustration of the diviners, the subject to which those lines refer is not always clear. For example, while we may identify the arc beneath Ruggieri's navel as the lower end of his belly, the thick layered strokes that cascade down from there seem to represent three or even four legs, rather than the two we might reasonably expect. And, though Ruggieri's left arm is defined from shoulder to wrist by dark, confident strokes and subtle shading, his face merges with Ugolino's hands to become an almost abstract pattern of distorted horizontals: a flat, featureless design that recalls more the visor of a helmet than the face of a human. Moreover, much of the image is rendered in light, spidery strokes that either depart from defining any subject or seem to represent earlier interpretations of the sinners' forms. The many thin lines trailing down at lower right, for example, seem to record possible positions for Ugolino's left leg, which was ultimately depicted bent at a right angle and compressed against Ruggieri's torso, while the curving, wispy lines just inside the left contour of Ruggieri seem to reflect a more erect stance slightly to the left of his current position.

One effect of preserving these alternative poses is to suggest movement.<sup>40</sup> Contrary to the traitors in the text, who are supposedly buried in ice up to their heads, Lebrun's archbishop and count seem to be in rather violent motion. They seem to be rapidly shifting position, particularly in the upper portion of the image, and thereby to suggest that the top of the ice may be represented by the arcs partially encircling Ruggieri's shins. Yet that impression may be illusory, for those arcs must compete with a strong horizontal line that obeys the text and cuts across Ruggieri's head, his left arm, and both of Ugolino's arms. In that stroke is the implication that all linear ambiguity further down the sheet of paper, all apparent shifting of pose, may in fact be merely a mirage, an illusory repetition created as light refracts through ice. We are thus confronted with an obfuscation of verisimilitude, an ambiguity compounding that which is inherent in the multiplicity of line.

Moreover, the few passages of anatomy that are clearly defined create tension in their juxtaposition with the more amorphous portions of the image. For example, Ruggieri's left bicep and tricep invite us to follow their contours down to the figure's left hand, but there the bold strokes taper into wispy lines that rarely intersect each other and that must compete with a layer of nearly horizontal, seemingly arbitrary cross strokes. Furthermore, the bold articulation of the bishop's navel and lower belly leave little doubt regarding that which they represent but must still compete with an only slightly lighter indentation above them and with a visual cacophony of other contours that cross the bishop's torso. Thus does clarity repeatedly intersect ambiguity in this image and bring that obfuscation to the fore. It invites us to work for the discernment of form and, in so doing, underscores the narrative and historical treachery of this episode. Although Ugolino may have saved Pisa from invasion by ceding several towns to Florence and Lucca in 1284, his enemies treated the act as perfidious and later returned the favor.<sup>41</sup> Under Ruggieri's leadership, they lured the count from exile with promises of amnesty, then reneged on their agreement and sealed him in a tower with four of his younger relatives.<sup>42</sup> Ugolino may then have compounded the theme of this episode by betraying his own flesh and blood, by cannibalizing his fellow prisoners.<sup>43</sup> But the reader cannot be sure from the account he gives in *Inferno* XXXIII, for he does not explicitly state whether or not he ate them.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, he overlooks so many opportunities to declare his guilt or innocence on this issue and strives so hard to deflect pity for the other prisoners onto himself that he has been accused of trying to betray his audience.<sup>45</sup> Yet, ironically, he may fail to dissociate himself from cannibalism precisely because he ignores countless opportunities to confirm or deny his guilt, because his lacunae become conspicuous and draw attention to the issue. Moreover, through myriad references to food, mouths, mastication, and speech, Dante as author links Ugolino to eating, and, by mentioning a rumor that the concession of

towns was ultimately a betrayal, Dante as narrator suggests that the count is indeed deceitful.<sup>46</sup> Treachery is thus piled upon treachery, and substance is buried beneath obfuscation.

Nevertheless, that substance is not completely lost from sight in Lebrun's image, for one of his clearest passages, one of the graphic juxtapositions underscoring the general sketchiness of his illustration, literally foregrounds the issue at the core of the obfuscation — cannibalism. Amid the light, hasty lines representing the shadows on Ugolino's face and the hair on the back of Ruggieri's head, thick, crisp strokes boldly define the count's upper teeth. They distinguish those instruments of mastication from an otherwise amorphous portion of the image and highlight not only Ugolino's eternal punishment but also one possible reason for it. Indeed, in relationship to the faintly defined teeth slightly higher on the page, those below seem to be descending on Ruggieri's head, to be in the very act central to the count's historical and narrative treachery. And, as they contrast with the sketchy portions of the image around them, particularly to the rest of Ugolino's otherwise featureless face, they foreground the bestial nature of his act. They suggest that he has been so consumed by hatred that, like the dog to which Dante compares him, he has forsaken every shred of dignity, of that which makes him human.

The count's passion, moreover, is underscored by that of Lebrun, for, in the faint echoes of Ugolino's teeth and in the other sketchy portions of the image, the artist blatantly reveals his own response to the subject at hand.<sup>47</sup> Like the quick, heavily layered, and sometimes arbitrary strokes of Guttuso, those of Lebrun suggest an agitated mind. The long wispy lines spilling down Ruggieri's legs, the short flicks ignoring the borders of his right thigh, and the many other strokes accreting near Ugolino's left knee depart from merely defining the physical form of the figures to suggest overtly the artist's feelings.<sup>48</sup> They seem to represent a loss of manual control and dexterity, a decline that, in turn, implies a loss of mental composure.<sup>49</sup> And, as they thus privilege emotional expression over physical description, they foreground and reinforce Ugolino's passion.<sup>50</sup> They not only graphically but also psychologically link him to the bishop and to the crimes associated with that relationship.

Such an interpretation is to some degree reinforced by the inversion of those graphic principles in Lebrun's image of *Inferno* XXIV.<sup>51</sup> Rather than obscure or abstract the transmogrification of the thieves into serpents and back again, Lebrun describes the process with clarity and detail that are extraordinary for this illustration cycle. From the torso of a thick, two-legged figure set against a circular black background, a rather crisply defined serpent uncoils towards us. Its body wraps around the torso and displaces the left arm, but the transition is not complete, for the figure still has legs, its right arm has only begun to acquire a surface as fractured as that of the serpent's scales, and the bulging muscles of that arm, as it grips a coil of

the serpent, suggest the thief is still resisting his transformation. We are evidently privy to a process whose horror lies less in its ends than in its unfolding, in an apparently painful transition that is ironically portrayed with the greatest clarity to be found in Lebrun's cycle, with each contour sharply defined, highly illusionistic anatomy, and shading consistently deployed to create volume, to define the bones of the serpent's head, for example, or to articulate its protrusion past the torso of the figure. Some lines may depart from strict description, as in the looping stroke that skirts the serpent's neck at upper right, but the departures are far less conspicuous than those in the other illustrations of the cycle and are often suggestive of the serpent's form or its transformation. Thus, the transmogrification is depicted with clarity that, in both describing it and conspicuously contrasting with the ambiguity inherent to it, reinforces it twice over.

The contrast of that clarity with the ambiguity in Lebrun's other illustrations suggests it was deliberate, as does its echo of the time and attention pre-modern artists lavished on Dante's unusually detailed description of the episode.<sup>52</sup> For example, in the third of three Musée Condé illustrations of the thieves, every spot and scale on the serpentine portions of these sinners is carefully articulated.<sup>53</sup> And even that extraordinary attention to detail is surpassed in the smoke passing from the navel of one thief in this illustration to the mouth of another, for the illuminators have articulated not only each ripple in that smoke but also each shadow that would be cast on and within it by a light source above it. Through careful gradations of ink that darken towards the bottom of the billowing smoke, they convey a sense of volume that is rare for their work and that overtly departs from the subject to which it is applied. That is to say, they devote more attention to illusionism, to conveying a sense of substance here, with the most ephemeral of subjects and the most transient of moments, than perhaps anywhere else in their illustration cycle.<sup>54</sup> Like Lebrun, therefore, they underscore the transmogrification of the thieves by describing it in great detail and by pointedly contrasting its nature to the form in which it is depicted. Rather than deploy quick strokes and other explicit traces of their personal response to the subject, they join Lebrun in enhancing the graphicness and immediacy of the thieves' suffering, in juxtaposing a precise rendering of it with the ambiguity of its subject and of neighboring illustrations.<sup>55</sup>

Lebrun may not be the only modern artist to be influenced by the miniatures of this episode, for, in a series of *Commedia* illustrations from 1970, Lebrun's publisher, Leonard Baskin, echoes both the composition and the clarity of pre-modern images for *Inferno* XXIV and XXV. As his rather iguana-like creature clings in profile to the front of a bound figure, bites its face, and penetrates its groin with a tail that emerges from between the figure's buttocks, he recalls the beasts assaulting the four thieves in an illustration of canto twenty-four from Biblioteca Estense MS R.4.8 in

Modena, the three lizards at left in the Modena illustration of canto twenty-five, the serpent attacking the thief in the second Musée Condé image of canto twenty-five, the beast at far right in the first illustration of that canto from Laurenziana MS Strozzi 152, and the creature on the second thief from the right in the British Museum MS Additional 19587 image of canto twenty-five.<sup>56</sup> Yet it is the clarity with which we can identify those parallels that may most overtly embody the influence of the miniatures on Baskin, for, relative to his other illustrations, this image is extraordinarily clear and economical. Baskin has a penchant for dark backgrounds, as in his image of the pilgrim “at the end of all desiring” in *Paradiso* XXXIII and in his illustration of the pilot from the opening of *Purgatorio*.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, Baskin often just hints at the form and action of a figure, as in omitting the setting of that pilot, in leaving the winged figure with nothing other than an oar and a horizon line to suggest his role, and in defining his body through merely an outline and a few interior contours.<sup>58</sup> But, in the illustration of canto twenty-five, Baskin describes the thief by means of a bold, confident outline and an unusually great degree of shading. The face and groin of the human figure, his most violent intersections with the serpent, are blackened with heavy, thick, repeated strokes that foreground these portions of the image, and his ribs are implied by short, rather horizontal curves beneath a smudge of shading. Moreover, that figure’s anatomy is rendered with what is, for Baskin, extraordinary descriptiveness. The buttocks, for example, are distinguished from the hamstring by a light line that continues their curve; the lower head of his right tricep is distinguished from the elbow by a notch and a short line extending up from the elbow; the upper, exterior head on the right tricep, which is distorted by the sinner’s hands being bound behind his back, is efficiently articulated by slight lines extending it into the region normally occupied by the anterior deltoid; and the right oblique is defined by a line that arcs up from the outline of the lower back and by another line that arcs down from the haunch of the serpent as it presses down on the hip of the human figure. Thus, with merely a few short strokes, Baskin conveys the shape and, to some degree, the volume of the figure. He describes its transmogrification of form with a clarity no less striking than that of Lebrun or the Musée Condé miniaturists. And, like them, he thereby both directly and indirectly reinforces the theme of this episode, both eliminates any chance we will misidentify the subject and provides a pointed juxtaposition to the nature of that theme.

Yet that is not to say Baskin abandons overt expressionism. Like Lebrun, he deploys a sketchiness that implies alteration. His bold contours, as in the right leg of the thief, are sometimes accompanied by a light echo to one side, by a thin line that implies another, slightly different pose. And even the boldest of his outlines are often constituted not from a single, confident stroke but from a series of short, quivering lines. The heads of the figures, for example, are composed of layer upon layer of strokes that are distinguish-

ed in their repetition and darkness from the light lines that stray far outside of those contours. Thus does Baskin reveal the act of creation, the movement of his hand as he articulated his interpretation of the text, and thus does he advertise that the image is at least in part a record of his emotional response to the subject, of a reaction that superseded his control of line, hand, and feeling.<sup>59</sup>

That expressionist style complements Baskin's often purely personal subject matter, as in his response to *Inferno* XIV.<sup>60</sup> A substantial portion of the text for that canto is devoted to a detailed description of the Old Man of Crete, the source for the rivers of hell:

his head is fashioned of fine gold, his arms and breast are pure silver, then down to the fork he is of brass, and down from there is all of choice iron, except that the right foot is baked clay, and he rests more on this than on the other. Every part except the gold is cleft by a fissure that drips with tears which, collected, force a passage through the cavern there.

(*Inf* 14.106-14)

And, indeed, most modern and pre-modern artists adhere closely to that description in their illustrations of this canto. In Budapest University MS italien 1, Musée Condé MS 597, Biblioteca Marciana MS italien IX.276, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal MS 8530, and the Codex Altonensis, the figure towers above others in the image, exudes liquid from a crack in its body or base, and has its head, arms, upper chest, lower torso, legs, and right foot carefully distinguished from each other by texture and often by color or gilding.<sup>61</sup> These images thus differ substantially from the subject and form of Baskin's illustration, for he substitutes nature for the God attacked by the sinners in the text, and he devotes his smoky image to the menace of those sinners, to the spirit of that which he calls "The Violent Against Nature."<sup>62</sup> From the shadows of an almost solid black background, a large face with jagged edges, an open mouth, upturned nose, and hollow eyes stares at us as it reaches towards us with bright, white talons. Yet that creature may not be the most menacing figure in the image, for, from its forehead, emerges a smaller, rather bat-like head with large ears, a short snout, and sharp teeth. A gaping cavity between the eyes of the larger figure suggests that the smaller figure may have been feasting on its neighbor, but, whether or not that is true, the eruption of the chiropterous beast from the skull of the larger creature embodies not only a specific act of violence against a representative of nature but also an unnatural union of beings, and perhaps unnatural procreation. That is to say, the image depicts a violation not only of one manifestation of nature, the larger creature, but also of nature itself. Violence against God, blasphemy, is translated into a physical relationship that is characterized by means of a minimalist composition, a few physical characteristics, and an almost obfuscatingly dark medium.

Although Baskin thereby departs from the subjects for pre-modern illustrations of *Inferno* XIV, he joins the miniaturists in viscerally suggesting the suffering and danger of that cantica. Like Guttuso and Lebrun, he looks back to the spirit of the fourteenth century, to an era in which the *Commedia* was treated like Scripture. As I have discussed elsewhere in detail, Trecento commentators describe Dante as “divine,” compare him to the Prophets, and sometimes insist he was in fact “touched by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>63</sup> And illuminators of that period often manipulate their composition, particularly the gate of hell, to slip us into the pilgrim’s shoes or to otherwise suggest that the narrative has relevance to our lives outside of our reading experience.<sup>64</sup> That is to say, they render the afterlife with a graphicness and immediacy that presage more the illustrations of Baskin, Guttuso, and Lebrun than those of Flaxman, Blake, and Doré.

As we have seen, the latter three illustrators resist traditional interpretations of art history, particularly the characterization of their era as one of extraordinarily personal and emotional response, to favor design over drama, to privilege style and aesthetics over passion and intensity. Indeed, in some ways, they may come closer than do Baskin, Guttuso, and Lebrun to the detachment that characterizes modern art, for the latter three artists almost anachronistically choose episodes facilitating emotional response, privilege the most climactic moments of those episodes, and depict them with the most dramatic of means, with bold colors, extreme contrasts in tone, shocking proximity, and selective obfuscation. Departing from the secularism often ascribed to the modern age, they bring home the suffering and joy of those who have reached Dante’s other world and invite us to empathize with those figures, to prepare for a fate that we, too, may someday face.

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## NOTES

- 1 A shorter version of this paper was presented October 19, 2001 at the Sixteenth International Conference on Medievalism, where it benefited from comments by Gwendolyn Morgan and other members of the audience.
- 2 Barbara J. Watts, “Sandro Botticelli’s Illustrations for *Inferno* VIII and IX: Narrative Revision and the Role of Manuscript Tradition,” *Word & Image*, XI (April-June 1995) 149-73.
- 3 Watts, esp. 159-60.
- 4 For Botticelli’s engraving, see Watts, fig. 13; for Botticelli’s drawing, see Watts, fig. 18; for the Yates Thompson miniature, see Watts, fig. 10.
- 5 For Flaxman’s engraving of Lucifer, see Charles H. Taylor and Patricia Finley, *Images of the Journey in Dante’s “Divine Comedy”* (New Haven and London: Yale U P, 1997), fig. 105. For similar three-faced, pre-modern images of the devil, see Peter Brieger, Millard Meiss, and Charles Singleton, *Illuminated Manuscripts of the “Divine Comedy,”* 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1969), II, pls. 317a, 318a, 318b, 320, 321a,

321b, 322a, 322b, 323b, 325a, and 325c. For Flaxman's image of the blessed, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 189. For examples of the Egerton miniatures, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 432, 458a, 464a, 468a, 475a, 484a, and 493a. For examples of the Arsenal miniatures, see Brieger et al., II, pls. 504a and 514b. See also Morgan Library MS 676, as illustrated in Brieger, et. al., II, pl. 493c.

<sup>6</sup> For Flaxman's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 78. For pre-modern images of this episode, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 244b, 245d, 247a, 250b, 251a, and 251b.

<sup>7</sup> For Flaxman's illustration of Guido, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 86. For miniatures of Guido engulfed in flames, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 268a, 268b, 270a, 271a, 272b, 272c, 273a, 274a, 274b, and 275c.

<sup>8</sup> For Flaxman's illustrations, see Taylor and Finley, figs. 197 and 228, respectively.

<sup>9</sup> For Bartolomeo's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 85. All quotes of the *Commedia* are from Charles Singleton's three-volume translation (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1970-75).

<sup>10</sup> For Flaxman's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 214. For Giovanni's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 215.

<sup>11</sup> For Botticelli's drawing, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 170. For Blake's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 171.

<sup>12</sup> For Blake's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 19. For fifteenth-century miniatures of Minos, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 87b, 88a, 89a, and 90b.

<sup>13</sup> For Blake's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 6. For the miniatures, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 39, 8c, 42a, and 43c, respectively.

<sup>14</sup> For Blake's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 35. For Botticelli's drawing of the scene, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 33. For Botticelli's engraving of the scene, see Watts, fig. 13. For typical lateral views in miniatures of the scene, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 126c, 127b, 128b, 129b, 130c, 132a, 133b, 134b, and 135c. For a late fourteenth-century miniature in Vatican MS latini 4776 that shows the portal frontally and the heavenly messenger from behind at a three-quarters angle, see Brieger, et. al., II, pl. 131b.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of the manner in which reading text from left to right conditions many Western pictorial narratives, particularly those from the pre-modern era and those heavily influenced by pre-modern art, see Meyer Schapiro's "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs," *Semiotica*, I (1969), 223-42.

<sup>16</sup> For Blake's illustrations of the episodes described, see Taylor and Finley, figs. 11, 13, 22, 25, 31, 35, and 46, respectively.

<sup>17</sup> For the Yates Thompson miniature, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 44. For Doré's engraving, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 47.

<sup>18</sup> For Doré's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 1.

<sup>19</sup> For Doré's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 60.

<sup>20</sup> For Doré's engraving, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 209.

<sup>21</sup> For Doré's illustrations, see Taylor and Finley, figs. 204 and 213, respectively. For a late fourteenth-century miniature of dancing figures, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 203.

<sup>22</sup> For Doré's engraving, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 23.

<sup>23</sup> For miniatures of Paolo and Francesca embracing, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 83b, 88b, 89c, and 91b.

<sup>24</sup> For Lebrun's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 87. For Guttuso's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 90.

<sup>25</sup> For Blake's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 88.

<sup>26</sup> For these miniatures, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 278a, 279a, 279b, 280a, 280b, 281b, 282, 283a, and 283b, respectively.

<sup>27</sup> For Guttuso's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 41.

<sup>28</sup> For the Vatican miniature, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 42.

<sup>29</sup> For Guttuso's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 151.

<sup>30</sup> For Doré's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 150. For miniatures showing Lombardo approaching the protagonists, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 377a, 377b, 378a, and 379b.

<sup>31</sup> For these miniatures, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 125b, 117 c, 117a, 118b, 119b, 122a, and 124a, respectively.

<sup>32</sup> For Guttuso's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 113.

<sup>33</sup> For Guttuso's illustrations, see Taylor and Finley, figs. 146 and 20, respectively.

<sup>34</sup> For Blake's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 19.

<sup>35</sup> For Guttuso's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 70. For Lebrun's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 68.

<sup>36</sup> That such issues are at the heart of Lebrun's art is suggested by his stated aim of having "... analysis and synthesis succeed each other as two beasts of the same function..." as quoted in Henry J. Seldis's introductory essay "Beyond Virtuosity" for the exhibition *Rico Lebrun (1900-1964)* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, December 5, 1967 to January 14, 1968 (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967), 21.

<sup>37</sup> For Lebrun's drawing, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 101.

<sup>38</sup> For Doré's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 98. For Blake's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 99.

<sup>39</sup> For the Riccardiana illustration, see Brieger, et. al., II, pl. 314b.

<sup>40</sup> Note that Lebrun claimed "Aware as I am of the alive and elusive quality of line itself, of its changeable existence, I feel that when this quality is present in drawing the image seems to become more valid as a commentary on the human dilemma. This is a difficult and at the same time a rich procedure. It involves being able to state and contradict, to withdraw and advance, using a line full of such assertive errors and intuitive vacillations that the total design results in a live basket of questions woven into a single yes," as quoted in his introduction to the *Inferno* illustrations for *Rico Lebrun: Paintings and Drawings: 1946-1961*, the catalogue for an exhibition held at the University of Southern California in April 1961 (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1961), 14.

<sup>41</sup> The circumstances leading up to and surrounding Ugolino's demise have been widely discussed and, in the case of his possible cannibalism, heatedly debated. For short yet detailed modern accounts of those circumstances, see Pietro Boitani, "Inferno XXXIII," in *Cambridge Readings in Dante's "Comedy,"* ed. Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1981), 76-77; and S. Saffiotti Bernardi's entry for Ugolino in the *Enciclopedia dantesca*, ed. Umberto Bosco, 6 vols. (Rome: Istituto dell'Encyclopedie Italiana, 1970-78), V, 795-97.

<sup>42</sup> For a good overview of possible reasons for which Ugolino was exiled and of the circumstances under which he returned to Pisa, see Boitani.

<sup>43</sup> Some chronicles of the time, such as the anonymous *Cronica Fiorentina compilata nel sec. XIII*, ed. Pasqua Villari, in *I primi due secoli della Storia di Firenze*, 2 vols. (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1898), claim Ugolino did indeed eat his fellow prisoners. But, other than Jacopo della Lana, who declares outright that Ugolino was a cannibal ("Comedia" di Dante degli Allagheri col commento di Jacopo della Lana Bolognese, ed. Luciano Scarabelli, 3 vols. [Bologna: Tipografia Regia, 1866-67], I, 501), the commentators generally ignore the issue or refuse to take sides on it. For a discussion of the degree to which the events surrounding Ugolino's demise were known in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, see Saffiotti Bernardi, 795; and Corinna Salvadori Lonergan, "The Context of Inferno XXXIII: Bocca, Ugolino, Fra Alberigo," in *Dante Commentaries: Eight Studies of the "Divine Comedy,"* ed. David Nolan (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield; Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1977), 63-84.

<sup>44</sup> Note, for example, the ambiguity of his famous last line, "Then fasting did more than grief had done" (*Inf* 33.75), which does not reveal whether he died at that time from hunger or postponed it as hunger overcame lament and led to cannibalism.

<sup>45</sup> For further discussion of Ugolino's narrative treachery, particularly in the context of evading associations with cannibalism, see Donna Yowell, "Ugolino's 'bestial segno': The *De vulgari eloquentia* in *Inferno* XXXII-XXXIII," *Dante Studies* CIV (1986), 121-44; and Giorgio Barberi Squarotti, "L'Orazione del conte Ugolino," *Lettore italiane* XXIII (1971), 3-28. Also important, albeit more tangential to the issues at hand, are John Freccero's article "Bestial Sign and Bread of Angels (*Inferno* 32-33)," *Yale Italian Studies* I (1977), 53-66; and Robert Hollander's "*Inferno* XXL" (37-74: Ugolino's Importunity," *Speculum* LIX (1984), 549-55.

<sup>46</sup> For a thorough discussion of the references to food, mouths, mastication, and speech, see Yowell. For the narrator's reference to the rumor, see *Inferno* 33.85-86.

<sup>47</sup> Note that in the introduction (14) to the *Inferno* illustrations in *Rico Lebrun: Paintings and Drawings: 1946-1961*, Lebrun remarks, "Since (Dante's) images are agonic and compounded in metamorphosis, shaped by the climate of hell, to try to illustrate Dante without a contributing share of personal 'hell' seems impossible."

<sup>48</sup> Of course, this is not to suggest that, particularly within the mind of the artist, the perceived object or the perception itself is any less real than that which is being perceived. As Lebrun himself said during what Seldis (33) describes as the artist's "early maturity," he "must start with the tangible object, the concrete. My aim is to fashion its equivalent concreteness in paint and line. To point up this quality of existence necessitates elimination, invention and abstraction. Abstraction is the concrete revealed."

<sup>49</sup> Note that John Ciardi, a poet and famed twentieth-century translator of the *Commedia*, summed up Lebrun's passion by claiming that "the more contemplative and detached artist can create well enough in a relatively relaxed and philosophical way. But the splendid ones always burn. The true passion is for the impossible. The work of the true artist is a creative violence, an attempt on the unattainable, and violent with the blazing of its own intensity. The artist must rush to the encounter with form because time is forever running out. Rico Lebrun was such a compulsive creator," as quoted in Seldis, 35.

<sup>50</sup> In reference to the use of a line "full of such assertive errors and intuitive vacillations that the total design results in a live basket of questions woven into a single yes," Lebrun claims in his introduction to the *Inferno* illustrations for *Rico Lebrun: Paintings and Drawings: 1946-1961* that "Dante's imaginings — his constant stress on how vulnerable and driven by changes the shades of his protagonists appear — and the stamp of exalted fever he brings to the summoning of these shades, call for such drawing" (14).

<sup>51</sup> For Lebrun's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 80.

<sup>52</sup> Note that in introducing the *Inferno* illustrations for *Rico Lebrun: Paintings and Drawings: 1946-1961*, Lebrun (15) remarked that "the staggering penalties Dante devises are medieval in blood and gloom" but "can be readily translated into their less theatrical but still dreaded equivalents in our more peaceful midsts."

<sup>53</sup> For the clearest reproduction of the Musée Condé image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 79.

<sup>54</sup> For most of the other Musée Condé miniatures, see Brieger, et. al.

<sup>55</sup> Note that in the introduction to the catalogue for *Rico Lebrun: Paintings and Drawings: 1946-1961*, Peter Selz (5) remarked on the proximity of Lebrun's mid-1950s drawings of concentration camps to the *Triumph of Death* in the Campo Santo of Pisa, a fresco almost certainly by the master of the Musée Condé miniatures.

<sup>56</sup> For Baskin's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 81. For the miniatures of the thieves, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 255b, 265c, 261b, 262a, and 262b, respectively.

<sup>57</sup> For Baskin's illustrations, see Taylor and Finley, figs. 255 and 118, respectively.

<sup>58</sup> Baskin himself described the goal of art as "penetration beneath surfaces to the true meanings of things in their relation to life," as quoted in Irma B. Jaffe's *The Sculpture of Leonard Baskin* (New York: Scholars Press, 1980), 34.

<sup>59</sup> In a tribute to Baskin, his friend, the well-known poet Ted Hughes, claimed Baskin's graphic line is "an image in itself — his fundamental image," as quoted in "The Hanged Man and the Dragonfly," the introduction to Alan Fern and Judith O'Sullivan's *The Complete Prints of Leonard Baskin* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), 18.

<sup>60</sup> For Baskin's illustration of this canto, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 51.

<sup>61</sup> For the Altonensis miniature, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 50. For the other miniatures, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 173b, 173d, 178b, and 176a, respectively.

<sup>62</sup> As noted in Taylor and Finley, 60. Hughes (12) claims, "for Baskin, a work of art must have a 'real content.' As he makes clear in his various writings, by 'real content' he means the 'physical presence of our common reality—the common experience of our common humanity.' And in the case of his own work he means, more specifically, the physical presence of 'our common suffering.'"

<sup>63</sup> For Trecento references to Dante as divinely inspired, see Benvenuto da Imola, *Benvenuto Rambaldi da Imola illustrato nella vita e nelle opere, e di lui Commento Latino sulla "Divina Commedia" di Dante Alighieri*, ed. Giovanni Tamburini, 3 vols. (Imola: Galeati, 1855-56), I, 14; and Francesco da Buti, *Commento di Francesco Buti sopra la "Divina Commedia,"* ed. Crescentino Giannini, 3 vols. (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62), I, 10. For comparisons of Dante to the Prophets, see Giovanni Boccaccio, *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, ed. Luigi Sasso (Milan: Garzanti, 1995), paras. 149-50; Bruno Sandkühler's discussion of an unpublished version of Graziolo Bambaglioli's *præmio*, 137; and Benvenuto da Imola, 1, 9-10, 20, and 22. And for claims that Dante "was touched by the Holy Spirit," see Filippo Villani's, *Il Comento al primo canto dell' "Inferno" di Filippo Villani*, ed. Giuseppe Cugnoni, Collezione e di opuscoli danteschi indediti o rari, XXXI (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1896), 28-29; Boccaccio's *Trattatello*, para. 19; his *Esposizioni sopra la "Comedia,"* ed. Giorgio Padoan (1965; repr. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1994), paras. 61-63; and Falso Boccaccio's *Chiose sopra Dante*, ed. G.G. Warren, Lord Vernon (Florence: Piatti, 1846), 44. For further discussion of these examples, see my article "Historicizing the *Divine Comedy*: Renaissance Responses to a 'Medieval' Text," *The Year's Work in Medievalism* (Bozeman: Studies in Medievalism, 2000), 83-106. These translations of the commentators are mine.

<sup>64</sup> See my article "Historicizing the *Divine Comedy*...." *The Year's Work in Medievalism* (Bozeman: Studies in Medievalism, 2000), 83-106.



## Heraldry: An Iconic Language

Vincent J. Francavilla

Not so long ago, I decided to trace the roots and family origins for my wife and myself. As the first-born, of the first-born, of the first-born in both my father's and mother's families, I felt that my position as a third-generation member gave me the familiarity with the founding members and the present-day generation to act as a link or bridge with the past. As I searched through the records, I realized that the one thing our families did not possess was a coat-of-arms to stand as a symbol of unity through time. I decided to remedy this situation. My wife's family name was Hassenfratz and my mother's was Zarbo. Although the coat-of-arms of the Francavilla family was also constructed, I shall use the first two to illustrate all of the points of interest in this modern-day heraldic construction.

The challenge of creating the family coats of arms coupled with my strong interest in medieval times gave impetus to my efforts. I had read that it is possible for any family to construct its own coat-of-arms as long as the established rules of heraldry were followed. In *Heraldry of the World*, von Volborth writes:

Who is entitled to armorial bearings? [ . . . ] with certain local exceptions [ . . . ], everybody has the right to bear arms. This is how it was at the beginnings of heraldry in the Middle Ages, and so it is today (180).

This paper is the result of my attempt to bring an aspect of the medieval times into some relevance with my life today.<sup>1</sup>

About the time I decided to create the family coats of arms, I had also been developing a theory of cultural icons that I planned to apply to certain aspects of human cultural endeavors. It seemed appropriate to apply the theory to some of the material gathered from the numerous texts on heraldry that I had been consulting. The wealth and diversity of material was somewhat overwhelming at first, but a description of heraldry by von Volborth seemed to fit the premise of the cultural icon theory exactly and could serve as an organizational approach.

In the introduction to his book *Heraldry of the World*, von Volborth states,

It was during the early decades of the twelfth century, between the First and Second Crusades, that nobles, knights and princes began to identify themselves and their equipment, their shields in particular, by the use of *simple* figures in clear, *contrasting* colours, and this must be considered the origin of what is now called heraldry [ . . . ].

He further states,

The particular characteristics of these new shield devices was (sic) the fact that they remained more or less the *same* for each individual and then gradually became *hereditary*, that their use was *extended* to practically all classes and institutions in the community; and that this developed into a detailed and permanent system for the *elaboration* and application of the insignia within a short time (7).

The words *simplification*, *repetition*, *exaggeration* and *juxtaposition* were the key terms that attracted my attention. Von Volborth seemed to be using these characteristics as major components of the rules of heraldry. Simplification is indicated by the words *simple* and *same*. Repetition is indicated by the words *hereditary*, referring to repetition throughout a family line, and *extended* “to [ . . . ] all classes and institutions,” referring to repetition throughout the culture. Exaggeration is indicated by the word *elaboration*, and juxtaposition is indicated by the word *contrasting*, referring to the colors.

The cultural icon theory that I was developing proposed a commonality to all of human culture based upon the imprinting of these four universal cultural characteristics. They represent the way in which humans pattern their world. The recognition of these patterns gives meaning and can result in producing change and reshaping our environment to establish a desired measure of control. The four cultural characteristics may be thought of as general categories, which are universally distributed throughout the artifacts and seminal ideas that make up our cultural matrix, from music, to art, to literature, etc.. The symbolic representations of heraldry seemed to be a good test case for the theory.

The first step was to establish the rules of heraldry and determine whether they conformed to the four categories of characteristics. If they did, then it would strengthen the premise that any coat-of-arms created as a consequence of these rules would be an example of patterns that derived from the cultural icon theory.

In the turbulent Middle Ages, warfare was the rule rather than the exception. As a result, the cultural phenomenon of the mounted warrior — the knight — was born. The noble knight was the cultural hero of his time and he eventually achieved a mystique that continues to influence our thinking even today. This iconic power has probably never been equaled by fighting men of any other period in history. The knight wore a helmet that covered all or most of his face. This made recognition on the field of battle virtually impossible. Heraldry grew out of a need to precisely identify these fighting men in full armor, and thus prevent confusion in the heat of battle. The creative solution to the problem was a systematic code of precise identification that was gradually developed for the major fighting families

of the Middle Ages. This code subsequently spread to merchants, guilds, clergy, and any other group wishing recognition.

The functional significance of heraldic iconography in the Middle Ages was quite important since literacy was at a low ebb. Not only was it necessary to recognize friend or foe in battle, but it was desirable to recognize the quality of products made by the trade guilds (brand names), to establish legitimacy of family inheritance, and to the sad task of identifying dead or dying knights on the field of battle by their coats of arms.

Because the iconic symbols were gradually organized, according to a set of principles, by members of a group called heralds, and because these symbols were used as a form of communication, medieval heraldry may actually be thought of as a form of language. As such, it consists of symbols that can be manipulated according to a set of rules to achieve meaning. Like hieroglyphics, it is a form of picture writing, and also like hieroglyphics, anyone conversant with the symbols and rules can clearly understand its message.

The rules of heraldry are many and complex, but it is certainly possible to list the more common guidelines, which account for most of the ordinary coats-of-arms. For purposes of illustration, the heraldic coats-of-arms, or "achievements," can be grouped under the four universal cultural characteristics in the following summary.

### 1) Simplification

- a) Heraldic charges (or symbols) are usually of one predominant color, and that color is limited to two "metals" (silver or gold) and five main "tinctures" (blue, red, green, purple, and black).
- b) The charges are rendered in the simplest and most direct art form, being stylized and symmetrical. The laws of perspective and proportion do not apply to heraldic icons.
- c) The use of as few charges on a field as is necessary for identification is the preferred rule.

### 2) Repetition

- a) The main charge may be repeated on various parts of the coat-of-arms achievement in various ways to give emphasis to the meaning. Often, the rule of three plays a role in the design: three lions (e.g., Richard the Lionhearted) or three fleurs-de-lis in a band of one color.
- b) Bands of colors may be repeated over and over to give a geometric effect upon a field. Thus, checks, diamonds, wavy lines, or narrow bands may repeat throughout a field background.
- c) Secondary charges may be repeated around the borders of the field to embellish the main design.
- d) The practice of partitioning, such as halving, quartering, and further subdividing the field, often creates patterns of repetition throughout the entire coat of arms.

### 3) Exaggeration

- a) The proportions of all charges are stretched or shrunk to fit the area of the field for which they are intended. Thus, a lion may be elongated vertically or horizontally to fill the appropriate band of color on a field, or it may be diminished to fit into a small corner.
- b) The most important features of the charge are emphasized and exaggerated out of proportion. Thus, the claws of an eagle may be made larger than normal to show a more ferocious pose.
- c) Charges may be placed together without regard to their true sizes. Thus, a crown may be placed upon the top of a castle, or a lion may be placed next to a castle, both being the same size on the field without regard to the laws of perspective or proportion.
- d) The charges are usually posed in exaggerated body positions, often related to human stances. This is an attempt to show attitudes, character, or emotion. Thus, a lion may be:
  - i) Rampant - improperly erect, resting upon its sinister hind paw,
  - ii) Coward - standing upon its hind legs, but with its tail down between its legs,
  - iii) Standant - standing on all four legs resting on the ground,
  - iv) Passant - in the act of walking, the dexter paw being raised, the other three paws on the ground,
  - v) Sejant- resting in profile, seated upon its haunches, with forepaws resting on the ground,
  - vi) Couchant - lying down, but head erect and alert,
  - vii) Dormant - lying down, but eyes closed and head resting upon the extended forepaws.

### 4) Juxtaposition

- a) In the overlapping of colors, only certain types of colors may be juxtaposed upon others. Only metals may be placed upon tinctures and vice versa. This helps to achieve clarity of recognition in the field of battle where colors must be readily distinguishable.
- b) Colors may alternate in reciprocal order from one side of a shield to another, so that the right side may be seen to be the mirror image of the left in both form and color. Thus, on the right half, a red lion charge on a white field may alternate with a white lion on a red field on the left half.
- c) The practice of impaling charges over other charges creates a "shock" effect within the field. This is done in the case of "inescutcheon," where a smaller shield bearing a symbol is placed over the center of the already existing field. This serves to call attention to that symbol above all else.

d) The rule of augmentation referring to “canton” places a symbol within its own distinctive field in the upper right corner of the shield, over any other design that may be present. This rule is used when the family has been honored by a monarch for distinguished service.

e) Finally, the marks of “cadency” are placed in the most obvious area of the shield, usually the upper right corner, to show the rank of eldest son, second son, etc. This was an important identification because it was related to the inheritance of land and title.

Having been introduced to the basic rules of heraldry and their associations with the cultural icon theory, we now can turn to the task of constructing specific examples of coats-of-arms. The family names of Hassenfratz and Zarbo will provide the our focus in this paper.<sup>2</sup>

The coat-of-arms for Susan Hassenfratz contains two elements: the name, Susan, and the family name, Hassenfratz (see figure 1). The name, Susan, means “lily.”<sup>3</sup> The lily occurs in many heraldic variations and it was decided to use two of these to emphasize the name by repetition of form. The first is the fleur-de-lis, a reference to France and reflecting the fact that Susan studied French in college. The fleur-de-lis is repeated three times in gold (“or”) in the upper or chief section of the shield. Because these represent the first three subdivisions of the field, it was appropriate for a first name. The second form of the lily in white (“argent”) was juxtaposed on either side of a white chevron that subdivided the remainder of the blue (“azure”) field into three parts. In the base portion of the field, the third part not yet filled, was placed a gold harp, a symbol of music. This was to signify that Susan sang in a choral group for fourteen years. If we were to describe the choice of heraldic charges in literary terms, we would say that Susan is metaphorically represented by a flower and a song. The flower is a simplified symbol repeated five times in two juxtaposed locations. Thus, the heraldic representation of Susan conforms to the universal characteristics of the cultural icon theory.

The name Hassenfratz presents more of a challenge. It is said to be derived from a German term meaning “frowning face.”<sup>4</sup> Family tradition associates the meaning of the German terms *Hassen* and *fratz(e)* with “grimace” or “frowning face.” Consultation with a number of references on the etymology of German names does indeed substantiate this as one possible interpretation (Bach, 291; Betteridge, 164, 219; Davis, 96, 137; Gottschald, 223; Pfeiffer, 370, 514; Schemann, 252, 390; Scholze-Stubenrecht, 364). Initially, we must differentiate between Hassenfratz and another spelling that is also encountered. The single “s” in the name Hasenfratz imparts a meaning that is not compatible with the family name Hassenfratz with the double “s.” The term *hasen* refers to a “hare,” while

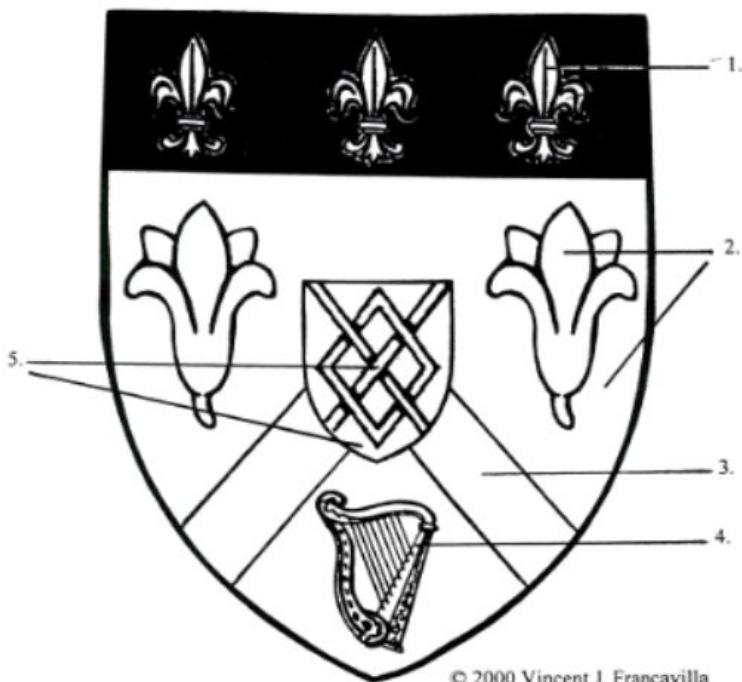


Figure 1. The Coat of Arms for Susan Hassenfratz

1. Three gold ("or") fleur-de-lis on field of black ("sable")
2. Two White ("argent") lilies on field of blue ("azure")
3. White chevron
4. Gold ("or") harp on a field of blue ("azure")
5. Gold ("or") fret on a field of green ("verdant")

the term *hassen* refers to “hate” and the attitudes associated with it. Having made this differentiation, we must acknowledge the fact that local cultural traditions often differ from one area to the next. Word usage can be frustratingly imprecise, allowing for a number of variations. Accordingly, the difference in the double “s” and the single “s” spellings may point to an entirely different origin for the two names or may simply reflect local variation or imprecision in the rendering of the name. The members of this family cling to the double “S” spelling of the name and the associated connection with the image of the grimacing face.

The term *fratz(e)* means “grimace, distortions, or caricature.” Davis states that the word may be borrowed from Italian *frasche* or French *frasques*, meaning “tricks or hoax,” since it is impossible to trace the word to a satisfactory teutonic source (96). Family tradition contends that there is an Alsace-Lorraine connection to the family history, and this may account for the borrowing from the French. It is also not uncommon to drop a final vowel from a name, transforming *fratze* into *fratz*. We may note that, in the Hassenfratz family, there is a medical history of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Some of the family members have been noticed to exhibit symptoms of stressed or contorted facial frowning - a grimacing face - during the occurrence of this condition. It is possible that the family folklore is actually traceable to a genetic predisposition for a medical condition. In any case, the traditional meaning for the family name of “Hassenfratz” does seem to be substantiated by a reasonable interpretation of the definitions encountered in the references. Accordingly, the derivation of the coat-of-arms appears to be in order. This is important because the meaning of the name will be used to select an appropriate symbol for the shield emblem.

In heraldry there exists a symbol or charge called a “fret.” Using a literary pun, we can substitute the fret for the name meaning “frowning face.” In heraldry this is called “canting,” a heraldic pun. Pakula, in *Heraldry and Armor of the Middle Ages*, describes canting arms as [ . . . ] allusive arms. It refers to a playing upon the name of the bearer; often a whimsical reference” (235). Neubecker further describes canting: “The effect of a sign depends on the associations it arouses. A play on words automatically arouses associations; “Canting Arms” in heraldry are seen as an example of these” (982). He also states, “Canting arms have always been popular. In many cases it may require a knowledge of philology or dialects to unravel the source of the pun (118).

Canting arms provide a bridge or linkage from one field of reference to another. It allows us to visually portray the family name, Hassenfratz. The gold fret is juxtaposed directly on top of the white chevron in the center, or fess point, of the shield. This is called “inescutcheon” and has the effect of focusing the coat of arms at a dominant center.

The application of the cultural icon theory may also be viewed at a more basic level involved with the actual formation of a heraldic symbol or

charge. For example, the fleur-de-lis is an iconic stylization of a flower achieved by manipulation according to the four universal cultural characteristics. When the characteristic of simplification is applied to the form of the lily, the result is a reduction in the number of petals and also a restriction of their form to two types: central “bullet” shape and two s-shaped side petals. The body is restricted by a knot-like binding. Repetition then results in the tripling of the image itself, while within the single lily the two s-shaped petals are exact replicas and the base or stem is also repeated in a tri-fold pattern. Exaggeration works with simplification on the lily, again producing the emphasized stem in one central area with two side structures projecting outward. Finally, the universal characteristic of juxtaposition is demonstrated by the two s-shaped petals affixed to opposite sides of the central axis major petal. Thus, we can see that the cultural icon theory works on a hierarchy of levels from the basic formation of the heraldic charges or symbols to their assembly within the field. E. H. Gombrich discusses the importance of this hierarchic principle in his book *The Sense of Order* (7-8). If we think of the lily flower as a thematic core element, then a modification of certain of the external aspects will occur to some degree when the representational matrix of its form is changed to bring certain features into aesthetic harmony. This is the process of iconification. We shall return to the application of the cultural icon theory at the level of the creation of individual heraldic symbols when we discuss the heraldic cross, used in the next coat of arms.

We can now turn our attention to the construction of the Zarbo coat-of-arms. Since the derivation of this coat-of-arms does not depend upon canting, but rather arises from the symbolism of the patron saint and city coat-of-arms, no emphasis need be placed on the actual meaning associated with the name. The basis for the shield goes back to the heraldry of the city Licata, from which the family originated. As is the case with many medieval cities, and in fact, earlier classical cities, a patron deity or saint protects it. In this case, the Church of St. Angelo de Licata is located in the central square and serves as an architectural focal point. Inside the church is displayed the coat-of-arms of St. Angelo (see figure 2). The founder of the Zarbo family in America, Antonio, was an artist by trade and he taught his son, Vincent, portraiture. The right side of the figure showing St. Angelo was painted by Vincent Zarbo. His grandson, Anthony “Rusty” Zarbo, was also an artist, and his rendering of the coat-of-arms for St. Anthony is on the left of the figure. The originals are in the Church of St. Angelo in Licata. Below the paintings, in a small shield, is the coat of arms of Licata, a small coastal seaport. The castle by the sea is a common representation for a coastal city and makes use of the juxtaposition of symbolic elements.



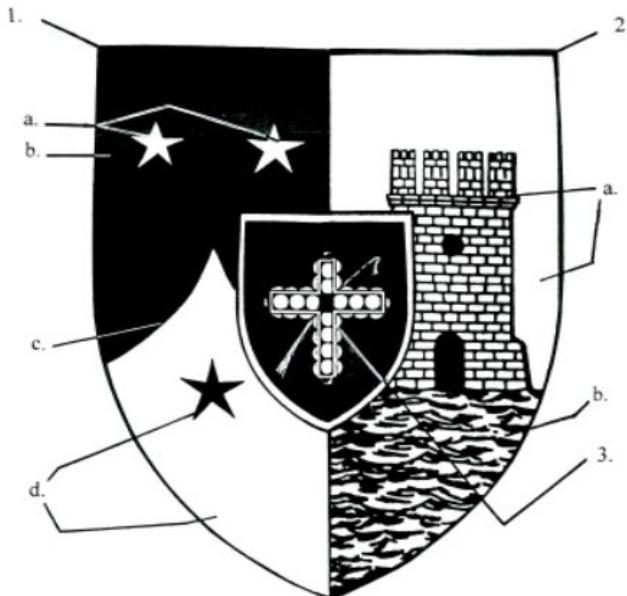
Figure 2. The Coat-of-Arms for St. Angelo de Licata and the City Arms of Licata

Figure 3 shows the juxtaposition of the right and left halves (*dexter/sinister*) that combine to create the coat-of-arms for the Zarbo family. The description is as follows (see figure 3).

1) The shield is divided in half (*per pale*), with the right side of the shield based upon the arms of St. Angelo de Licata. This includes (a) three gold stars (*molets*), with (b) two stars in a field of black above. The dexter field is separated (c) by a modified (bowed) chevron and (d) with a single gold star in a field of light blue below.

2) The sinister field of the shield is based upon the arms of the seaport of Licata. This includes (a) the red (*gules*) castle on a field of white (*argent*) by the (b) blue (*azure*) sea.

An analysis of the charges on the shield reveals that the composition conforms to the four universal cultural characteristics. The castle by the sea is a simplification representing the whole of Licata. In a literary sense, then, it is a synecdoche, or a part representing the whole. The stars are simplifications that repeat over the right side and are in juxtaposition above and below.



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Figure 3. The Coat of Arms for the Zarbo Family

1. Right side: a) three gold stars, b) two stars above, c) modified chevron, d) gold star in field of blue
2. Left side: a) red castle, b) blue sea, c) inescutcheon, Latin Cross

St. Angelo de Licata was a member of a noble house, some of whom may have served in the Crusades in the East. Thus, his coat of arms bears (3) a jeweled (*bezanty*) Latin Eastern Mediterranean cross in gold and white on a field of red. In literary terms, the cross is a simplification that represents the crusader who came to the East. This cross symbol is then placed on a shield over the center, in juxtaposition to the rest of the field inescutcheon. The setting of the cross inescutcheon serves at least two purposes. Thematically, it is a mark of distinction referring back to the crusader member of the family. Artistically, it binds together the two halves of the shield with a central focal point reminiscent of the bridging function of the fret on the Hassenfratz shield.

If we return again to the application of the cultural icon theory at the basic level of the creation of individual heraldic symbols, our focus now shifts to a consideration of the heraldic cross, used in the Zarbo coat of arms. E. H. Gombrich discusses the heraldic cross to demonstrate the principle of “graded complication” and it becomes evident that the universal cultural characteristics function in this case (see figure 4).

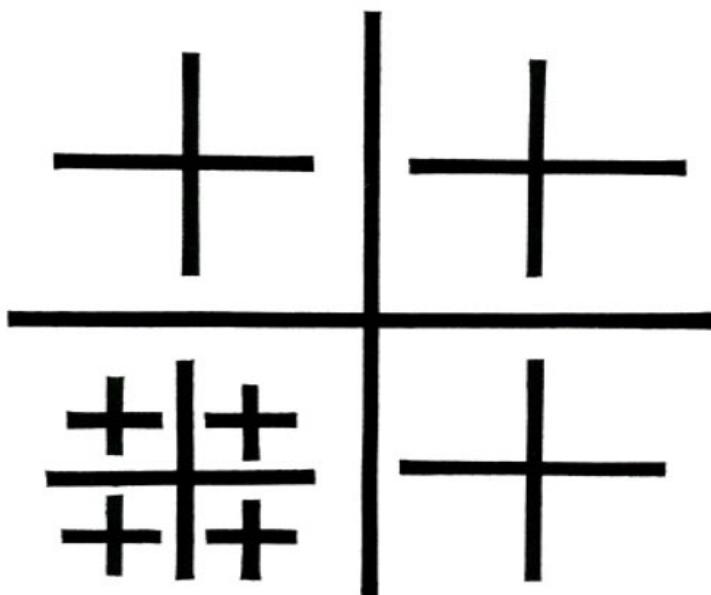


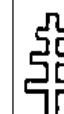
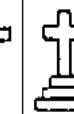
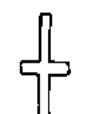
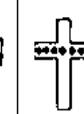
Figure 4. Simplification of the E. H. Gombrich figure for progressive filling, using the heraldic cross as an example (original diagram from Figure 86, E. H. Gombrich, 1984, 81)

It may be useful at this point to reduce the principle to a simplified [simplification] diagram of an extremely monothematic design; starting from an equilateral cross a further such cross can be placed between each of its arms and the procedure continued [simplification and repetition] for as long as the sharpness of the pen and the grain of the paper permit. It would be equally possible to continue outward, framing the first cross by another one, both procedures extending [exaggeration] infinitely [ . . . ] framing, fitting, linking. Any of these procedures of “graded complication” can point the way towards infinity (80).

An interesting result of my research on the heraldic cross used in the Zarbo coat-of-arms was the recognition of the value of the cultural icon theory in demonstrating the full potential for expression of the cross in all its forms. In the creative, expressive language of heraldry, the cross is the most commonly used symbol and thus contains the full variety of iconic forms. Each specific shape of the cross carries with it a special meaning about a family’s history and characteristics and thus proclaims its message to all who are skilled enough to read it.

In figure 5, the inflection of the heraldic cross is studied by means of a Punnet square-like chart. This allows the matching of any universal characteristic of the cultural icon (horizontal row along the top) with a specific locus on the cross (vertical row along the side) to generate a specific final heraldic cross form. The blank boxes in the square represent iconic opportunities, or niches, which can potentially be filled by new representations. If, as an example, we consider the top horizontal row in which the center locus of the cross (i.e., thematic core element) is inflected as it passes through the four forms of the universal characteristics, we generate the following cross icons from left to right. As the centers disappear we obtain: A1a) Cross-quartered, A1b) Cross-pierced, A1c) Maltese cross. As the center multiplies use, we get: A2a) Union Jack of Britain. As the center expands, we have: A3a) Cross-nowy, A3b) Cross-nowy quadrant. As the center is juxtaposed with other elements, we get: A4a) Cross-interlaced (Celtic cross), A4b) Shield charge over center (inescutcheon).

If, as a further example, we now consider the bottom horizontal row, we can generate a number of other cross icons when all four arms of the cross (thematic core element) are inflected through the four universal characteristics. If we consider square E3, we find expanded arms forming: E3a) Cross-pommy, E3b) Cross-urdy, E3c) Cross-patee, and E3d) Cross-potent. If we move to square E2, we generate: E2a) Cross-crosslet, E2b) Cross-crosslet crossed, E2c) Cross-botony and E2d) Cross-potent repotent. It should be noted that the cross-bezanty used in the Zarbo coat of arms also belongs in category E2, and a rather similar cross can be found in D2.

UNIVERSAL → CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS ↓ DYNAMIC LOCUS ON ICON	1. SIMPLIFICATION	2. REPETITION			3. EXAGGERATION	4. JUXTAPOSITION
A. CENTER	 1a Cross quartered		 St. George	 St. Andrew	 St. Patrick	 3a Cross nowy
	 1b Cross pierced	 1c Maltese cross	 2a Union Jack of Britain (3 cross superimposed)		 3b Cross nowy quadrant	 4a Cross interlaced (Celtic Cross)
B. UPPER ARM	 1a Tau cross or St. Anthony's cross	 2a Patriarchal cross	 2b Papal cross	 3 Cross of St. Peter		 4a Label on cross (desig- nating 1st son)
	 4b Crown juxtapo- sed on upper arm of cross					
C. LOWER ARM	 1 Cross fitched	 2 Cross of Lorraine		 3a Latin cross	 3b Calvary cross (cross on steps)	 4a Templar's cross
	 4b Globus crucifer					 4c Masonic device
D. SIDE ARMS	 1 Cross of St. George (with side arms reduced)	 2a Cross with side arms bent	 2b Cross with repeating solid circles on arm	 3 Cross with right arm potent & left arm removed	 4 Cross with side arms augmented with axes	
	 1a Cross humetta	 1c Cross moline fimbriated	 2c Cross bottony	 2b Cross crosslet crossed	 3a Cross pommy	 3b Cross undy
E. MULTIPLE ARMS	 1b Cross double pitchee (double- pointed edges)	 2a Cross crosslet	 2d Cross potent repotent	 3c Cross patee	 3d Cross potent	 4a Cross annuletty (rings at ends)
	 4b Cross fleurety (fleur de lis at ends)					

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Figure 5. The Language of Heraldry: The Case of the Heraldic Cross

From this consideration, it appears that the heraldic crosses derive from a process that is iconic in nature. When considered in the context of the cultural icon theory, the thematic core of the cross has a number of dynamic loci through which an evolution or transformation of form may occur. This transformation may be gradual, retaining much of its original form, or it may make great leaps in morphological characteristics due to events, having great impact upon a culture. The cross came into rapid prominence due to the establishment of Christianity. Once it was established as an independent and significant symbol, the Church nurtured its form and codified it as a venerated cultural symbol. From that time on, the morphology of the various heraldic cross forms retained a rather fixed character. This crystallization of form accounts for both the power and inflexibility of the heraldic character. It became an icon frozen in time.

The practice of placing crosses on the shields of crusaders, beginning in the twelfth century, set the precedent for many noble families to adopt a cross as a part of their coats-of-arms. Functionally, the inflection of the many forms facilitated the independent identification of each variation with a specific family. Thus, the powerful cultural icon of the cross became the most frequently used and firmly fixed iconic symbol in the language of heraldry.

The subject of this paper is an odyssey into the world of heraldry. We have seen that, in modern times, any family can establish its own new coat-of-arms if they wish. By simply following the rules of heraldry they can produce a design and then register that design with the proper governmental authority. In the United States that body is the U.S. Coast Guard.

The creation of family coats-of-arms as a lasting tribute to the history of the Hassenfratz and Zarbo families is one example of such. The recognition of their involvement in a much larger pattern of cultural hierarchy, in turn, reflects the application of the four universal cultural characteristics, simplification, repetition, exaggeration and juxtaposition as part of heraldic processes. Finally, because heraldry may be thought of as a form of pictorial language, other aspects of the arts may similarly be analyzed in the context of the cultural icon theory.

## NOTES

1. I am grateful to Gwendolyn Morgan for suggesting this as a fitting topic for the journal.
2. Since the family coats-of-arms and the case of the heraldic cross diagrams were copyrighted in 2000, the writer is pleased to give permission for use of these figures in this paper.
3. *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1963 (1181)) lists the name, Susan, in the section on common English given names.
4. Long family tradition identifies Hassenfratz as meaning "frowning face."

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