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EDITORIAL

This issue of *Arts* has been delayed, and we apologise. Because of the delay it is made up of inaugural lectures (valuable as these are) which it is our responsibility to publish. Other material, particularly 'Forum', is held over.

The major (although not the only) reason for the delay has been the uncertainty of funding. We are able to appear now thanks to a grant from the I. E. Ivey bequest to the University. It is probably the last university grant we will receive. There is some hope that the Faculty, hard pressed as it is, will be able to assist journals published within it; but the nature and extent of this assistance is yet to known from the Dean. In short, *Arts* is in similar straits to the Faculty itself, which must lose yet more staff and at the same time cut back its undergraduate intake.

Many members of the Association are life members, who paid their life subscriptions at a time when a dollar—or a pound—was worth much more than it is now. Production costs have outrun such subscriptions, and we appeal openly for help. Cheques should be made out to 'Sydney University—Arts Association' and addressed to the Arts Association, Box 2, Holme Building (A09), University of Sydney, Sydney 2006. As donations to the University, they should be tax deductible.

G.L.L.

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Methodological Transplants: Linguistics, Science, the Arts and Literary Criticism

GIOVANNI CARSANIGA*

By outlining a few interdisciplinary issues in the context of recent developments of critical theory, I intend to pay tribute to my distinguished predecessors, Frederick May and Gino Rizzo, both of whom, in different ways, were passionately committed to interdisciplinarity. I would really need a series of lectures to realise my intentions, and even a cursory summary of what I intend to do would take too long.

Let me therefore move straightaway into my argument and take as my starting point a piece of literature. By doing so I am already begging a number of questions: that it is possible to distinguish literature from non-literature, that literature comes in recognisable chunks or pieces, and that there is someone, a writer, who gave it a visible form which I shall call text. These propositions, furthermore, presuppose that there is someone who does the distinguishing or the recognising, and that this someone can be identified with one or more real persons. All this may be intuitive but is still problematic.

I spoke of the text as 'visible' form, but until recently the vast majority of recognisably literary texts have been consumed in audible form. Many still are to-day. I use the word 'consumed' to avoid prejudging the issue of what exactly one does with the text, or to it, which I hope may become clearer as I go on. Often the visual component of the audible text is more likely to be a performance than its appearance on a written or printed page. Without being consciously aware of the fact, most times we think of a literary text as if we were thinking of its original form we are actually thinking about our experience of its production, reproduction and consumption. We experience the poem or novel as a book object, or a part of a book object, totally unlike what it

**Professor of Italian Studies.* *This inaugural lecture was delivered on 9 April, 1992.*

was when it was first written, even granting that it had or could have an original form as opposed to various co-existing drafts. We read the play in the quiet of our sitting room, or see it on television, or enjoy it in the distinctive environment of a theatre, through the mediation of a host of intermediaries: actors, designers, stage hands, scenery painters and builders, set decorators, property people, lighting engineers, a director and a dramaturge, not forgetting the rest of the audience; so that the same play, seen on two different nights, or in two different productions, amounts to utterly different experiences, throwing doubt on what exactly is meant by 'the same play'.

I also propose to assume that our piece of literature is a work of art in the sense of being the product of an aesthetically satisfying activity: aiming, that is, to give pleasure to its practitioners, both producers and consumers. Literature does that, in common with painting or music, but things are widely different in most other respects. One does not enjoy a piece of literature as one does a concert or a painting. To begin with, most people, whether they are literate or not, can feel some pleasure merely by seeing a painting or a sculpture (in most cases via a reproduction), by looking at a dance, by listening to a poem or a play. But only literate people can read a text. Listening to the sounds of a musical performance, preferably live, is a pleasure open to all. These differences in modes of consumption are due to the different peculiarities of the artistic 'object'. Music is usually encoded in a score, but the original score handwritten by the composer is not for consumption, not even by the highly trained few who could re-create its sound in their mind (and even for them reading a score is not as rich an experience as listening to its performance). Various performances of that score may have been encoded by other means on vinyl, tape or CD records; but we can only access that encoding through playing machines with varying degrees of fidelity. No playback or performance is *the* piece of music. There is no original, in the same sense as there is one for a painting or a sculpture. And yet we experience most visual arts through reproductions which approximate it in varying degrees of accuracy. In the case of paintings they may be analogues of the original: not in the case of sculptures mostly reproduced as two-dimensional illustrations.

The original manuscript of a work of literature, when it exists, is largely irrelevant to our appreciation of its text. If we are literate, we obtain access to the text through a multitude of analogues which, however much unlike the original or one another, are all equally valid representations (to concern ourselves with translations would require a separate lecture).

Literature differs from the visual arts and music also because its medium is language, which, unlike sounds, shapes or colours, happens to be the chief means of communication between human beings. Sounds, shapes and colours can also be used as signs within a communication code. Codes, however, are sign systems either referring to a pre-constituted and conventionally invariable set of meanings, like traffic signs or electrical wiring; or encoding language, like the Morse code, or the codes used by spies. Sounds, shapes and colours are meaningfully and even systematically used by artists to express a variety of emotions; and to that extent one loosely uses phrases such as 'the language of music' and 'the meaning of colours'. But they lack the two fundamental properties of language: the ability to express new contents, and to refer to itself.

The question of self-reference needs clarification. We need to distinguish between formal and narrative self-reference, which all arts have, and discursive self-reference which is a property of language. Self-reference is formal, when certain parts of the work, or of other people's compositions, are copied, quoted, elaborated; it is narrative when the work refers to its art form in its contents. The music of Bach, for instance, exhibits in his fugues the most absorbing and intellectually satisfying self-reference of the formal type. Saint-Saëns *Le carnival des animaux* or Elgar's *Enigma Variations* show narrative self-reference, alluding to other musicians in a more or less transparent way. The graphic work of the great Maurits Cornelis Escher is wholly based on self-reference of both types. And we are all familiar with what the French call *mise en abîme*: the play within the play in Shakespeare and Pirandello, the film about film-making such as Truffaut's *La nuit americaine* or Diane Kourys's *A Man in Love*, the ballet about ballet like Antony Tudor's *Gala Performance*. Literature offers any number of poems about poetry, from Horace's *Epistula ad Pisones* through Boileau's

Art Poétique to Manzoni's *Sermone a Giovan Battista Pagani*; or of novels about the writing of novels: to mention only a recent Italian example, Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* (*If on a Winter's Night A Traveller,* 1981).

It is easier to maintain that all arts are self-referential by pointing out that reference to external reality is irrelevant to them. That does not mean that the arts may not refer to external reality, only that their meaning, and our enjoyment of it, is not dictated by reference, narrative contents or mimesis (imitation or reproduction of reality). Music, for instance, is incapable of explicit narrative content. One may guess that the fourth movement of Beethoven's 6th Symphony alludes to a storm, but it is possible to identify the previous movement as a 'scene by a brook' only by reading it in the programme. No one could identify the four *Kalevala* legends Sibelius was inspired by in his tone poems simply by listening to the music. When dance tells a story, as in *Swan Lake* or *The Nutcracker,* it does so through movements that bear little resemblance to normal body movements, and require a conventional interpretation. Most modern dance is abstract. As for representational painting, no one would be so naive today as to judge of its merit by the accuracy with which it portrays reality. Reference to external reality is equally irrelevant in the case of literature, in spite of the fact that a great deal of the discussion about it is still concerned with what it allegedly refers to, or communicates.

Reference and communication are not identical concepts. Literature may communicate emotions or ideas, but it does not follow that it necessarily refers to anything outside the emotions or ideas it contains. Schoolteachers, alas! still train students to evaluate literature as if the point of doing it were to compare the imaginary characters in texts to real persons. Historical novels, like Manzoni's *I promessi sposi,* or Tolstoy's *War and Peace,* mention real persons, such as Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, or Napoleon; but their appearance is functional to the fictional plot of the novel, not to real history. Whereas history writing or everyday communication are mostly about things outside the act of communication itself, literature, like music, painting, or any other art, is mostly self-contained and almost inevitably ends up by drawing attention to its internal structure; not only to what it says but also, perhaps primarily,

to how it does it. Art tells us something about reality mostly insofar as the work of art itself becomes part of our cultural horizon. Language, however, is self-referential in a more complex way, which I called discursive self-reference. We can only talk about language (including the language of literature) by using language, and we distinguish the two levels by calling 'metalanguage' the language we use to talk about language. We can use mathematical symbols to elaborate and express mathematical theory, and to that extent the language of mathematics can be self-referential: but it is limited to logico-mathematical propositions and cannot encode any contents outside its own system. We cannot discuss piano playing by playing the piano, or the Heidelberg School's work by painting a picture. It seems therefore reasonable to suppose that an improved understanding of what language is about might result also in a better understanding of literature.

Granted that the point of literary language is not reference, it still is a form of communication, often powerful enough to cross time and space. We therefore have to establish in what way the language of literature differs from that of everyday communication, technical manuals, legal contracts and commercial correspondence. We cannot merely say that the difference lies in the fact that literature's use of language is aesthetically satisfying, because that was part of our initial assumption, and one cannot use as evidence what was part of one's assumptions. In the past critics tried to sidestep the difficulty by saying that there are certain forms of language having in themselves an aesthetically satisfying quality. They thus developed a theory of specifically 'artistic' forms called rhetorical figures, such as metaphors, similes and other tropes. They prescribed the use of restricted lexical choices. Words and expressions used in everyday communication were deemed to be inelegant and banned from poetry. A wide range of contents was also banned. This type of criticism was developed from the classical age down to the present time, often with great ingenuity and marvellous subtlety; and it yielded many valuable insights into the nature of the literary phenomenon. It did not explain, however, why many texts written according to the rules, full of all sorts of rhetorical figures and dignified lexical choices, about uplifting subjects, crafted with great sincerity and moral commitment, were obviously

worthless; whereas many others, apparently unadorned, undignified or 'irregular', were clearly of great artistic merit.

This kind of criticism, prescribing the lexical ingredients of lyric poetry or the structure of regular tragedies, went hand in hand with prescriptive grammar, and both were based on an extensive study of classical languages and literatures. In the seventeenth century the rationalistic grammar of Port Royal, with its underlying belief in the psychological foundations of linguistic categories and in the close connection between the structure of language and that of logical thought, harmonised well with the rationalistic criticism of Boileau, stressing the interdependence of clear thought and clear style, and the role of reason in poetry as an antidote to the blazing follies of the Baroque age, '*de tous ces faux brillants l'éclatante folie*'. The end of the eighteenth century saw the beginning of historical and comparative linguistics, which deeply influenced literary studies making them heavily dependent upon textual criticism, the study of tradition and the discovery of literary sources and analogues. The awareness that linguists such as Wilhelm von Humboldt derived from their study of linguistic change and development of the energy and creativity of language, reflecting the energy and spirit of human societies, was consonant with much of the best criticism of the Romantic age, with its emphasis on creativity and emotional power.

The rift between literature and language studies began when, in the first decades of this century, linguistics went through a sort of revolution which may be conveniently symbolised by the name of Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure saw that the investigation of a historical phenomenon through time and space clearly does not amount to a description of what constitutes the phenomenon itself. One may be able to gain some understanding of the purposes and use of a car (to give an updated example) by looking at the history of transport and comparing one vehicle with another, but that would not be the same as the knowledge of how a car is engineered and what makes it work. Of course pre-Saussurean linguists had a pretty good grasp of language structures; but the point is that such a grasp could not have been wholly and safely founded on the comparative study of aspects of language, taken at various stages in various language histories, since the choice of those aspects and

the identification of those stages presupposed linguistic structures, and an intuitive non-explicit procedure for recognising or constructing them. Saussure's plea for a synchronic or structural study of language systems was a plea that discovery procedures be made explicit. In his perspective, synchronic and diachronic (or historical) methodologies were complementary: the results obtained through one can be embodied in hypotheses to be confirmed through the other. In practice Structuralism, as the synchronic methodology came to be known because of its reliance on the concepts of structure and system, came to replace or displace traditional philology, causing the resentment of many of its adepts. They reacted by denying that structuralism could be a proper scientific method for studying language or languages. That in turn caused some reflection on the question whether, and under what conditions, linguistics could claim to be a science, and its methods transplanted to other fields of research.

It is easy to see how the Saussurean revolution caused a breach between the study of language and literary studies which, in many academic departments, were inextricably tied to the study of the old classical languages in which many great masterpieces had been written and hence to traditional philology. Criticism at its most 'scientific' had been closely concerned with tradition, periodisation, source-influence; and critics therefore were antagonistic to the notion that the diachronic dimension could somehow be dispensed with. At its most subjective, their work dealt with elusive impressions, personal evaluations, intuitions, perceptions, such as only discerning practitioners of literature could hope to have. They therefore rejected the idea that criticism could be made 'scientific' through a 'science of language', and open to any upstart capable of applying a few objective 'discovery procedures' to a text.

The Saussurean revolution had however brought to fruition a tendency which had already begun in the eighteenth century: a shift from an atomistic view of language as a lexicon of reality to a contextual and epistemological view, focussing on the way in which language represents mental processes. Freed from its obsession with individual sounds and lexical items, which had reached its climax in the second half of the nineteenth century, linguistics could now profitably explore large systems of structures. Historical

and comparative philologists used to construct suitably large fields of study by extending the diachrony through which they investigated and reconstructed small particles of language. The new linguists widened their context by choosing larger synchronic samples or 'corpuses' of language which they studied in *toto*. Structuralist methodology could therefore be seen as better suited to the systematic study of literary texts than one having as its object the study of isolated forms. But what could a literary 'corpus' consist in? a single poem? the collection of which that poem was a part? the whole poetic output of its author? the whole literary tradition to which the writer belonged, and by contrast those to which s/he did not belong? Should literary critics study texts as individual instances of poetic *parole*, or take them as manifestations of the great system of poetic *langue* which is the real object of investigation? In order to gain a clearer insight into these methodological transplants, let us go back to the 'piece of literature' we took as our starting point.

Let us imagine that our literary object is a love sonnet, two words roughly referring to its contents, or subject matter, and form. I have said 'contents and form' as if they were two ontologically separate and discrete things, but things are not so simple. In the poem itself neither member of the pair can subsist without the other. And yet a closer investigation makes it possible to distinguish between not two but four separate concepts:

(1) *the form of the form,* in this case its being a sonnet with a specific form common to countless other sonnets;
(2) *the form of the contents,* being the conventions the poem shares with similar ways of expressing one's love in poetry (for instance, the assumption that it is unrequited);
(3) *the substance of the form,* that is, the structure of the text; and
(4) *the substance of the contents*: what the poem actually says.

This distinction, borrowed from Saussure and the Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev, can be fruitfully applied to literary criticism because it provides a justification of a structuralist, as distinct from a historical, study both of the various conventions shaping types of literary contents, such as the love lyric with its complaint about unrequited love, the epic romance with its typical duels between

knights, the fairy tale with its happy ending, the detective story with its turns and twists and suspense; and also of such form and contents classes as sonnets, canzoni, anecdotes, jokes, not to speak of more traditional genres like tragedy, comedy, the novel.

One could multiply distinctions of this kind; between the various voices that may be speaking in the text, say the poet as himself or herself; the poet as some other kind of poet, a bard, a visionary, a prophet; a dramatic character speaking in verse; a narrator. In a narrative text we may have the narrator speaking in the first person as the writer, or as the writer introducing the narrator who tells the story, or as the protagonist of the story. There may be different viewpoints or focuses: the omniscient narrator with unlimited access to the characters' thoughts and emotions; the knowledgeable but not omniscient narrator who may be on the fringes of the story as an observer or inside it as a minor character; the limited outlook narrator, who may be telling the story in the third person from the viewpoint of one of the characters, or the protagonist speaking in the first person. The focalisation may shift from one to the other of these types. And then we have to consider whom all these voices speak to, within the text and outside it: whether the intended recipient of the text is someone imagined to be within the story (for instance, the woman to whom the poet declares his love in the sonnet); or who could be within it as an ideal contemporary of the characters; or totally outside the story, as another writer, a critic, a cultivated reader, an uncultivated reader, a contemporary of the author or someone from a distant future. Here too various combinations are possible.

Our love sonnet stands now identified as a rather complex chunk. As to its form, it is perceived as a poem-thing intrinsically different and relating to different interpretive conventions from a drama-thing or a novel-thing. Within its formal class it is perceived as a sonnet long before it is decoded: one needs only to look at the number of lines and the pattern of rhymes. Its pre-verbal significance is totally independent of its linguistic message even if it concurs with it in the realisation of its global meaning. The form of the contents also transcends language, though we obviously rely on our decoding in order to decide what it is: to be a member of the class of love poems transcends the message of this particular sonnet.

Like a feminine plural noun in Italian or French, belonging to two separate morphological classes which cannot be easily seen or separated in the actual word, our text belongs to two formal classes, poem and sonnet, the latter implying the former; but neither membership is actually visible in a separate label. Like Saussure's *langue*, they are objective but intangible realities, existing outside any individual manifestation of their members.

When we move to substance, it may appear at first sight that its form and subject matter are somehow embodied in the poem-thing, but how can that be? Unlike a painting-thing or a sculpture-thing of which there must be an original, displaying those features that enable one to assign it to a specific class of objects, the poem-thing has no original and cannot consequently have reproductions, only presentations. Whereas the original of a visual work of art displays qualities that may be completely missing from a reproduction, a poem's substance does not change for being written in longhand or printed or spoken aloud, though the manner of its presentation can also be significant. Its text is a real, factual object, and yet it is impossible to say where or how it actually exists.

It is now becoming increasingly obvious that the meaning of a literary text cannot be reduced to any of the factors we have singled out so far, but must depend upon their complex interaction. I cannot possibly explain the whole of semantics in a sentence: but let me just say that meaning does not arise on a specified level at the end of the decoding process, but occurs at every level on which an element in a structure is related to its component parts and to the system of which it is a component in all the various ways we have looked at so far. The fact that something can be recognised as having a structure or being part of one is evidence of its having a meaning of some sort. The total ascertainable meaning (I am going to suggest in due course that the whole meaning is not ascertainable), results from all these partial meanings and at the same time is much more than their mere sum. Structuralists have shown how the elements can be identified. Each element in a structure can be seen as

(a) an arrangement of smaller parts;
(b) a part in a larger arrangement;

(c) a member of the classes of all similarly arranged elements;
(d) a member of the classes of all elements that may become a part of the same larger arrangement.

Let me clarify this by means of a simple linguistic example. Take the sentence *He comes invariably late.* Let us look at *invariably.* It can be analysed as a linear arrangement (in its written form), or a complex sound sequence (in its spoken form) of a negative prefix *in-* followed by an adjectival stem *-vari-* and the suffix *-able* modified by the adverbial ending *-ly.* Note that identifiable elements are not always neatly separable: *-ly* is not separable from *-able* in the previous example as it is from *real* in *really. Invariably* is itself a part of the larger arrangement *He comes invariably late.* It is a member of various classes of similarly constituted words, like *indelibly, internally, intangibly,* which may be extended to include other negative adverbs like *untruthfully, unmistakably,* but not other adverbs such as *rather, always, too.* It is a member of the class of all adverbs that can take its place in the sentence without infringing any rule of acceptability, including *rather, always, too,* but not *indelibly, internally* or *intangibly.* Similarly any part of *invariably* may be shown to be an arrangement of minimal significant units of sound called phonemes, which can themselves be subject to further analysis through a sound spectroscope; and the whole sentence may be related to an endless continuum of higher contexts. Each element has a meaning at the level on which it combines in the structure: *in-* is negative in *invariably* but not in *internally; invariably* means in this context 'always' and not 'changelessly'. The meaning of the whole sentence depends on its context: but more about that in a moment.

Coming back to our love sonnet, it is a sequential arrangement of words. It is also a part of a number of larger arrangements. It belongs to the work of the poet in its entirety, to a particular series of love sonnets by the same author, to the class of poems written during a particular period, to a body of national literature. It is a member of the class of poems called sonnets by virtue of their internal formal structure, or love poems by reason of their contents. One may look at it also as a member of the class of all texts which would fit any system of which it can be a part (other drafts or

versions of the same sonnet, alternative poems that might be included in its place in an anthology etc.). All these classes contain texts which have what is nowadays called an 'intertextual' relationship with the poem under examination, and impinge on it in some way.

Literature, like language, is sequential because it is time-bound and to a certain extent it unfolds sequentially, although, like music, it is also a complex harmony of many concurrent features. That also applies to written language, with all its resonances and implications. But sequentiality is a mode of production and analysis, and cannot possibly account for comprehension. The *highest* speed of which the human brain is capable in identifying separate elements of a sequence is from 7 to 9 signs per second. But this speed is too *low* for comprehension, because the elements, once identified, cannot be retained at that speed: by the time one has reached the end of the sequence one has forgotten the beginning. If I uttered the previous sentence by spelling its words one by one you would not understand it. What we comprehend are *Gestalten*: not strings of elements but complex multilayered chunks. We make sense of them in a non-sequential way: the meaning of something in the early portion of a sentence may become clear only after reaching its end (a well-known feature of German syntax). It may even depend upon its *not* being clear until the end.

This point was convincingly made for literature by Roland Barthes in *S/Z*, where he analyzes a story by Balzac entitled *Sarrasine*. At a certain point in the story Sarrasine, a young sculptor, embraces Zambrinella, an operatic soprano, while travelling in a carriage towards Frascati. At that point neither he, nor the reader, know that Zambrinella is not a woman but a *castrato*: that will become apparent only later in the story. The full implications of the episode can therefore be realised either when one is not actually reading it but reading a subsequent page, or on a second reading. The appreciation of the story depends on a non-sequential comprehension in which earlier features are recollected on a first reading, and later features are remembered when going through the earlier stages for a second time; and one's former role as first reader is compared with the present, producing a sort of dramatic irony. Non-sequential comprehension is characteristic of tragedy

which depends for our enjoyment of it on our previous knowledge of the plot. All Greek tragedies were based upon well-known myths or stories. Even today there is hardly any spectator of *Hamlet* who is in any doubt as to the Prince's fate. Even if one has never heard the story one expects the protagonist to fall from high, fail, and die, because that is the convention of tragedy. The opposite convention prevails in thrillers: we may grip the edges of our seat in watching the unspeakable dangers James Bond goes through, but we know from the very beginning that nothing can ever kill him, even when we see him placed in a coffin in the first scene of the film.

The fact that our sequential structures of analysis are incompatible with our non-sequential mode of comprehension is a serious weakness of the structuralist approach to literature. It is similar to the weakness of phrase-structure grammar which, as Chomsky pointed out, cannot account for relatively simple phenomena such as the difference in meaning of identically structured sentences, the syntactic relationship between discontinuous forms, or the fact that obviously related sentences like an active clause and its corresponding passive cannot be produced one from the other by means of step-by-step re-write rules. It would seem that both the grammatical and the literary study of a text cannot stop at its sequential surface, but must posit other levels of textuality inaccessible to the usual structural analysis based on composition, distribution, interrelation and contrast of surface features. When one considers intertextuality it is clear that the subtle relationships between a text and its intertexts cannot possibly be grasped without hopping, so to speak, to and fro from one to the others. And the ability to perform these hops is not equal for all readers since it depends on the varying levels of literary competence of each one of them and the number of intertexts they can recognise.

All this points to the inescapable conclusion that many of the alleged properties of the literary object do not belong with the object at all, but depend on it being made sense of in a certain way, according to often implicit conventions. When I said earlier on: *He comes invariably late* you no doubt supplied an unspoken context, probably about a friend who is never on time. If I nowsay

At the long table of life,
before an empty plate,
Fate sits, the uninvited guest:
he comes invariably late.

you would probably try to discover more meaning in the sentence than you would bother to look for in the context you supplied, because you would take those four lines as a poem (don't try too hard: the poem is mine). And you would take them as a poem because of their rhythm and rhyme, that is the way in which the four lines fit a context of literary conventions, and would probably try to recapture in your mind possible intertexts, that is, other poetic pronouncements on Fate, uninvited guests, the banquet of life, etc.

But when one tries to separate the properties of the object itself from the manner of its decoding and interpretation one finds that there are no clear guidelines. It may well be that *all* observed structures are in fact properties of the interaction between the object observed and the observer in a specific cultural situation. The structures of our love sonnet may well not 'exist' in any ontological sense; or, if one must use this word, they exist in a culturally conditioned, though not wholly determined, system of interpretation, to which individual readings must refer. This system would then be not so much a social institution totally outside the individual, like the Saussurean *langue,* but a grammar of interpretive rules internalised by the literature consumer, more like the Chomskyan *competence.*

That accounts for the shift, in recent times, from a text-based to a reader-centred literary criticism, in other words, from the study of certain objects to the study of the theoretical models by which we attempt to understand them. This shift was in a sense paralleled both by the new scientific epistemologies championed by Popper, Kuhn, Lakatos (to mention but a few names), showing that science was very much unlike the objective experimental model favoured during the age of Positivism; and by the second linguistic revolution headed by Chomsky in the 'sixties, which attempted not so much to construct a grammar generating all the acceptable sentences of a natural language, as to clarify many of the issues relating to the

evaluation of alternative theoretical models of language. The question was no longer: 'How does language work?' but 'How do we understand our language competence?' Similarly the question that literary critics began to ask was no longer: 'What do texts mean?' but 'How do readers construct meanings?' The theories of production of literary texts have been supplanted by theories of their reception; the analysis of how they came to be constructed by elaborate deconstructions. Let me now move towards my conclusion by sketching some of the difficulties arising from the new critical approaches.

We may readily agree with Jonathan Culler that, since there is no rigorous way to distinguish fact from interpretation, nothing can be deemed to be definitively in the text prior to interpretive conventions. The fact remains nevertheless that someone produced the text, and did so in the full knowledge of the prevailing or possible interpretive conventions. Granted that the literary text is unlike most objects of scientific investigation, like a crystal or a gene, it is so because unlike crystals and genes it is the outcome of an intention to mean something. That should not be taken as if *all* the meanings the text carries were deliberately planted there by its author, for many are not; nor as if the reader's task were to reconstruct the author's intentions; but in the general sense that the author has a conscious project to produce meaning. The author's intention to mean has as its necessary counterpart the reader's assumption that the text is meaningful. Meaning is therefore *teleological*, whereas what a scientist can discover about crystals or genes is *teleonomical*, according to the distinction made by Jacques Monod. Nature's overall tendency is that crystals and genes should produce copies of themselves, but this tendency is built in the system; and, even if one believes in a Divine plan, it is not necessary to suppose that God personally supervises every crystalline accretion or genetic replication, as opposed to having created a system where these things occur by themselves. But texts do not happen by themselves. Furthermore they do not replicate themselves. Whereas the natural universe exhibits stability and invariance as its most startling characteristic, and mutations as exceptions to the rule, literature, and art in general, is infinitely variable and unrepeatable, and the stable point of reference offered by tradition is only the

springboard for endless mutations.

The impossibility of sequential comprehension of a text applies to its writer before it applies to anyone else. I spent several days preparing this lecture, admittedly not an artistic text, and in the process I have read each of its paragraphs, in sequence and out of sequence, at least fifty times. So must anyone writing a poem or a novel. Writers are the first consumers of their texts. An interesting metaphor of this fact, widespread in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was that writers often disguised themselves as mere editors of accidentally found manuscripts. They presented themselves as readers, before pretending to be re-writers. But can the fact that authors are the first consumers of the text they destine for their public bridge the unavoidable gap that separates authors and readers? Authors may have some understanding of their contemporary readers' literary competence but may not always be able to foresee future trends or cultural changes even when they include future readers in their virtual audience. And we may be unable to share today the same viewpoint as the author's original readers.

We have already touched on various ways of bridging the gap, all implying the gathering of philological, historical, literary, philosophical, ideological, biographical evidence to bear on our understanding of the text. The problem is that there are no theoretical limits to the extension of the cultural context, or to the number of intertexts that may be relevant to a text. It would not be safe to presume that the relevant ones are only those preceding the text, since some later writers may show in their work illuminating references to it which it would be perilous to neglect. Tradition extends both ways. There are furthermore no sure and objective criteria to define what is relevant. The field of investigation thus becomes practically infinite. If we now move, out of desperation, from what mediates between the author and the reader to the structure of the reader's competence and the study of the theoretical models whereby the reader understands the text, we fall into an infinite regress, because the reader's understanding of the text presupposes certain theoretical models, our understanding of those theoretical models needs an epistemological theory, the epistemological theory requires a decision procedure to choose between epistemological theories, the decision procedure has to be set up according to valid

criteria, the determination of those criteria ... and we could go on. Between any reader and a text we can easily interpose: a reading of the text, an analysis of the reading of the text, a criticism of various types of analysis, a history of the various criticisms levelled at possible types of analysis, a general theory of text analysis, a survey of the theories of text analysis suggesting that textual analysis is impossible, and so on and so forth. It is easy to forget that reading comes before any analysis of the reading. Perhaps the fact that reading, a seemingly simple operation, is so inherently complex, as I have tried to describe, induces us to confuse it with a complex critical procedure. But to read is not to criticise. I do not embark upon the criticism of the love sonnet we started from because I want to find out whether I enjoy it or not. I already know that. The end of the author's meaning-generating project is reading and enjoyment, not criticism. Criticism only helps me to understand how and why I enjoy what I enjoy, and it may improve my enjoyment only as a consequence of my improved understanding of myself and the mental processes of another reader (the critic). Criticism throws more light on the critic than on the author who is its object.

Two final transplants, both related to the idea I foreshadowed that it may be impossible to arrive at a global understanding, or a perfectly coherent description of the meaning of anything. The first one comes from the uncertainty principle discovered by the physicist Werner Heisenberg in 1927 according to which measuring one quantity renders impossible the simultaneous measurement of a related quantity because our observation interferes with either one or the other measurement. This principle was readily adapted by social scientists who began to understand how the outcome of any observation is vitiated by the fact that the observer interferes with what is being observed. It has been suggested that the impossibility of finding out both the mass and a velocity of a subatomic particle by hitting it with another particle, which is the only way we can conduct the investigation, is in some ways similar to an anomaly found by Kurt Gödel in the construction of theories of mathematics by means of mathematical reasoning carried out by Russell, Whitehead and Hilbert. In 1931 Gödel stated his famous theorem, that it is impossible to prove the consistency of a formal system within the system itself, and that all consistent axiomatic

formulations of a self-referential system include undecidable propositions. Transplants must be performed very cautiously, because of the very serious chance of rejection. But if we were to extend Gödel's theorem to language, it would seem to suggest that any use of metalanguage to investigate language, however rigorous, leads to paradoxes; which is perhaps what Sapir sensed when he said that 'all grammars leak'.

The most famous of these paradoxes is the Epimenides paradox. Epimenides was a Cretan who said 'All Cretans are liars'. If you take Epimenides's quotation as language, then what I say about him and his statement lies within a first-level metalanguage. If Epimenides is a Cretan and all Cretans are liars, then his statement that all Cretans are liars must be a lie, hence Cretans are not liars. But if we thus accept that Epimenides, as a Cretan, is not a liar, then his statement that Cretans are liars must be the truth, hence he must be a liar. Russell tried to solve this and other similar paradoxes by means of the theory of types. Applying it to language, it says that any statement in a language is not referred to by any statement in a higher order metalanguage. Thus what we say in our metalanguage about Epimenides and his use of language has no bearing on his use of language. It is easy to show that this modified theory of types creates more problems than it solves, because it allows the possibility of setting up an infinite regression of metalanguages, and does away with what we have assumed to be the fundamental property of language which is self-reference. A final passing thought is that, if Heisenberg and Gödel are right, then it may be impossible for human brains to produce a consistent theory of the workings of human brains, which is what language, mathematics, the arts and criticism are all about.

This conclusion is far from being depressing. To begin with nobody needs an absolute, perfectly consistent formal theory of anything. After all mathematicians, according to Gödel, can get on perfectly well without one. Physicists continue to probe successfully the mysteries of the universe in spite of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, or perhaps because of it. Only literary theorists fail to realise that they cannot at the same time demonstrate anybody else's inability to produce a consistent theory of literature, and present their own work as being *the* ultimate and absolute theory of

literature, covering essential aspects the others have neglected or ignored. Given what they themselves have revealed and emphasised, the practically infinite complexity of the textual and intertextual system, added to the complex infinity of our human culture in its historical development over time and space, and to any as yet unrevealed complexities that future generations of critics may reveal, it may be totally unreasonable to aim for total understanding. A more reasonable task may be for critics to define as clearly as possible the margins of applicability of any methodology they may wish to use to the limited purpose for which they wish to use it, in the full knowledge that wider margins or different purposes may require a different methodology. Different answers to critical questions are not necessarily contradictory or incompatible, and it is only because of the dictates of the PhD industry and the career needs of academics that they are often alleged to be so.

A second positive conclusion is that we must do away with what I would call the 'humanistic cringe', the absurd idea that the humanities are inherently incapable of the same order of achievement in the elaboration or acquisition of knowledge as the so-called exact sciences; when it has been increasingly apparent for the past half century or longer that the sciences are not as exact as people used to believe. The reason why all chemists agree on the formula of hexachlorophene, while most critics will disagree in their conclusions about a love sonnet, is not that chemistry has better decision procedures than literary criticism, simply that literary critics do not need to have the same area of agreement as chemists because, as we suggested earlier on, natural objects are teleonomically invariant, whereas artistic objects are teleologically mutant and therefore posit a totally different type of scientific investigation.

The final positive conclusion is that both the arts and the sciences benefit from mutual contact and understanding: and that is where interdisciplinarity comes in. We have suffered far too much from a particularised, compartmentalised approach, all too often resulting from the pertinacity with which academics defend their perceived territory; the deep-seated tendency of educational administrators to see educationally sound developments not as the aim of their professional career but as the means to advance it; the inability of politicians and those whom they persuade to toe their line to

understand that we already have a clever country: the country of Alan Bond, Brian Burke, Laurie Connell, Brian Youill, Christopher Skase and John Spalvins, to name but a few who were mentioned until recently as shining examples of true Aussie cleverness. What we need is an intelligent country, where education does not come second best to employment and is not confused with training, but enjoys the true breadth, depth and creativity that comes from the wider horizons of interdisciplinarity; where a society whose horizons have been perversely restricted to one single valueless dimension, the economy of disposable incomes, can rediscover the dimension of human values which the humanities, the arts, and especially literature can provide.

'The Plant for the Heart Grows in Magan ... ': Redefining Southeastern Arabia's Role in Ancient Western Asia

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The archaeological investigation of the four great riverine civilisations of the Old World—Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, and Shang China—has been conducted on a scale which undeniably dwarfs research in the intervening areas of the Asian landmass. Yet attempts to understand the ancient world of Asia which are narrowly pre-occupied with these so-called core areas, and those which, in the newer jargon, focus on the articulation of so-called centres with their peripheries, are, in my opinion, doomed from the outset to failure. The study of Civilization with a capital C, like the study of centres and peripheries, fails to acknowledge the fact that ancient Asia was always a mosaic of inter-locking cultures, each important in its own right, and an understanding of each is necessary if we are to move beyond a simplistic, reductionist view of the past and confront the complexity of this part of the world in antiquity. I have chosen to focus on Western Asia, and to examine the archaeology and early history of southeastern Arabia, that part of the Arabian peninsula which is today comprised of the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman.[1] This area has often been considered marginal, peripheral, or irrelevant, in comparison with its better known neighbours. I hope to show, however, that this misconception is a product of certain historical conditions which have determined the course of Western Asiatic archaeology and Assyriology since the last century. For when we examine the archaeological and cuneiform evidence pertaining to this region, known in antiquity by various cognate names including Sumerian Magan, Akkadian Makkan, Elamite Makkash, and Old Persian Maka, then a very

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different picture of the region emerges. To begin with, however, some background information is necessary.

The intellectual history of ancient Western Asiatic studies is a subject which has attracted few serious devotees. The histories available of, for example, American archaeological research in Western Asia, or the 'Progress of Assyriology', are generally superficial and anecdotal rather than analytical. Yet, because of the geographical locus of these fields, it is undeniable that they have been profoundly influenced by contemporary political, social, economic and religious trends: from the Napoleonic Wars to the Gulf War, from the rise of radical Wahhibism in Arabia to the advent of Islamic Fundamentalism in Iran, from the disintegration of the Ottoman empire to the post-war creation of new nation states. To give a full account of these phenomena and their relationship to archaeological and Assyriological research would far exceed the limits of the present discussion, and I shall only highlight a few points which appear relevant to the progress of research in southeastern Arabia.

While the late eighteenth and nineteenth century emphasis on the classical, Greco-Roman roots of modern Western civilization sped many a European scholar on his way to Rome and Athens, the search for the physical manifestations of the Bible fostered a parallel interest amongst Victorians in the archaeology of the Holy Land, broadly defined. To the extent that the Assyrians and Babylonians also figured in the Bible, early travellers and explorers, beginning in the 1840s and with the permission of the Ottoman imperial authorities, also began undertaking investigations in the cities of Assyria and Babylonia in what is today Iraq. By 1877 this had led to Ernest de Sarzec's wholly unanticipated discovery of the Sumerians at Tello in southern Iraq, a people about whom the Bible knew nothing. In 1894, anticipating a politico-cultural policy which continues to this day in the region, the French government, in an effort to forge closer ties to the Shah of Persia, secured an agreement with Nasr ed-Din Shah which gave France a monopoly on archaeological excavation in Iran. The justification was transparently political. Similarly, German political pressure on Ottoman Turkey led, in 1905, to Germany's winning the concession to investigate Bögazköy, the capital of the Hittites.

Following the First World War, the architects of the Mandate imposed French directors of antiquities in Syria, and British directors in Iraq and Palestine. Archaeology followed the flag, and ancient Mesopotamia took the place of ancient Greece and Rome as the dominant super-culture against which the barbarians of the Zagros or the steppe could be measured. Long before anyone was talking about centre-periphery relations in Western Asia, the centre had been defined, full stop. Only the intervention of the German Archaeological Institute succeeded in making room for the equally dominant Persian Empire as a worthy object of research. The notion of centre and periphery as defined in the first century of archaeological research in Western Asia embodies an undercurrent of ethnocentrism which is striking. Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, and to a lesser extent the Indus Valley, were literate and therefore 'like us'. They were worthy objects of research, unlike the aliterate savages and barbarians on their borders. The more cuneiform parallels were found to the literature of the Old Testament, the clearer it became that ancient Mesopotamia was Europe's great, common ancestor, and the popularising works of a scholar like the late Samuel Noah Kramer, whose *History Begins at Sumer* appeared in the first of countless editions in 1956, helped to codify that belief.

Contemporary political conditions, meanwhile, institutionalised the incompleteness of archaeological exploration across large portions of Western Asia. When Loftus and Layard explored Nineveh and Babylon, they did so lawfully, with the permission of the Ottoman authorities. The vast Ottoman empire tolerated a large number of foreign Consuls, many of whom engaged in archaeological exploration at one time or another. For all its many faults, the Ottoman empire succeeded in bringing some kind of political authority and limited security to a vast region extending from the Tigris to the Mediterranean. Little archaeological work was done in Western Asia outside of the Ottoman Empire, however, with the exception of the work of the French Mission to Susa in Iran, and the extraordinary American expedition led by Raphael Pumpelly to Anau Tepe in Turkmenistan in 1904. For in those areas which were fortunate enough to lie outside the grasp of the Sublime Porte, such as southeastern Arabia, unstable, even anarchic, political conditions often obtained.

During the early nineteenth century the southern coast of the Gulf was a notorious area of piracy and smuggling, and after the reduction of the Qawasim pirates in 1819 by the Bombay Marine, few foreigners visited the region until the discovery of oil. In Oman proper, the situation was very different, but whereas the Al Bu Said dynasty generally controlled the coast, despite the constant challenge of the Qawasim, it had only nominal control of the interior, as a result of which few travellers were able to visit inner Oman in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In fact, between 1913 and 1955, when the Jabal Akhdar war was fought by the British on behalf of the Sultan, the Al Bu Said dynasty lost control of the interior completely, and did not fully regain it until the early 1960s. Thus, the mechanisms which had permitted research in the Ottoman empire and the countries formed out of it following World War I did not apply at all in southeastern Arabia where political conditions dictated a very different form of research development.

It was, in fact, the search for oil which created the climate in which the earliest archaeological exploration of southeastern Arabia was undertaken. In 1958, the American Foundation for the Study of Man, a creation of the American oilman Wendell Phillips, undertook a short season of excavation at Sohar, in Oman, and in the same year Temple Hillyard, working for British Petroleum in Abu Dhabi, showed two Danish archaeologists visiting from Bahrain the island of Umm an-Nar, off the coast of Abu Dhabi, and today the site of the country's largest oil refinery, where he had observed a number of ruined graves. These were the very first archaeological investigations undertaken in southeastern Arabia.

Research remained sporadic right through the 1960s, until political conditions changed dramatically. In 1970 the young Sultan Qaboos deposed his conservative father, Sultan Said b. Taimur, in Oman, paving the way for the opening up of what was still essentially a medieval country. A year later, in 1971, when the General Treaty of Peace signed in 1820 between the Qawasim of the southern Gulf and the Government of India expired, the seven Trucial States of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, Ras al-Khaimah, and Fujairah formed themselves into a new country called the United Arab Emirates. Following these two events, the stage was set for an upsurge in exploration, beginning with an Arab

mission sent out to the U.A.E. from Iraq, and with American and Danish explorations in Oman in 1973. After the 1978 Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, still more scholars who had been working in Iran turned their attentions to the Gulf region, and since that time American, Arab, Belgian, British, Danish, French, German, Italian, Swiss, and now Australian archaeologists have rapidly helped to re-write the early history and archaeology of southeastern Arabia. It may seem premature on my part to attempt to re-define southeastern Arabia's role in ancient Western Asia on the basis of little more than two decades of serious research, but the pace of work in the U.A.E. and Oman has been so rapid that a reappraisal of the region's archaeology and early history at this point seems justified.

If we begin in what is currently termed the Late Stone Age, then it is instructive to note that we know far more about hunter/gatherer and fisher subsistence and economy in southeastern Arabia during the eighth–fourth millennia B.C. than we do about this subject in, for example, Mesopotamia. The fishing and shell-fish gathering societies which inhabited both the Gulf and Indian Ocean coasts of southeastern Arabia are attested to by a virtually continuous thread of shell middens extending along both coasts. It is clear that, already at a very early date, southeastern Arabian fishermen were capable of achieving large catches in the rich fishing waters off their coasts, and that these groups were in contact, along the southern shores of the Gulf at least, with the late prehistoric culture of southern Mesopotamia known as the Ubaid. At least half a dozen sites in the U.A.E. have yielded imported pottery from the north, probably manufactured at Ur and the type site of al-'Ubaid itself, all of which can be dated between c. 4500 and 3800 B.C.

Mobile groups of hunters are attested to in the interior by their characteristic pressure-flaked tool-kit, but by the late fourth millennium we find the first indications of the establishment of the sedentary oasis regime which has come to dominate so much of arid Western Asia. Date palms were domesticated in southeastern Arabia by c. 3100 B.C., as demonstrated by palaeobotanical evidence from Hili 8 in the Al Ain oasis. This was an event of great importance since the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, and cereals in such an

arid environment was only possible in the shade created by the date palm.

Early on we see that a natural symbiosis was established between the interior and the coasts of southeastern Arabia. Small quantities of domesticated animals, such as sheep, goat, and cattle, as well as dates and copper, were brought from the interior oases to the coast where they were exchanged for dried fish.

Thus, by the very end of the fourth millennium B.C., as the evidence from Hili 8 has shown, the basic economy of oasis life in southeastern Arabia had been established. Architecturally, a distinctive settlement pattern was also emerging. This consisted of a central, fortified building which probably formed the focus of each settlement, accompanied by large, circular, extra-mural, communal graves. Evidence of domestic architecture in mudbrick and stone has been found, e.g. at Maysar, but it is not unlikely that many people lived in the same kinds of perishable palm-frond houses, called in Arabic *barasti*, which until the dramatic changes in the local economy brought on by the influx of petro-dollars, continued in use throughout the U.A.E. and Oman until quite recently. The central fortification was undoubtedly the locus of regional power, whether defined economically, politically, or in terms of the prestige of a particular family or lineage over time. At Hili 8 the earliest known example of this type of fortification, which dates back to c. 3100 B.C., was roughly square, measuring approximately 16 metres on a side. With time, these buildings became round. Examples have been excavated in many parts of the region, from Maysar in the Sharqiyah, to Bidya in the Northern Emirates. The largest example of this building type is currently under excavation at Tell Abraq by a team from this university. Not only does the building, with its 40 metre diameter, exceed all others in size by some 15 metres, more remarkable is the fact that it is preserved to a height of c. 8 metres, making it the largest Bronze Age building yet discovered in the Arabian peninsula. Built of mudbrick with a facing of stone, it has a 4.5 metre thick ringwall. This mammoth structure puts me in mind of the fifteenth-century Timurid historian al-Samarqandi, who wrote, 'If you have doubts about our grandeur, look at our edifice'. This same sentiment must have been shared by the builders of the fortress at Tell Abraq, the sheer size of which marks the site as one of the

more important centres of ancient Magan. The evidence of regional centres like Tell Abraq suggests that, by 2500 B.C., the Oman peninsula must have been a mosaic of small emirates, for lack of a better word. I doubt very much whether any one of these exercised hegemony over any other. There is such a general degree of parity in settlement pattern and material culture that it would seem nothing would justify speaking of true state formation at this point.

Following the contacts with Mesopotamia of fifth and early fourth millennia date mentioned earlier, we find the people of Magan again in contact with southern Mesopotamia around 3000 B.C. This can be inferred from the presence of a distinctive type of Mesopotamian polychrome pottery, appearing in graves in the interior of the region around Jabal Hafit, as well as unpainted vessels which find close parallels throughout the Early Dynastic period in Mesopotamia. In addition, half a dozen torpedo-based storage jars found in graves on Umm an-Nar island off the coast of Abu Dhabi are, as physico-chemical analyses have shown, Mesopotamian products datable to the Early Dynastic III period, or c. 2500–2350 B.C. These very likely contained some form of oil, such as the sesame oil which later texts inform us was exported from Ur to Magan in order to purchase copper. These relations, however, are indicated only by archaeological finds in the U.A.E. and Oman. Nothing has been found of comparable date in Mesopotamia which can be taken as an import from the region, unless one counts the shell used to make various objects, ranging from cylinder seals to lamps to jewellery, some of which could have originated off the shores of the southern Gulf. An obvious question arises, what was moving from Magan to Mesopotamia at this time? Apart from the most obvious resource, copper, it is also likely that wood was being sent. Two recently edited school texts from Nippur, dating to c. 2100–2000 B.C., contain the line, 'May Magan and Meluhha ship wood to you!' As Piotr Michalowski has pointed out, there are certain archaic signs used in the text which point to an Early Dynastic date for the original composition, although they could have been anachronistic usages as well. If the text does indeed go back to the Early Dynastic era, anytime between c. 2900 and 2350 B.C., it would be a precious piece of information on Magan's early role as a supplier of wood to Sumer. And while the Oman peninsula may not strike you today as

a verdant, forested region, there is a considerable amount of timber to be had, and Tell Abraq itself has produced such large quantities of charcoal that the Tell Abraq palaeobotanist, George Willcox, has expressed astonishment at the amount of wood for building and fuel that must have existed in the vicinity of the site during the third millennium B.C.

By the twenty-fourth century B.C., the balance of power in Mesopotamia had begun to change radically, and the old order of independent city-states rapidly gave way to a new order. As his own inscriptions tell us, Lugalzagesi of Umma sacked Lagash, conquered Uruk, and laid claim to a nascent empire extending 'From the Lower Sea along the Euphrates and the Tigris to the Upper Sea', i.e. from the Gulf to the Mediterranean. But as the laconic Sumerian King List records, after Lugalzagesi's reign of twenty-five years, 'Uruk was smitten with weapons' by the son of a date-grower, and cup-bearer to Ur-Zababa, King of Kish. This man, who founded the world's first empire, took the throne-name *Sharru-kin*, literally 'legitimate king', and founded a new capital city called Agade. Sargon of Agade reigned for fifty-six years, roughly from 2334 to 2279 B.C. according to the middle chronology, and seems to have fully deserved the title *shar kishshati*, 'king of the totality', which appears in the so-called Sargon Geography.[2] On a life-size statue of Sargon which stood in the temple of Enlil at Nippur, an Old Babylonian scribe several centuries later copied an original inscription of Sargon's in which he boasted that, after winning thirty-four battles, and destroying the city walls to the edge of the sea, ships from Dilmun, Magan and Meluhha made fast at the quay of Agade. Although he never made the kind of statement which would suggest that he himself conquered or looked down on these countries, Sargon was clearly proud of the fact that, after the hard-fought battles which established his hegemony, ships from the furthest lands on Mesopotamia's eastern horizon came up to Agade, his new capital in the centre of Babylonia, a city which lay far north of the traditional Gulf ports of Ur and Lagash to which trading vessels might be expected to come. Whether this was a unique event or not, we do not know. That it was noteworthy, however, is clear, and the prestige associated with the arrival of these vessels was so great that it warranted mention in Sargon's own royal inscriptions.

By the reign of Sargon's son, Manishtusu, however, the Akkadian attitude towards Magan seems to have changed. While Sargon must have had his hands full in conquering large portions of continental Mesopotamia, Manishtusu sought to extend the borders of the Akkadian empire beyond the Lower Sea, as the Gulf was routinely called. As his 'Standard Inscription' tells us, Manishtusu crossed the Lower Sea after attacking Anshan, the great mound of Tal-i Malyan near the later Persian capital Persepolis in the Marv Dasht plain of southwestern Iran, and defeated a coalition of forces drawn from no less than thirty-two cities. While we have yet to identify a single city in Bronze Age southeastern Arabia, the Akkadian term for city, *alu*, was a fairly elastic one applicable to everything from hamlets to metropolises, and it is logical to suppose, in view of the many Bronze Age sites with fortifications found throughout southeastern Arabia, that this refers to thirty-two such sites with their fortresses and outlying populations. Manishtusu refers to the 'lords' of Magan by the ancient Sumerian title *en*, a title originally applied to the early rulers of Uruk, and indeed in this he was followed by his son Naram-Sin. The use of this title is interesting, and while it is clearly a Mesopotamian usage in lieu of a native term for high political office in Magan, nothing forbids us from viewing these 'lords' as the local rulers of those emirates referred to earlier, centred each on one of the many round fortifications documented archaeologically. Moreover, it confirms that, from the Mesopotamian perspective, the rulers of the adversary in question, Magan, were subsumable under an august title of early Sumerian rule. Never was there a better illustration of the respect accorded in ancient Mesopotamia to the distant land of Magan, for not only did the country attract the personal military intervention of two of the world's first emperors, but in describing the defeat of that foe, the Akkadian scribes used a highly honorific title.

The case of Naram-Sin's (Sargon's grandson) intervention is more complicated, however. Naram-Sin's own Statue A inscription, engraved on a life-size statue of the king, only the feet of which are preserved, states: 'Naram-Sin the mighty, king of the four quarters, victorious in nine battles within one year. After he had won those battles, he also brought their three kings in fetters before Enlil ... He subjugated Magan, and captured Manium, the "lord" of Magan;

he quarried blocks of diorite in their mountains, transported (them) to his city Akkade, made a statue of himself and dedicated it to ... ', and here the inscription breaks off.

No doubt dedicated to Enlil, the statue in question was probably set up in Sippar to celebrate the crushing of a rebellion which is described in an Old Babylonian account composed several centuries later and originally published in 1919 by Alfred Boissier. The text is composed in the voice of the ultimately victorious Naram-Sin, and relates the uprising of a number of cities against the might of Naram-Sin. This is the so-called *insurrection générale*, which, while it was probably not a coordinated rebellion, was most definitely a period in which Naram-Sin faced spontaneous uprisings on many fronts. Significantly, after informing us that the rebel leaders elected one Iphur-Kishi, 'a man of Kish', as their leader, it goes on to name ten kings who might be considered the ring-leaders of the rebellion. Included among them is Manium, king of Magan. Recently, Wolfgang Heimpel has questioned whether Naram-Sin himself ever campaigned against Magan, or whether Manium was present on Babylonian soil during the uprising and whether his capture there did not in fact constitute the *de facto* defeat of Magan. Quite apart from the fact that Naram-Sin's own Statue A inscription, as we have seen, specifically mentions the quarrying of blocks of diorite in the mountains of Magan, there are a number of alabaster vessels which, in typical Mesopotamian fashion, were inscribed with a label which read, 'Naram-Sin, king of the four world quarters, vessel (from the) booty of Magan'. It was far from uncommon for Mesopotamian monarchs to celebrate their seizure of booty by this kind of act, and the existence of these fragmentary vessels suggests that Naram-Sin himself campaigned in Magan.

This belligerent state of affairs was, if nothing else, put to an end by the fall of the Old Akkadian empire. When the barbarous Guti invaders had at last been expelled, Ur-Nammu, the founder of a new dynasty based at the ancient city of Ur, turned almost immediately to the restoration of commercial ties with Magan. In a dedication to the Sumerian moon god, Nanna, we read, 'Ur Nammu, the mighty male, the king of Ur, the king of Sumer and Akkad, the king who built the temple of Nanna, caused the former state of affairs to appear—at the edge of the sea in the registry place [?] ... [Ur-Nammu] restored the

Magan trade [lit. 'boat'] into his [Nanna's] hands'. The same event is alluded to in the celebrated Law Code of Ur-Nammu, where 'the might of Nanna' is credited with returning the Magan-boat of Nanna to the 'registry place'. Quite clearly, the prominence given to Magan in the affairs of the founder of the Third Dynasty of Ur is a reflection of Magan's more than merely provincial status. For roughly a thousand years Magan had been supplying much of the copper which reached southern Mesopotamia. Likewise, it was one of the few sources of diorite, a hard black stone favoured by Mesopotamian kings who wished to have statues of themselves fashioned and dedicated to their patron deities. And whereas the Old Akkadian kings may have tried their hands at the outright conquest of Magan, it would seem that Ur-Nammu was opting for a different approach, a commercial-diplomatic means of insuring the supply of Magan's much sought after raw materials.

It is, however, Shulgi, Ur-Nammu's son and successor, who is widely acknowledged as the true creator of the Ur III empire. As Piotr Steinkeller has recently stressed, 'In the second half of Shulgi's reign, which lasted forty-eight years, the Ur III state entered into a period of rapid territorial expansion', beginning with his destruction of Karhar in the year Shulgi 24 (2070 B.C.), and continuing virtually up until his death.[3] Did this territorial expansion swallow up Magan? I believe it did, temporarily at least. An economic text from Shulgi's twenty-sixth year (2068 B.C.) records the receipt of gold dust at Ur from *a lugal-Ma-gán*^{ki} (*Ur Excavation Texts* III 299). This was almost certainly a gift of great respect from the king of Magan to the king of Ur. Lugal was the title most widely used in Mesopotamia to designate kings. As William Hallo noted many years ago, it is 'the royal title *par excellence*'. But a text from the year Shulgi 34 (*Materiali per il Vocabulario Neosumerico* 10: 149), on the other hand, refers to the transport of troops (*ugnim*) to Magan. It would seem, therefore, that Magan had been annexed in the interval, i.e. sometime between years Shulgi 26 and 34. Confirmation of this annexation can be found when we move into the reign of Shulgi's successor, Amar-Sin, for we find, from the fourth year of his reign, 2042 B.C., a text from Drehem in the Metropolitan Museum (Metropolitan Museum of Art 11.217.29, l. 84) which records the arrival of 'Wedum, the courier of Nadu-beli, *ensi* of Magan'. *Ensi*,

particularly in the Ur III period, was the title used for royally appointed provincial governors who, however, as Piotr Steinkeller has pointed out, 'stemmed by and large from the local population'. Whether or not he was a Maganite, the mention of Nadu-Beli as *ensi* implies that the Third Dynasty of Ur had indeed succeeded in incorporating part of southeastern Arabia into a Mesopotamian empire, a feat of which even Manishtusu and Naram-Sin had not been capable.

The inclusion of Magan by this time in the Ur III empire would help put two texts from the reign of Amar-Sin's successor Shu-Sin, in a clearer light. An undated text from his reign, which appears to define the limits of the Ur III empire, concludes by naming 'Subur on the shores of the Upper Sea (i.e. the Mediterranean), and Magan, with all their provinces ... on the other side of the sea'.[4] In light of the Metropolitan Museum text, it now seems certain that Magan was in fact part of the Ur III empire by the time this undated text was written. The second relevant text from the reign of Shu Sin dates to his eighth year (2030 B.C.) and records the disbursement of barley (70 or 600 *kor*) from the *ensi* of Girsu to one B/Pudu as the 'consignment of Magan'. Rather than viewing this as a major shipment for the purchase of copper as some scholars have done recently, I would suggest that this barley may have been destined for Ur III officials stationed in Magan.

Magan may not have remained under the control of the Ur III empire, however, beyond the reign of Shu-Sin, who died in the ninth year of his reign. The Ur III empire disintegrated rapidly during the early years of Shu-Sin's successor, Ibbi-Sin, as indicated by the fact that scribes stopped using his date formulae in rapid succession, beginning at Eshnunna in his second year, Susa in his third, Lagash in his fifth, etc. Little wonder, then, that the much more distant province of Magan should have ceased to acknowledge the authority of the king of Ur. Certainly the extant texts of Lu-enlilla, a merchant of Ur who purchased Magan copper for the Nanna temple in the years Ibbi-Sin 2 and 4, give not the slightest indication that Magan still belonged to the Ur III empire.

This rapid review of selected Old Akkadian through Ur III references to Magan in cuneiform sources has, I hope, demonstrated that Magan was far from an unimportant, anonymous grey area on

the Mesopotamian horizon. The personal intervention of Manishtusu, Naram-Sin, Ur-Nammu, and Shulgi in Maganite affairs would never have occurred had this been the case. The consistency with which Magan figures in the cuneiform sources from the reign of Sargon in the middle of the twenty-fourth century B.C. down to the fall of the Ur III dynasty around 2000 B.C. should warn us against viewing Sumer and Magan in simplistic, centre-periphery terms.

From the fall of the Ur III dynasty, c. 2000 B.C., until the reign of the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I in the thirteenth century B.C., cuneiform sources cease to mention Magan, except as an adjective describing certain types of trees, chairs, and jars. How are we to interpret this silence? From the Assyriologist's point of view, this has always been taken as a clear sign that the lines of communication which linked Ur and Magan in the twenty-first century B.C. were badly broken. Archaeologists working in southeastern Arabia, moreover, contributed to this misapprehension by positing a complete breakdown in settled life after about 1700 B.C. The notion of a Dark Age in Mesopotamia, extending from the conquest of Babylon by the Hittite king Murshili, around 1600 B.C., until the reign of Burnaburiash II, around 1359 B.C., in the middle of the Kassite era, was adumbrated by the great Sumerologist Benno Landsberger in 1954. The lack of cuneiform sources, combined with a perceived absence of archaeological remains of second millennium B.C. date in southeastern Arabia, seemed to mutually corroborate each other. In fact, as recent excavations at Tell Abraq and Shimal in the U.A.E. have shown, this reconstruction is proving to be badly mistaken, and a simple reflection of inadequate archaeological exploration.

Historians are, of course, well aware of the difference between what people do and what they say they do. Several dozen pieces of imported Mesopotamian pottery from Tell Abraq, datable to anywhere between c. 1900 and 1200 B.C., may not seem like a staggering amount of evidence, but it provides, for the first time, a clear indication that, while the texts make no mention of contact between Mesopotamia and Magan, there must have been some, and that must have extended over several centuries spanning the Old Babylonian and Kassite periods. Furthermore, the existence of pottery with clear parallels to sites in southwestern Iran, such as Susa and Choga Zambil, points to relations with the powerful Middle Elamite

state, the history of which is only lately beginning to come to light thanks to the efforts of scholars such as the French Elamologist, François Vallat. Ultimately, this may reveal something about the silence of the Mesopotamian sources. Up to this point we knew nothing about the existence of any links between Elam and Magan, but Tell Abraq has yielded not only sherds of what is demonstrably Middle Elamite pottery, of equal importance has been the discovery there of a clearly Middle Elamite cylinder seal. In fact, it is now clear that another Middle Elamite seal, though never recognised as such before, has long been known from eastern Saudi Arabia. We are likely to be witnessing the remains of a growing Elamite influence in the Gulf at the expense of Babylonia, and therein may lie the 'silence' of the Babylonian cuneiform sources.

But more importantly, it is now clear that sedentary settlement did not cease in southeastern Arabia around 1700 B.C. This idea was based on limited evidence and, when it was put forward in the late 1970s, was not incorrect. Today, a site like Tell Abraq shows us evidence of continuous occupation throughout the second millennium B.C., and while it is true that the absolute number of second millennium settlements in the region is still small, the large number of second millennium graves presupposes the existence of a sizeable population in the area prior to the Iron Age. Furthermore, the finds from Abraq confirm that contact between Magan and Dilmun, the area which took over the distribution of its copper following the end of the Ur III period and which we identify with modern Bahrain, were strong. Previously, it had been assumed that the Dilmun copper shipped to Babylonia during the Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian periods, i.e. during the first four centuries of the second millennium, must have come from Magan, for Bahrain, i.e. Dilmun, has no copper sources of its own. Dilmun, it was said, eclipsed Magan in the trade, acting as a middle-man with Babylonia, while continuing to be supplied from Magan. While this seemed reasonable enough, little evidence had ever been found of ties between southeastern Arabia and Bahrain. Now, four seasons of excavation at Tell Abraq have brought to light over 650 fragments of a kind of pottery known to have been produced on Bahrain, as well as a stamp seal which, although a local Maganite product, was clearly carved under the influence of the well-known Dilmun glyptic

tradition. Taken together, this evidence suggests that Magan continued to serve as a supplier of copper to Dilmun and indirectly to Babylonia at least through the Old Babylonian period, after which, if the evidence of growing Middle Elamite contacts is taken into account, we may be witnessing the growth of ties with Elam, perhaps at Babylonia's expense.

Judging by the large numbers of Iron Age sites throughout the Oman peninsula, the late second and early first millennia B.C. was a period of great prosperity. Substantial settlements, like Tell Abraq with its massive mudbrick platform, and communal graves richly furnished with metal weaponry characterise the period. Yet scholars long believed that, by this point, Magan had slipped completely off the Mesopotamian horizon. In fact, two texts prove that this was not the case. The library of the great Assyrian king Assurbanipal, stored in his palace at Nineveh, contained a text listing medical prescriptions which includes mention of a 'plant for the heart' which grew in Magan. The text goes on, 'Sin (the Moon-god) ... , and Samas (the Sun-god) brought it [the plant for the heart] down from the mountains: its roots fill the earth, its horns pierce the sky, and it seizes on the "heart" of Moon, oxen, sheep, asses, dogs, pigs, men and women'. Published already in 1904 by the German Assyriologist Friedrich Küchler, this important text has been overlooked in all recent discussions of Magan, yet it proves that the memory of Magan in far Assyria was not dead in the seventh century B.C.

The second text of relevance was discovered in 1931 by Reginald Campbell Thompson and Max Mallowan during their excavation of the temple of Ishtar at Nineveh. Dated to c. 640 B.C., the text records Assurbanipal's receipt of tribute from, among others, 'Pade, king of Qade, who dwelt in the city of Iske' and who, having undertaken a journey of six months, at the command of the gods Assur and Ninlil, finally reached Assurbanipal's capital. Other kings mentioned in the same context included Hundaru, king of Dilmun, modern Bahrain, and a king whose name was unfortunately broken from Kuppi, the same country known earlier as Gubin and often thought to have been located somewhere in the Gulf region. It is thus clear that we are dealing with three kings from the southern fringes of the Assyrian world. Several years ago, I pointed out that Iske, the capital of Pade, could be none other than the modern town of Izki in

the centre of Oman, a town which local Omani historians rank as the oldest in Oman. Furthermore, the Akkadian name here given to the region as a whole, Qadê, is listed in later trilingual Achaemenid Persian royal inscriptions as the equivalent of Old Persian Maka, the cognate of the earlier Sumerian Magan and Akkadian Makkan. Thus, we have here a precious reference which shows that the Oman peninsula, at this point, must have been divided up into one or more kingdoms, one of which was tributary to Assyria. Again, I would think that we were dealing with regional emirates rather than a hegemony which extended across the entire peninsula.

Finally, a soft-stone amulet discovered at Tell Abraq in 1990 may be a reflex of contact between Qadê or Magan and Assyria or Babylonia in this period. One side shows an anthropomorphic figure with three-pronged claws for its hands and feet which bears a remarkable similarity to depictions of the so-called *lamashtu* demoness in Mesopotamia. *Lamashtu* was thought to bring disease, and *lamashtu* amulets were routinely worn to ward off disease. The discovery of such similar amulets in southeastern Arabia, Babylonia and Assyria makes it not unlikely that the belief in this demoness was shared during the Iron Age, and if this is the case, then it represents the first instance of an ideological link between Mesopotamia and southeastern Arabia which has been established for this period.

Nothing suggests, however, that the Neo-Assyrian kings ever campaigned against Magan, as their Ur III and Old Akkadian forebears had, but by the Achaemenid period the region had once again fallen prey to an outside power. The Persepolis Fortification Texts, an archive of several thousand administrative texts written in Royal Achaemenid Elamite which were found by Erich Schmidt during the Oriental Institute's excavations at the Persian capital Persepolis, are relevant. Two texts record receipts by officials, salaries in kind, provided to 'Irdumasda, the satrap at Makkash', in 505/4 B.C., and Zamashba, likewise satrap at Makkash. Makkash, as has long been recognised, was the Elamite form of Old Persian Maka. Thus, by the end of the sixth century, Darius I had incorporated Maka into his empire. This is, moreover, confirmed by several other sources. The Egyptian statue of Darius excavated at Susa in 1972 bears the name Mag within a cartouche, and shows a kneeling

Maciya, or inhabitant of Maka, above it, while a similar representation is found on the Shallufa stele, which probably commemorated the construction of a canal linking the Nile with the Red Sea by Darius. Herodotus (3.93), moreover, lists the Mykoi, i.e. the inhabitants of Maka, as part of the population of the fourteenth satrapy of the Persian empire.

An additional four Persepolis Fortification texts, all dating to a five year interval between 500 and 495 B.C., record the disbursement of travel rations of beer and flour to men travelling between Susa, in southwestern Iran, and Makkash. One mentions Barnush the *karamarash* at Makkash, an Elamite title which may be translated as 'registrar'. It is interesting to note in this regard that the satraps and registrar in Makkash all bore good Old Persian, as opposed to Elamite or Semitic, names. It is clear that they were most probably ethnic Persians from Fars who were stationed in Makkash as provincial administrators.

At least one factor which must have contributed to the prosperity of the times was the development of *qanat* or *falaj* irrigation, that system of underground galleries which tap the huge sub-surface water reserves of southeastern Arabia after a fashion which has been likened to 'mining for water'. Qanats, which are thought to have originally developed in northwestern Iran and Urartu, spread quickly over the Iranian plateau and eventually, with the aid of the Muslim conquest, reached areas as far away as Spain and North Africa. It has been suggested that the Achaemenids introduced this technology into the Oman peninsula, and this may be true, although it would seem that, chronologically, much of the Iron Age remains discovered to date in the U.A.E. and Oman would pre-date any Achaemenid contact.

The first book of the *Kashf al-Gumma*, an anonymous history of Oman of which several copies from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries A.D. are known, describes the expulsion of the Persians from Oman by Malik bin Fahm, leader of the Azd, and with this the modern, Arab occupation of the Oman peninsula was thought by traditional Arab historians to begin. But to follow the course of later cultural developments in the region would take too long. I would like to conclude by reviewing a few salient points. If southeastern Arabia has not been in the mainstream of ancient Western Asiatic

studies, that has been due to those historical reasons which I tried to outline at the beginning of this lecture, rather than to any sense of having been peripheral throughout history. Indeed, the evidence points to the integration of the Oman peninsula into the greater cultural mosaic of the ancient world from the fifth millennium onwards. The trade in copper and wood, which may have begun as early as 3000 B.C., was of considerable importance in southern Mesopotamia, where virtually all timber and metal had to be imported. The repeated attempts by Old Akkadian, Ur III and eventually Achaemenid rulers to incorporate Magan or Maka into their empires, perhaps more than anything else, show that, from the perspective of the so-called centre, Magan was far from peripheral. Magan might lie at the opposite end of the Lower Sea, but the repeated efforts to control it can only mean that it was seen as a prize well worth having.

Magan's importance left its mark on the body of water which we today call the Persian or Arabian Gulf. On several occasions, I have referred to it as the Lower Sea, as indeed it was often called in both royal and literary cuneiform sources. But towards the end of the Ur III period, in an exchange of letters between the last ruler of the empire, Ibbi-Sin, and the *ensi* of Kazallu, we find the Lower Sea referred to in Sumerian as *a -ab-ba-má-ga[n-na*^{ki}*-shè*], or 'sea of Magan'. This is the first time in history that the Gulf was given a more precise denomination than simply 'Lower Sea'. Remarkably, just over two thousand years later the Greek polymath Cl. Ptolemy identified the same body of water as *Magon kolpos* in his famous *Geography* (6.7.17), and while this has often been misconstrued as 'Gulf of the Magi', the great South Arabian explorer Eduard Glaser had already recognised in 1890 that the Greek *gamma* of Magon was in fact a transcription of Old Persian *k*, hence the true meaning of Ptolemy's hydronym was 'Gulf of the Maka'. From the twenty-fourth century B.C. to the second century A.D., Sum. Magan, Akk. Makkan, OP. Maka, El. Makkash were names which were respected by the so-called more advanced societies of the greater Mesopotamian world. That this should have been the case is finally becoming apparent as archaeological research advances throughout the length and breadth of southeastern Arabia, one of the most exciting frontiers of research in Old World archaeology today.

Notes

1. For fuller details on the matters raised see D. T. Potts, *The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity*, Vols. 1–2, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
2. J.-J. Glassner, 'La division quinaire de la terre', *Akkadica* 40 (1984): 24.
3. P. Steinkeller, 'The Administrative and Economic Organization of the Ur III State: The Core and the Periphery', in McG. Gibson and R. D. Biggs, eds, *The Organization of Power: Aspects of Bureaucracy in the Ancient Near East*, Chicago, SAOC 46, 1987, 20.
4. W. Heimpel, 'Das Untere Meer', *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 77 (1987): 79.

Why Australian Literature?

ELIZABETH WEBBY*

When I finally gave in to persistent requests to deliver an inaugural lecture, I nominated the end of September as the fatal date, largely because it seemed sufficiently far off: still in the realm of things one would do someday. I did not realise the particular significance the month of September had in relation to the Chair of Australian Literature. Not only did G. A. Wilkes, the first holder of the Chair, take up his appointment on 3 September 1962—just over twenty-nine years ago—but Leonie Kramer, the second holder of the Chair, gave her inaugural lecture on 25 September 1968—23 years ago.

I have taken the precaution of reading the inaugural lectures given by my two predecessors—when doing something for the first time, it is usually wise at least to look at precedents, even if one doesn't follow them. Professor Wilkes spoke on 'The University and Australian Literature',[1] taking his title and starting point from an essay Christopher Brennan published in *Hermes* in 1902. Asked to write something to celebrate the University's Fiftieth Anniversary, Brennan, with tongue in cheek, wrote what he subtitled 'A Centenary Retrospect', ironically calling attention, from a supposed 1952 standpoint, to the little that had been done for 'Australia's now flourishing national art and literature' in the first fifty years of the University's existence.[2] Professor Kramer's title was 'The Context of Australian Literature'; her historical starting point was the 1849 NSW Legislative Council's debate about the foundation of the University.[3]

My own title has a much more recent and humble origin—a question, virtually the final question, asked during my interview for the Chair of Australian Literature early last year. 'Why Australian Literature?' was not a question I had been expecting and I had to ask

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for clarification—'Isn't literature literature?', I was told. 'Why do we need to single out Australian literature?' My answer was a variation of one I'd given during the First Feminist Book Fortnight two years ago when asked why we needed to have a Feminist Book Fortnight. In an ideal world, I said, it might be possible to teach literature as literature without regard to nationality or gender, but that ideal world has not yet arrived.

Interestingly, Christopher Brennan, writing about the supposed supportive relationship between the University and Australian literature in 1952, from the perspective of how literature was actually being taught here in 1902, noted as an advantage the fact that 'literature has here been taught always as an organic unity, without hostile frontiers of country or language'. Earlier this year I was asked, in the context of the celebration of the centenary of the History Department and the failure to celebrate the centenary of the Philosophy Department, whether the English Department had also failed to observe its centenary. Mungo MacCallum's appointment in 1887 was, however, as Challis Professor of Modern Literature, not as Professor of English. The first professors of English were not appointed until 1921, so this is only our 70th anniversary, that is, as a separate department. Teaching of English, however, began in 1888 under MacCallum, so if that is the yardstick we have missed out by three years.

The decision to establish a Chair of Australian Literature here was made, then, in the context of already existing Chairs in English Literature and Early English Literature and Language within an entity called the Department of English. Perhaps at some time in the future we may become a School of English Language and Literatures in English, with additional Chairs in American Literature, Pacific Literature and all manner of desirable others, though this does indeed seem rather Utopian at the present time of contraction rather than expansion. Unlike Brennan—or Leonie Kramer, who, perhaps equally tongue-in-cheek, suggested that in 300 years most Australian students might know as little of English Literature as most present students do of classical—I'm not going to indulge in prophecy, even in jest.

While my questioner somewhat disconcerted me by asking 'Why Australian literature?', I was perhaps lucky that it was not an even

more disconcerting 'Why literature?' Both Professors Wilkes and Kramer, speaking in the 1960s after a period of rapid expansion in universities and in English Departments in this country, assumed that this question no longer *was* a question. Professor Wilkes, for example, noted: 'That there are valid reasons for the University study of literature itself I am taking for granted, as in an inaugural lecture in the Faculty of Arts I do not feel required to justify the existence of the Faculty to itself'. The very different nature of Australian universities and English Departments thirty years later requires us, increasingly, to make these sorts of justifications, even to ourselves. Increasingly, too, one is confronted by attacks on the nature of universities, and English Departments, like that made by Paul Johnson in the *Australian*, based on an extremely narrow-minded view of education as training, i.e. the acquisition of vocational skills. So, he claimed, medicine should be taught in hospitals, law in the courts, etc. The best he seemed to be able to find for English Departments to do was the teaching of handwriting and verse writing.

One might counter in protest that one of the most important functions of a university education is to prevent people thinking as narrowly and rigidly as Paul Johnson. No doubt he attended a university but, as Dorothy Green was fond of reminding us, humane studies do not make one humane. Whether written in jest or not, Brennan's 1902 essay provides a justification of the University which bears repeating today:

> The capacities of a university for turning out poets are generally limited to a rudimentary sense of the verb; and our University has certainly not spoiled as many as it might have. But it has done noble and appreciable work in preparing the soil, the light, the atmosphere in which a literature might most favourably develop; in creating a community pervaded with a living sense of spiritual values, of the deeper unity of culture in all its forms, and carrying that sense into every daily act of its life, so that no corner is left for barbarism, vulgarity or materialism. Everyone who has graduated from our University, we might say without much exaggeration, has become a centre of such enlightenment for all about him; carrying away with him from his academic days something more than a mere improved capacity for earning his living, and a gift of platitude.
>
> For this we have to thank both the governing and teaching bodies of our University, past and present.

> The governing body, perhaps, most of all: for in their hands lay most power for good or evil. Never have they been seen to despair of the University. Never, even in the muddiest flow of the nineteenth century, have they sacrificed the idea of a University, saying 'Go to, we are modern men: what have we to do with these phantoms? Let us make veterinary surgeons, and, when horses are superseded, let us turn out automobile-engineers: for a new dispensation is come upon us, and these things alone are of value.' No: remember how they dared, under the leadership of him who will always be known as the Great Chancellor, to stem the current that howled about them, saying steadfastly, 'To our keeping has been entrusted an idea, *Universitas*—the unity of human culture throughout all its bewildering phases. Let these new developments be welcome; let them enrich us: but let them not seek to oust the ancient treasures; let them not claim to usurp the place of the idea which is more than they or any other temporal form, old or new. Let us feed the lamp and hand it on undimmed: in honour we can do no less.'

Picking up Brennan's idea of the University as being primarily concerned with 'human culture in all its phases', A. D. Hope in 1954, as quoted by Professor Wilkes in his inaugural lecture, had noted

> If literature is recognised as one of their proper fields of study, the Universities as a whole should study literature as a whole wherever it exists, and Australian Universities have the right and the duty to see that the literature of their own country does not form a gap in the general body of studies.[4]

Of course, a gap only exists if perceived as such and many other University professors did not believe that there was any Australian Literature to study. The more usual question in the 1950s was not 'why Australian literature?' but 'what Australian literature?' Professor Kramer recalled in her inaugural lecture the arguments in the 1950s against the establishment of the Australian Literature Chair: 'Those criticisms were made not by uninformed people, but by some academics, and more surprisingly, some writers'. Even a decade or more later, as she noted, 'Shortly after I joined the University I met a gentleman who, on being introduced to me, said "What Australian literature?" '. I don't propose tonight to tell the many other stories about ignorant English professors and their chauvinistic comments on Australian literature or the lack of it.

There was a time when these were ritually told and retold at meetings of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature, just as feminists once swapped their horror stories of the elderly academics who kept inquiring when the Department of Men's Studies was to be established.

Part of my personal answer to 'why Australian literature', however, relates to the fact that I did perceive a gap in my study of literature here in the later 1950s and early 60s—a gap relating to my inability to study any Australian literature. There were, it is true, some lectures in this area in the English III Pass course but, at that time, they were unavailable to Honours students who did a separate Year III Course. I consequently knew very little about Australian literature—I had studied Douglas Stewart's *Fire in the Snow* at high school, been a long time fan of Banjo Paterson, and had read my Australian children's books from May Gibbs through to Mary Grant Bruce and Ethel Turner, but that was about it. In an attempt to fill this gap I decided to write my B.A. Honours thesis on an Australian author—in fact on H. H. Richardson, whom I had not of course read but felt some affinity with simply because she had been a boarder at P.L.C. Melbourne as I had at P.L.C. Sydney. I discussed this possible topic with G. A. Wilkes—not yet Professor of Australian Literature, though to become so later that same year—who asked if I was really sure I had anything new to say on H. H. R. (Unbeknown to me he had written his own B.A. Honours thesis on H. H. R. a dozen or so years earlier.) I went to Fisher Library, looked at the size and number of books by and about H. H. R. and decided I didn't—which is how I came to write on Patrick White and, a year later, to publish one of the first articles on his plays. (*The Ham Funeral* was performed in Sydney while I was in the midst of my thesis and happened, luckily, to fit in perfectly with my argument.)

Though I met no opposition to an Honours thesis on an Australian author in the early 1960s—indeed, another member of my year also wrote on Patrick White—and Professor Wilkes appears to have met none in the late 1940s—there was, it seems, more opposition a few years earlier. I recently read a manuscript by someone who claimed that she had been actively discouraged from writing on an Australian topic earlier in the 1940s. Yet, curiously enough, as I discovered when reading through old university calendars recently in an attempt

to discover if we really had forgotten the English Department's centenary, Australian literature was taught as an integral part of the English I course from 1940 through to 1952. The course contents were, as listed in the calendars:

(a) The history of the English language, principles of composition, literary and practical, questions of 'good speech', including that of Australian pronunciation.
(b) The development of English literature, with the reading of some prescribed works of Chaucer and Shakespeare, also of other selected English writers.
(c) Australian Literature.

In 1953 Australian Literature moved out of English I to English III and so became much less available to students.

We are shortly to begin discussion of a new English I syllabus to take effect from 1994 and it seems that, forty years later, we might end up with something not all that different, at least in general terms, from the 1940 course, though we are probably unlikely to worry too much about 'good speech' let alone, despite Paul Johnson, good handwriting.

Of course, the texts we shall be teaching and how we shall be teaching them will be very different. If we are asked 'what Australian literature?' nowadays it is with a very different inflection, meaning not 'is there any?' but what, at the end of the twentieth century, do we mean by 'Australian', what by 'literature'? Both these terms have changed their meanings dramatically in the century since the 1890s when, it was believed, a 'genuine Australian literature' had finally been established. Brennan wrote, ironically, in 1902 of this nationalist school:

> the Australianity of this literature, which largely dealt with and was mainly addressed to mythical individuals called Bill and Jim, was painted on, not too laboriously, from the outside. What ruined the school was that it forgot its main (and only) object after all and took to celebrating imported fauna, such as the horse and the jackeroo.

The concept of and the belief in the need for an essentially Australian literature began, however, many years before the 1890s. Reviewing the first collection of poems published in Australia by an Australian born poet, Charles Tompson's *Wild Notes from the Lyre*

of a Native Minstrel (1826), the *Sydney Gazette*'s critic called, as countless others were to afterwards, on Australian writers to write about what they could see around them rather than merely imitate English authors:

> ... we will merely suggest to Mr. Tompson the propriety of letting his similes and metaphors be purely Australian. He will soon find his account in doing so, as they will infallibly possess all the freshness of originality. In this respect he has decided advantage over all European poets, because here nature has an entirely different aspect. Let him select from the treasures by which he is surrounded—let nature be his exclusive study—and Australia will have it in her power to boast of the productions of her bard.[5]

We, of course, know that the processes of seeing, of writing and of reading are much more complicated and inter-related than this model allows. But it continued to be the dominant one, as critic after critic pointed to all the distinctive material waiting to be written about. Here is part of an article on 'Colonial Literature' published in Sydney in 1845:

> 'But we have no colonial literature, nor do I see any materials from which a literature purely colonial could be raised.'
>
> 'I wish you would abolish the use of the word "Colonial" at any rate with regard to literature, and call it either "Australian" or "National". Depend upon it that Australia will never be more than a cipher among the nations, until her sons assume to themselves national characteristics, and proudly stamp them by the pen to be acknowledged and admired by the world!'
>
> 'All very good,—but no answer to my position, that both literature and the materials for forming it are wanting to Australia. ... '
>
> 'Little has yet appeared, I grant you, to warrant the high ground I have chosen to take in this argument; yet of what has been published, so great a proportion is really good, that I cannot help repeating, that, with the same amount of talent, to say nothing of any addition, a literature might be formed, distinctively and strikingly Australian; and as for material; whence the material of American Literature? In the woods, and the prairies, on the rivers, and the lakes. Among the red Indians and snowy mountains, ay, and in the city too, in the drawing room, in the counting house, in the cottage, and in the hall! If anything be wanted here, it is the men and not the matter, nor do I believe that even *they* are absent, but that if Australians as a nation, would cherish

> and be proud of literature as of national and not of European character and interest—a Fenimore Cooper, a Washington Irving, a Channing, a Franklin, and a Willis, would soon spring up in our midst to spread a halo over Australia, by seizing each in his own manner on the material presented in the town, in the bush, among sheep stations, homesteads, squatters, blackfellows, kangaroos or parrots; among seamen or landsmen, nativeborn or emigrant, military, naval, or civilian!'[6]

While both these critics see Australian Literature as distinct from and in opposition to English or European literature, this view was not widely shared by Australian writers or readers of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the journal which published the article just quoted from, the Colonial *Literary Journal*, was a close copy of *Chambers' Edinburgh Miscellany*, and this century was to produce dozens of colonial clones of the *Illustrated London News*, *Punch*, and other English magazines. Writing in the *Australasian* on 27 February 1869, the poet Henry Kendall protested against the call for a separate Australian literature:

> We are not desirous to divide ourselves from all the attainments, all the rich results, of the literature of our common English tongue ... So far as literature can grow amongst us, so far as it can reflect local conditions, and give literary form to the altered natural, and social circumstances of our Australian life, so far let it stand as a useful and valuable part of English literature; but let us not fence ourselves up in a petty sphere, narrow our attention to it as our world, and forget the universe from which we shall have cut ourselves off.

Kendall's opinion is similar to that found in Brennan's rejection of 'the hostile frontiers of nationality and language' and would, I imagine, be one shared by most writers from what we now call post-colonial societies. In his essay 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition', for example, Jorge Borges asked 'What is our Argentine tradition? I believe we can answer this question easily and that there is no problem here. I believe our tradition is all of Western culture, and I do believe we have a right to this tradition, greater than that which the inhabitants of one or another Western nation might have ... we can handle all European themes, handle them without superstition, with an irreverence which can have, and already does have, fortunate consequences'. Elsewhere in this piece—originally given as a lecture

in the 1950s—Borges attacks the equation of 'local colour' with nationality in terms which strongly recall Brennan's 1902 essay. I might add in a parenthesis that the most enjoyable course I have ever taught here was one which studied Australian short story writers in a world context—including collections by Chekhov and Borges as well as stories by English, American and New Zealand writers. In putting that course together, perhaps I subconsciously recalled a passage in Professor Kramer's inaugural lecture. Arguing that the context of Australian literature included not only Australian history and art and English Literature, but also literature as a whole, she noted:

> One of the particular strengths of Australian literature is and has been the short story. From the nineteenth century to the present day there is a wealth of material, well worth reading and discussing in its own right. But the short story is also part of a family, which, to go back only into its immediate past history, contains such distinguished members as Pushkin, Turgenev, Chekhov, de Maupassant, Conrad, Hawthorne, Twain, Thomas Mann, Kafka, James Joyce, Henry James—the problem is where to put the full stop.

That, of course, is very much the problem, especially at a time of diminishing resources and diminishing courses. While writers and readers can still be citizens of the world, critics and university teachers are compelled to go about erecting those very fences Kendall complained of. Courses have to be constructed, lectures, articles, and reviews written—the textual world has to be divided up somehow. However much we may deplore the simplifications of the binary, there is no escaping the fact that some authors go in and others go out. In the past, these decisions tended to be made according to what was then seen as the canon: based on an author's antiquity, reputation, perceived literary value, perceived moral value, etc, etc. As the canon has been progressively deconstructed—not to say exploded—other ways of dividing up texts have been resorted to: by gender or by genre, by period or content, by nationality and/or race of the authors. However one does it, one is constructing a desirable category and selecting on the basis of it: Australian/non-Australian; women/non-women. In erecting a fence to protect and foster one category, one is inevitably constructing all others as others and so excluding them.

It has been interesting to see the old debate over special pleading, and categorisation of writers as Australian or non-Australian, resurfacing recently in a slightly different form in Robert Dessaix's essay in the *Australian Book Review* for February/March 1991, 'Nice Work If You Can Get It'. He sees the categorising of some Australian writing as multicultural as operating more in the interest of certain critics and academics than of the writers themselves. Like Kendall, Dessaix argues that Australian writers are writers and that the multicultural fence—designed to protect and promote—ends up merely producing a ghetto. The thorniness of the multicultural question is well illustrated by the differing labels which have been applied to writers seen as belonging to this group from the 1950s onwards—New Australians, migrants, ethnics, non-Anglo-Celts, NESBs. I was myself quite fond of the term non-Anglo-Celt, largely because in 1983 I invented an acronymic definition of what had been till then the dominant tradition in Australian literature—this was the WACM—white, Anglo-Celtic, male. I had a vain hope that it might become part of the Australian language—along with A. A. Phillips' 'cultural cringe' and Donald Horne's 'lucky country'—but this was not to be. In London last year I was attacked after a seminar for using this term—the attacker argued that to call anyone a 'non-something' was an insult. Perhaps his real objection was one made more recently by Australian Celts who have refused to be associated even at this linguistic level with the English. So both of the terms 'Anglo-Celtic' and 'Non-Anglo-Celtic' are now prohibited as politically incorrect.

The problems are not, of course, with the terms themselves, but the values that become attached to them. We have a bad habit of accepting our own—or our forebears—man-made constructions as natural and inevitable. A recent television documentary on perceptions of Australianness illustrated this well. Young people of Asian and Southern European ethnicity were asked to describe the typical Australian. All replied 'blonde and blue eyed'. 'But what nationality are you?' asked the interviewer. 'Australian', they all responded. Something the reverse happened to me while in hospital earlier this year when one of the cleaners, clearly from a non-English speaking background, asked me where I was born. 'Here, in Sydney, I'm an Australian', I replied. 'And your parents?' she asked. 'They were

also born in Australia', I said. I could have added that all my grandparents and, indeed, most of my great-grandparents, had been born in Australia, but even that may not have convinced her. 'No, you don't seem like an Australian,' she said, shaking her head. 'You are a happy person, and Australians are all ... ', at which point she pulled a very gloomy face.

This incident happened to coincide with my own observation that, out of a truly multicultural group of nurses who looked after me during this period, the best by far were those who were not Australian born and trained. The latter belonged uniformly to the loud-footed, loud-voiced, rough-handed, she'll be right brigade. Both observations led me to reflect again on our national character and to conclude that, if 'old' Australians are such a grumpy, complaining, ill-considerate lot, thank God for multiculturalism.

On that same television programme I mentioned earlier, an academic from Wollongong University's multicultural centre constructed an interesting diagram of Australia's changing population profile in the 200 years since 1788. In the first fifty years, to 1838, the majority of the population was Aboriginal; in the next fifty years British-born; in the next fifty , Australian born. In the final fifty years the majority of the population was again born outside Australia.

In this last period, 1938–1988, we have seen an increasing preoccupation with questions of Australian identity and the construction of it in terms which were only ever true, if true at all, for the previous period, 1888–1938. This period has also seen the establishment of courses in, and centres of, Australian literature and Australian studies, not only in this University, but throughout the world. This period ended with the premature celebration of the bicentenary of Australia—something which will not, of course, actually occur until the year 2101. None of us, I expect, will be still around to see it, though we shall all, I hope, be celebrating the century of Australia in 2001 and the sesquicentury of this University the following year. Some of us may even still be here for the centenary of the English Department, in 2021.

By then, another half-century will almost have passed since 1988, and conceptions of what is literature, what is Australian, will have changed yet again, in their terminology if nothing else. I am, as you may have noticed, a believer in recycling, so I don't imagine

the issues will really have changed all that much. It will still come down to deciding which texts get taught and which don't, to the battle between keeping up with the new and preserving or rediscovering the old, to balancing the desire to foster the local while remaining aware of the international. There have been and there are, as I have tried to show, a range of answers to 'why Australian literature?' and 'what Australian literature?' They, or questions like them, will keep being asked, as long as we have universities, or, at least, universities with strong Faculties of Arts, and a living rather than a dead culture.

Notes

1. An inaugural lecture delivered on 20 April 1964 and published by Angus and Robertson in 1964.
2. This lecture is reprinted in A. R. Chisholm & J. J. Quinn, eds, *The Prose of Christopher Brennan*, Sydney, 1962, pp. 220–27.
3. Published in *Arts* 6 (1969): 18–29.
4. 'Australian Literature and the University', *Meanjin* 13 (1954): 165–69.
5. *Sydney Gazette*, 1 November 1826, quoted in Elizabeth Webby, 'Parents rather than Critics: Some Early Reviews of Australian Literature', in Leon Cantrell, ed., *Bards, Bohemians, and Bookmen*, Brisbane, 1976, pp. 19–38.
6. *Colonial Literary Journal*, 27 February 1845, quoted in Elizabeth Webby, 'Before the *Bulletin*: Nineteenth Century Literary Journalism', in Bruce Bennett, ed., *Cross Currents: Magazines and Newspapers in Australian Literature*, Perth, 1981, pp. 3–34.
7. 'Short Fiction in the Eighties: White Anglo-Celtic Male No More?', *Meanjin* 42 (1983): 34–41.

Telling Stories: Perspectives on Literary History
The Narrative Genres in Eighteenth-Century France

ANGUS MARTIN*

Perhaps I should start with my title. My colleagues have been saying to me that it looks long enough to be a lecture on its own. It is true that it was intended to suggest reasonably fully the range of what I hope to discuss.

First of all: *telling stories*. In other words, it will be about the literary genres that present a narrative; and about different ways in which narratives have been—and can be—presented through language. I shall be leaving aside—both for convenience and to remain within the confines of a single lecture—the relationship between what is conventionally seen as narrative fiction on the one hand and dramatic or theatrical forms of narrative on the other.

In the second place my title refers to: *perspectives on literary history*. My other major emphasis will thus be on attempting to present my topic from a number of different points of view, on trying to build up in this way an impression in the round.

My sub-title aims to suggest the particular types of narrative which I have been most concerned with in my own research and which I shall make the focus of my discussion here. I find it hard to believe that I have been occupying myself for over thirty years with what is conventionally labelled as the eighteenth-century French novel. I have in my time turned the pages of literally thousands of examples of the genre, as—together with my research colleagues—I attempted to survey exhaustively this type of writing at this period in the past. Not that I wish to express any sense of weariness or regret—my surprise comes rather from the fact that the subject still seems, to me at least, so fresh and challenging.

So in this discussion I should like to try to outline what I see my

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field of research as being. What was narrative fiction in eighteenth-century France, and in what context did it exist? How were stories told? How were they produced and how were they consumed?

My topic will thus be largely concerned with the concept of genre: the notion that there will be a range of conventional and more or less rigid forms into which all discourse will be moulded. My subject will be the narrative genres, but my mode of communication, I am acutely aware, will be another genre with which I am much less familiar—the inaugural lecture.

Let me use the tried-and-tested educational principle of beginning with the familiar. The three items of eighteenth-century narrative fiction best known in the Anglo-Saxon world have found their widest audience through adaptations in other media.

The abbé Prévost's *Histoire du chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*[1] is familiar to opera-goers through the music of Massenet's *Manon* and Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*. (Auber's version is far less commonly performed, although there was a revival in Paris a couple of years ago at the Opéra comique.) These operas are based on a section of a long novel entitled *Les Mémoires et aventures d'un homme de qualité*, published volume by volume over the years 1728 to 1731. I say a section of a novel, for the work which today is constantly reprinted in paperback editions as an item in its own right was originally tacked on, as a separate episode, to a long recounting of the travels and adventures of a French nobleman. The hero of the novel proper tells his story in the first person, in the form of his memoirs. This principal narrator is not the hero of the story of *Manon Lescaut* but rather a listener to Manon's lover's tale. The situation is supposed to be that the man of quality, in the last volume of the novel, is reproducing Des Grieux's story just as the young man told it to him when they met in their travels many years before.

Manon Lescaut, as an example of eighteenth-century French fiction, illustrates many facets of the genre as it was conceived in the early part of that century. As you will have gathered, even from my brief presentation, the structure of the *Mémoires et aventures d'un homme de qualité,* is in modern terms somewhat rough and ready. It is based on the time-honoured technique for long fiction of stringing together a series of adventures that gain their unity from the identity of the hero and the peregrinations that this hero carries

out. This structural principle in Western literature goes back of course to Homer's *Odyssey*. It was espoused enthusiastically in the Greek novels of the first centuries A.D. and given new currency in the heroic romances of the seventeenth century. Whilst Prévost, for his part, attempts to give a recognisable picture of contemporary life, rather than the royal or pastoral adventures of mythical or historical figures, he is still using what was soon to become an increasingly old-fashioned way of telling a long story: namely to accumulate a series of what remain essentially short narratives.

Where Prévost is not old-fashioned is in his use of first person narrative. Like many of his contemporaries he is acutely aware of the way in which a story where the main character tells his or her own tale has the effect of breaking down the distance that can separate the reader or listener from the action being related. On the one hand, there is an automatic aura of truth surrounding the memoir form; on the other, there is the simple fact that the traditional narrator, the story-teller, has been supplanted, done away with.

These narrative effects, directed towards involving the reader more closely with the events of the story, are illustrated in what may be seen as their extreme form in the next example I should like to remind you that you know.

I refer to Laclos's *Liaisons dangereuses*,[2] first published in 1782 and popularised in recent years through a stage adaptation and in fact two new film versions. These transpositions, however, eliminate entirely the basic narrative technique of the novel, for the story is told through the letters supposedly exchanged by the characters. The *Liaisons dangereuses* is an epistolary novel, a sub-genre only infrequently exploited in our own day. Here the traditional story-teller has been eliminated as in first person narrative, but we have gone further. There is now no principal narrator at all, and each of the personages takes his or her turn to present his or her point of view. And these personages are supposedly not writing for a single unchanging reader, but are conceived as being caught in a variety of acts of communication with a variety of individual recipients of their messages.

It is particularly on the level of the overall construction of the novel that a very considerable change in technique is evident when we pass from *Manon Lescaut* to the *Liaisons dangereuses*. The only

journeys now are from salon to salon, from boudoir to boudoir, from city residence to country house. The time scale here is of months rather than a life-time. A handful of symmetrically chosen characters works out a tightly managed plot—the kind of plot that in earlier days would have been the subject of an interpolated story within a larger work. Laclos, like his contemporaries, in the latter part of the eighteenth-century, is able to write a long narrative based on a relatively simple set of events because he knows how to slow down his narrative pace.

This trick was, it may be added as a parenthesis, what made Samuel Richardson, with *Pamela*, *Clarissa Harlowe* and *Grandison*, the publishing sensation he was in his day. Whilst modern students of the English novelist may feel that he overdoes the detail, his contemporaries were swept off their feet by the impression he gave them that they were 'living along' with their fictional heroes and heroines. Perhaps the nearest modern equivalent is the pleasure of the television serial, which is going strictly nowhere, but which delights in imitating the rhythms and the minutiae of everyday life.

The two French examples I have chosen have, I hope, allowed me to give some inkling of what I see as the great technical achievements of the later eighteenth-century novel. On the one hand, practitioners of the genre learned to break with the past and to use simple and well-constructed (rather than purely episodic) plots for long works of fiction, and this was something entirely new. On the other hand, they did this by slowing down the pace of narration and attempting to imitate the individual's perception of the passing of time and of the moment-by-moment experience of living. The great novelty for the public was to be led by such techniques into feeling a new involvement with the events of the fiction that was being read. The narrator's job was now less to tell a story than to help his audience to experience that story.

This was an ambition that the nineteenth-century novel continued to pursue and to develop, and popular fiction goes on doing so—as exemplified in those large paperbacks that proliferate in airport bookstalls for buyers who obviously feel the need to be transported in imagination away from the discomfort of the 747. Innovative fiction in the twentieth century has increasingly abandoned such techniques, however, and attempted to break rather than create the

illusion of participation. Is it because other media have exploited audience-involvement through techniques that became more effective if only because of their novelty? I am thinking of the nineteenth-century theatre and its descendant the silent cinema. But even more of the children of those genres: the wide-screen, Technicolor, stereophonic sound cinema presentation—and the constant and multiple flow of moving, colour, talking images that flit across countless television screens, blurring fiction and reality into an indistinguishable experience.

My first two examples have served to illustrate what seems to me an essential originality of the eighteenth-century novel in France. My third familiar illustration will serve to show that this can be only a partial view of what is, by its nature, a far more complex phenomenon.

Voltaire's *Candide*,[3] in purely quantitative terms, is probably best known in the Anglo-Saxon world through an American musical version. I cannot comment on this adaptation as I have never been tempted to follow it up. Just as I feel decidedly unenthusiastic at the idea of any kind of version in other media of Proust's great novel, I am not really tempted by any form of *Candide* which loses that sly, disabused, witty, vulgar, uproarious and at the same time terrible, narratorial voice that presents the innocent hero's misfortunes to us. Here we have the exact opposite of the kind of reader-identification which does away with the traditional story-teller. It is true that we have a biting parody of the old structural principles of the romance: Voltaire's tale relentlessly mocks the long narrative that is based on a journey, and relies on extraordinary coincidences, deaths that turn out not to have been fatal, and a happy ending that makes everything all right after all. It is also true that Voltaire is using fiction to get across a message, and that the eighteenth-century novel—at least in its later manifestations—very frequently laid great stress on the moral implications of the stories told and indeed on the moral effects they could expect to exert upon their readers. In no way, however, can it seriously be argued that Voltaire is attempting to involve his reader emotionally and pragmatically in his narrative: the engagement remains intellectual, ironic, analytical.

One reason for this, clearly, is that Voltaire does not see himself, in generic terms, as a novelist, but rather as a writer of short fiction.

His collected tales may be entitled *Romans et contes* (novels and short stories), but they are effectively all *contes* (short stories). In other words Voltaire writes brief, not long, fiction. There is no attempt to slow down narrative pace; indeed speed and brevity are of the essence. Voltaire maintains the traditional third-person narrative voice of the short tale, an efficient and effective way of cutting corners, directing the reader, and pointing a moral. What is typical of the Enlightenment is on the one hand the way in which such a humble and accessible type of narrative is given such a noble mission, and on the other hand the manner in which the techniques of short narrative are, as it were, exaggerated in the search for a more taut and efficient story-telling formula.

Voltaire's work can serve to remind us of the way in which at this period the modern distinction between short and long fiction is beginning to develop. We have noted that before the eighteenth-century length in narrative was achieved by placing end to end (or by interweaving) what were in fact a number of individual short narrations. As the novel learned to slow down its narrative pace and to make use in more leisurely fashion of the space at its disposal, the short story typically moved in the opposite direction, exploiting its brevity in ever more typical ways.

The history of short fiction brings me to one of the French eighteenth-century writers who intrigues me most: Jean-François Marmontel.[4] To date I have spared you obscure examples, but here I must change tactic. But be reassured, Marmontel is not a household name to the French today either. And yet he was one of the most eminent literary men of his generation. His fame—not quite of the order of that of Voltaire and Rousseau, but certainly ahead of Diderot—was Europe-wide, and largely as a result of his collections of short stories.

He was in fact an early proponent (both in theory and practice) of the 'well-made' brief narrative, with a single focus, and an extreme stress on technical and thematic unity, accurate plotting and vigorous narrative energy. He is mentioned far too little in histories of the genre, which tend not to look further back than the early years of the nineteenth century. (And yet Edgar Allan Poe must have known Marmontel's work ...)

The case of Marmontel reminds us that the story of eighteenth-

century French fiction is more complex that was first suggested here, if only because outlines of literary history sternly pull the shades on the mass of forgotten writers who had brief or long periods of fame in their own day, or who, indeed, exploited the genre ingloriously or anonymously. Specialist histories of the novel in France will not fail to mention such people as Lesage and Marivaux or Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and the marquis de Sade—or even Fénelon, Hamilton, Robert Chasles, Crébillon, and Rétif de la Bretonne. But how often does one find a reference to Madame de Gomez, Baculard d'Arnaud, Gueullette, Duclos, madame de Tencin, Louvet de Couvray, to name but a handful of the cohort. All these men and women contributed to the development of prose fiction in eighteenth-century France. The work of some of them is today seen as extremely original and influential (one thinks of Marivaux for instance or of Diderot), even though their work was either seen as eccentric or known in the most fragmentary form in their lifetime.

If it is difficult to account for the whole army of writers of fiction who may be numbered in hundreds, how is one going to deal with the thousands of novels (let alone short stories) that poured from the presses. A major part of my research work has been in surveying the total production of prose narrative in the French language between 1700 and 1820.[5] Something over 3,000 new works originally written in French appeared in the century from 1701 to 1800. To these can be added another 700 or 800 translations from other languages. It is a sobering thought to realise that of these only a dozen or so are still commonly read and studied, even by specialists. *Sic transit gloria litterarum.*

Once one starts to look at the production of works of fiction, one is led to consider the circuits of production, distribution and consumption that supported what was clearly a substantial branch of the publishing industry. It should be added that only gradually did prose fiction become a major branch of literature—and only really in the latter part of the century—competing as it did with religious works on the one hand and the 'official' literary genres, such as verse and drama, on the other.

Novels were produced by booksellers, mostly clustered in Paris, but to some extent in the provinces. Their businesses were closely regulated by government ordinances, as were those of the printers

who actually produced the volumes. The content of novels, as of all printed books, was subject to a system of censorship and the purchase of permission to publish, which weakened gradually as the century progressed and which was abolished by the Revolution—before being reinstated in other guises by Napoleon.

Booksellers kept shops (and held onto stocks for what seem to modern eyes extraordinary lengths of time—ten to twenty years on occasions), and they did business with correspondents in the provinces and outside of France through the postal system. Books published in this way were an expensive item, available only to the aristocracy and the prosperous middle classes. In the latter wpart of the century, the English fashion of the lending library was imported into Paris and many booksellers began to rent out their volumes (especially novels) as well as sell them. Many of us here tonight can remember the last days of the local lending library in this country; and of course the system has been reinvented to distribute video cassettes—perhaps the true successors of the eighteenth-century novel—for all the reasons I outlined when I spoke of the immediacy of television, plus the flexibility in choice of title and time of use.

Readers of novels—or at least purchasers of novels—necessarily belonged to the wealthier classes of society, as books of any substance and intended for entertainment were normally beyond the reach of artisans and those even less well off. There are many references to servants reading their masters' books and their novels in particular, and indeed purloining them, but the lifestyle of domestics was unusually ambiguous in an age that normally kept social classes in their place. A major bar to universal consumption of novels, apart from the financial prohibition, was the extremely low level of literacy that persisted—whilst improving slowly—throughout the century. Novels were, of course, considered at the time to be particularly attractive to a female audience. This was not only because of the prevalence of love stories, but also because women, lacking the formal education that gave access to official literature, were supposed to have found access to an untraditional and all-involving genre more readily within their grasp. In the latter part of the eighteenth century in France, the juvenile market for fiction also began to be exploited in earnest, thanks to the success of the

moralistic but talented Arnaud Berquin—one of the great pioneers of children's literature.

One particular type of reader of novels—then as now—was the literary critic, the literary theorist or commentator. In general terms, the critical establishment in France during most of the eighteenth century remained disdainful towards novels, or else actively hostile. Four major objections to the genre surfaced constantly. Firstly, that Aristotle had never heard of it and prescribed the verse epic as the proper form of long narrative. Secondly that writing fiction (especially when there was a pretence of truth) was the same as lying—that other colloquial sense of 'telling stories'. Thirdly that the constant theme of love led to immorality. (Rousseau, in a preface to the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, got around this one by claiming that his novel could not corrupt young girls, for if any young girl even opened it she was already corrupted.) And lastly that reading novels was a waste of time that should be spent on pious works and the search for salvation. It has been claimed that hostility to prose fiction reached such heights in France in the 1730s that the genre was officially outlawed. In spite of all of these fulminations, the public for novels grew constantly; and increasing currency was accorded the counter-claim from more favourably disposed theorists: that reading fiction offered a useful simulacrum of life experiences and a practical course in morality by examples.

So far we have considered, in this sketch of eighteenth-century French fiction, the texts themselves, the writers, the distributors and the consumers. There are of course other viewpoints from which one can observe this complex phenomenon, and I should like to develop just one of them.

The production of narratives in eighteenth-century France can be considered from the perspective of the media used to communicate these narratives. We have talked in terms of the novels and short stories published as books, but it is worth remembering that stories were also told in many other ways. Even within the parameters of the official book trade, of course, many other traditional narrative genres competed for attention with the new forms of story-telling. Mediaeval forms, such as the *fabliau*, lived on for instance in the vast production of jokebooks. And saints' lives and moral exempla were still produced in enormous numbers for the devout. Classical

genres were assiduously cultivated, from the mythological tales derived from Ovid, to verse and prose fables, dialogues, allegories, dreams, character sketches, pastorals, and—the jewel in the generic hierarchy—the verse epic. Early modern models of prose fiction were constantly reprinted: Boccaccio, the Spanish picaresque novelists, the pastoral tradition of Montemayor, of Sidney and d'Urfé, the heroic romances of mademoiselle de Scudéry and her peers, the comic parodies of Cervantes and Scarron ...

The booktrade had already gone beyond the traditional production of individual titles and had invented and exploited the formula of the serial publication. The production of periodicals—weekly and monthly magazines—was already highly developed in the pre-Revolutionary period. In literary periodicals, the short story found a new context, a new popularity and a new set of formal conditions that had important consequences for the manner in which the genre developed. The great Marmontel first published his *Contes moraux* in the major journal of his day, the *Mercure de France*, and they were quickly pirated by other journalists all over Europe.

Printed books, however, as produced from the presses for booksellers and journalists, were not the only medium for narrative. We have already noted that the reading public was relatively small because of the low levels of literacy. This meant that traditions of oral story-telling remained alive, particularly in the French countryside, well into the nineteenth century. Peasant communities would gather on feast days or on winter evenings to listen to one of their number retell traditional tales, partly through recitation, partly through improvisation. (The convention lingers on among parents who tell rather than read traditional tales to their offspring.) And in aristocratic salons oral presentation of stories in prose or in verse was a time-honoured tradition, embodied in the narrative structure of many printed collections of stories that go back at least to Boccaccio's *Decameron*. (Perhaps it could be argued that the public lecture is one of the last artisanal vestiges of this kind of oral literature prepared for and shared by a small community.)

Manuscript as a medium of distribution of literary productions still persisted in eighteenth-century France, in spite of the dominance print had already achieved. Friends still exchanged their attempts at writing verse and prose, often as part of the still strong habit of

extensive letter-writing. Authors of subversive works, unable to risk having them printed, resorted likewise to multiple manuscript copies. There is also the celebrated case of a literary periodical, the *Correspondance littéraire*, from 1753, that was prepared for a number of royal and princely subscribers and sent all over Europe in manuscript copies. (Some of Diderot's prose fiction, of course, first appeared therein.)

Related to the official booktrade by its use of printing, but separate from that trade by the nature of its product and the means of distribution of that product was the popular press, producing cheap little brochures of only a few pages for the new literate elements of the poorer social classes. In French these publications, which the English called 'chapbooks' or 'cheapbooks', went under the general label of the *bibliothèque bleue*, because of the cheap blue-grey recycled card used typically for their covers. The content of the *bibliothèque bleue*, reproduced on low-quality paper with poor type and wood-cuts, was made up of works of piety, practical manuals, games and jokes, but also fairy stories, tales of chivalry and moral exempla. Their content is never new, always borrowed, always simplified, abridged, adapted to an uneducated public. The market for these cheap brochures appears to have been enormous and certainly in the quantity of units sold it went well beyond the turnover of the book-trade proper. They were not available in normal bookshops, but were carried through the countryside on the backs of peddlers along with their stock of cottons and ribbons, of household requisites and cheap novelties.

When one looks at the variety of media for fiction, one is easily tempted to see correspondences between the modes of transmission and the formal qualities of the kinds of stories told through them. The magazine story will be brief and to the point if only because of exigencies of space. The tale in the *bibliothèque bleue* will be told simply, albeit with much redundancy, with illustrations, with short and easily-managed divisions, so that new readers (and those that will be expected to read aloud to the illiterate) will not find themselves out of their depth. The oral tale will continue to treat traditional subjects, to formalise the role of the narrator, and to fulfil a didactic or warning function for the adult uneducated and the young.

It may be argued that the distinct formal qualities of the

eighteenth-century novel can be traced back to the medium in which is was created. The modern novel may be seen in this perspective as the first genre uniquely created for and in print. Whereas earlier written and printed forms of narrative were in a sense transpositions of earlier oral models, the novel as the eighteenth century created the concept and as we understand the term today was always intended for extended individual reading. Hence the effect of intimacy and of personal experience. As we read, the novelist attempts to mimic our own perceptual experiences: observing places and actions, listening to sounds and speech, thinking and planning and reflecting. The notion I developed earlier, that the eighteenth-century novelists learned to slow down the speed of narration and to involve their readers in the action of their story sits well with the hypothesis that it is the medium of print and the processes of silent reading that allow them to develop these techniques.

I have tried to sketch, in what we have discussed to date, some varying perspectives on the development of prose fiction in eighteenth-century France. I have suggested something of the complexity of the topic as we observed it from a variety of vantage points. I have also tried to demonstrate how aspects of the development of narrative observed at one particular level and from one particular perspective can have relevance to other or similar characteristics of the genre that are highlighted by other levels and perspectives of analysis. My principal example of this phenomenon was the way in which the innovatory techniques of reader-involvement observed at the level of the text can be related to the use of the print medium in a new way for a new kind of public.

It is a most exciting commentary on the progress of the discipline of literary history that an appreciation of such interrelationships is coming to be a central preoccupation of our discipline. And I devote my brief conclusion to my experience of varying concepts of a historical approach to literature that have held sway over the years I have been working on the early French novel. The changes I have seen can be characterised as a move from a naive to a self-conscious view of literary practice and of historiography, together with a shift from an analytical to a synthesising methodology.

When I worked on my doctoral thesis in the late 1950s, current methods remained those of the Lansonian school: the examination

of non-literary documentation as a background to the literary text. My thesis on the depiction of Parisian reality in the novels of the then relatively obscure writer Rétif de la Bretonne involved the comparison of the 'literary' evidence with a mass of documentation conceived of as the 'historical' evidence. In those days in the more traditional departments of the French universities there was no theoretical discussion of what characteristics might conceivably distinguish the two types of text. It was a matter of labels: some forms of writing were put in the category of literature and others in the category of documentary evidence. And so I proceeded to compare what Rétif had written in his novels with whatever anybody else may have written in what were intuitively categorised as non-literary texts.

Of course, even then, new approaches to the historical disciplines had been developing and had already influenced the parameters of literary history. The sociological analysis of the records of the past that had been espoused by the *Annales* school found its first parallel in types of research into the literary past that looked beyond the canon of great names and attempted to investigate and indeed to measure statistically the work of minor and forgotten writers. Out of this kind of study of the past grew the particularly successful branch that became known as the history of the book, studying the material context of publication in early modern times and on into the nineteenth century. The kind of bibliographical work I began in the early 1960s (and I suppose my original choice of the then less-than-celebrated Rétif de la Bretonne for my thesis) were related to such attempts to study earlier centuries in the detail of their more humdrum characteristics.

Marxist history and Marxist analyses of literature, of course, also saw historical and literary developments as part of an essentially political process, of a struggle for power between different social groups. Such approaches—strictly Marxist or not—had a strong influence on concepts of prose fiction, which came to be seen as a genre belonging particularly to the rising middle classes. These methodologies directly or indirectly inspired studies of censorship, and of the influence the official context of the novel may have had upon its evolution.

Whilst historiography did not stand still, its more traditional

tenets increasingly came under attack, with the rise of structuralism in the 1960s. In particular, the accumulation of data now tended to be seen as a misguided endeavour unless a theory or a structural concept could enable the researcher to make sense of those data. Intellectual history now began to be seen as a series of constructs that were first and foremost examined as they were seen to function within a given era, but then compared as a series of paradigms in sequence.

Structuralist literary studies retreated from history into the analysis of the text itself. Inspired by structuralist linguistics (and to some extent by generative linguistics), the work of literature was conceived on the model of the sentence, with its own elements and its own rules of combination. New interest was aroused in the way in which early novels functioned and, through a wide variety of structuralist studies or merely studies with a formalist emphasis, a great deal of progress was achieved in our understanding of what was called in a celebrated phrase 'the rhetoric of fiction'.

This divorce of history and literature has, however, largely been reconciled in the last ten to fifteen years. Both linguistics and literary studies have developed theoretical models that have made it possible to link again the text and its context. A major influence has been the growth of schools of pragmatic and systemic linguistics which attempt to take into account not only the form of the message but the input of the speaker and the listener as well as the situation in which the speech act occurs. There has been a return to a view of language and of literature as a total system, the parts of which are interrelated in complex but analysable ways. The availability of computerised methods of manipulating and analysing data have, of course, made many of these developments possible.

At the same time, traditional labels for various forms of discourse have been broken down, and today the so-called 'historical' document can be seen as a construct obeying its own rules and constraints, in the same way as the so-called 'literary' document is the product of another set of rhetorical and generic parameters. Today, more than thirty years on, my thesis on Rétif de la Bretonne's picture of Paris in his novels would be based not on an essentially haphazard accumulation of evidence (which did not, I say in my defence, necessarily lead to conclusions that were absolutely off the mark),

but rather on a notion of the essential unity of all forms of discourse.

Literary history has thus become a study that seeks to understand the workings not only of a textual system but of a complex cultural system. There is today in this discipline the constant ambition to interrelate the levels of communication, from the material to the actual and to the conceptual. I have tried to show how connections can be made between the form of eighteenth-century narrative fiction and the context of its production, its distribution and its consumption. I have attempted also to relate the variety of media that transmitted narrative to the forms it took on. By examining this generic system from the past in its detailed configuration, perhaps it will be possible to make some small progress in understanding further aspects of the processes of human communication.

One of the essential features of the story, of course, is that it must come to a close, it must leave us with some sense of an ending. And lectures obey the same rule of finality. I should like to revert to forms of first person narrative as I conclude, and to evoke for you something of my own personal experience.

I should like firstly to express my thanks to my former Head of Department, who over more than twenty-five years offered me constant support and encouragement, not to mention his untiring patience. I refer to Professor Keith Goesch, of Macquarie University, who has demonstrated a long commitment that is deeply appreciated. From the start he set me a model as a researcher and a publisher.

And again, I cannot close without paying tribute to my late colleague, the English scholar, Professor Vivienne Mylne, with whom I worked for three decades on the historical bibliography of the eighteenth-century novel. It was in many ways a unique collaboration: it took place at a distance, it lasted an unusually long period of time, it was for all concerned an enriching experience from every point of view. Vivienne died suddenly last June and, with our friend and collaborator, Professor Richard Frautschi of the Pennsylvania State University, I still find it hard to accept that we shall not hear Vivienne's laugh again nor see the spark in those oh-so-enquiring eyes. A great academic career has ended, which enriched our knowledge of the French eighteenth century, always remaining aware of those myriad links between text and context that have been our subject here tonight.

I have now told my stories—stories of eighteenth-century fiction, stories of the some of the frames in which research takes place, both intellectual and personal. In my career, I may add in closing, there has been a certain narrative symmetry: here at the University of Sydney I am back where I started as a student and as a young academic, but neither the institution nor I are quite the same. And is that not the essence of narrative—a journey through time and space, a process of change and transformation, a rite of passage? And dare I hope that this particular conclusion, as in the best of stories—and as Scheherazade for one understood so very well—is but another beginning?

Notes

1. The most accessible edition in English is probably the translation by L. W. Tancock in the Penguin Classics series, Harmondsworth, 1949.
2. Translated by P. W. K. Stone in the Penguin Classics series, Harmondsworth, 1961.
3. Translated by J. Butt in the Penguin Classics series, Harmondsworth, 1966.
4. No modern editions of Marmontel's *contes* are currently available in French or in English—a measure of this author's spectacular fall from literary grace.
5. Angus Martin, Vivienne Mylne, Richard Frautschi, *Bibliographie du roman français, 1751-1800*, London & Paris, 1977. This bibliography is currently under revision to cover the full century, from 1700, and a further study of the novel under Napoleon will take the data to 1815.

When is a Tragedy not a Tragedy? Generic Invention in Euripides

KEVIN H. LEE*

To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often.

Epigraphs are fashionable again and I choose these words of John Henry Newman as a text which is appropriate both to the history of my discipline in this University and to the subject of my lecture. Before I turn to that I should first say, as is traditional in inaugural lectures, a word about my immediate predecessors. I use the plural advisedly, because I occupy, or rather sit nervously on the edge of, not one but three chairs: those of Latin, Greek and Classics.

The last occupant of the chair of Classics was Charles Badham, whom J. Enoch Powell described in his inaugural lecture as 'England's best Greek scholar during the second half of the last century'.[1] This was high praise indeed from a man who could end his lecture with reference to 'every teacher of Greek in this State, from myself downwards'. Badham, who had been trained in both England and Europe, produced work of lasting quality, and several of his conjectures on the text of Euripides have found favour with the most exacting of modern critics.[2] From the time of his appointment in 1867 he had a significant influence on the development of the University and he did not spare himself in promoting his subject both within it and among members of the wider community. Badham lived at a time when the study of Latin and Greek could be spoken of as the cornerstone of any serious education and he faced detractors with a supreme if sensible confidence in the subject he professed.[3] It is no wonder that his imposing portrait by Anivitti which hangs in the Great Hall exudes an heroic air and makes him look like a happy blend of the Aristotle and Plato depicted by Raphael in his *School of Athens*.

* *Professor of Classics.* *This inaugural lecture was delivered on 29 April, 1993.*

Badham's successor was to see the establishment of separate chairs of Greek and Latin in 1891. This division was maintained for a century, and, while it led occasionally to the preaching of a shared gospel in discordant tongues, it certainly accounted for the strength of the study of ancient languages in both the University and the schools of this state. Even now, philology, in both a pure and applied sense, is practised here with more vigour than in any other centre in Australasia.

The last professor of Latin was John Dunston who retired in 1986 after a career of distinguished service in the University as both professor and deputy Vice-Chancellor. His scholarly interests focused on Silius Italicus and his reception, and he produced significant work on Italian scholarship in the fifteenthth century.[4]

The last professor of Greek was William Ritchie, a figure more inclined to play Amphion than Zethus, whose work on Euripides Badham would have been proud to own.[5] In the last years of his tenure Professor Ritchie helped my present colleagues to fashion the shape of classical studies for the coming decades. The sound philological tradition established by Badham, Scott and their followers would be retained; it would, however, go hand in hand with modern approaches to literature, history and social sciences. The serious study of classical literature and ideas would no longer be confined to those with a knowledge of the ancient languages. The close links between Latin and Greek would be formalised again in a Department of Classics which, with the Departments of Archaeology and Ancient History, would constitute a School representing three major approaches to the ancient world. Ancient drama is just one subject, the study of which will benefit greatly from the collaboration which the School should encourage. More than ever before we are aware of Greek drama not simply as a literary artefact, but as theatre, and as one strand in the network of religion, politics and patterns of thought which was Athenian society. I propose to treat here one aspect of the development of drama: the amalgamation of tragic and comic modes of thought and presentation in the work of Euripides.

As both traditional Tragedy and Comedy progressively lost their distinctive features towards the end of the fifth century B.C., there was born in the shape of New Comedy a form of drama with themes and structures of long-lasting influence on the European stage. To

this process of growth and change Euripides made the decisive contribution. Judgements, as is always the case with instigators of change, varied from glowing approbation to a sense of outrage. 'If I were sure of life beyond the grave, I would hang myself to see Euripides' says a character in a fragment of the 4th century comedian Philemon (fr 130K). On the other hand, Aeschylus in Aristophanes' *Frogs* speaks contemptuously of his rival as 'a son of a gossip-monger, a poet of beggars, a dealer in rags and patches' (ll.841ff.) But the facts, partially recorded in Satyrus' life of the poet, are incontrovertible: '... Relationship of husband and wife, father and son and servant and master, or the business of reversals—virgins raped, babies substituted, recognition by means of rings and necklaces. This is the very stuff of New Comedy and Euripides brought these dramatic means to perfection ...'

In this lecture I want to look more closely at Euripides' transformation of Tragedy, of his creation of a genre which some of his contemporaries, no less than some modern scholars, would not recognise as tragedy at all. My investigation will focus on a play which marks a turning point, the *Ion*. The *Ion* contains many of the ingredients of later comedy, but at the same time it is firmly rooted in the heroic world of classical tragedy; its moods are often light and even flippant, but it can also be sombre and raise the most disquieting questions about human suffering and the apparently quixotic arrangement of events by the gods. But before I turn to a consideration of this play, first some words about the Greeks' attitude to genre, dramatic genre in particular.

The Greek creative spirit was content to express itself within the limits imposed by tradition. Innovation was, of course, prized, but the new was always found within existing formal and thematic frameworks. One reason for the powerful effect of tradition was the oral and predominantly public character of Greek poetry from its earliest times down to the emergence of a rudimentary book trade in the second half of the 5th century.[6] Archaic and classical Greek poetry from the time of Homer was linked in numerous ways with institutions of a public kind at which the poetry was performed, either by groups or solo virtuosi. Conversely, it was felt that an essential and characteristic feature of many types of public gathering was the performance of the genre of poetry appropriate to the

occasion. So in *Odyssey* 8 when Alcinous invites the Phaeacian princes to a banquet in honour of his foreign guest, he invites the divine singer Demodocus as well. Demodocus' impressive tales of the Greeks' exploits at Troy are seen to be as much a part of the banquet as the wine and good food. The same phenomenon is evident in a less elevated context at the end of Aristophanes' *Wasps*. When old Philocleon needs to be groomed like Eliza Doolittle for high society, his son takes him firmly in hand: clothes, deportment, small talk, all undergo adjustment. But the climax of Philocleon's education comes in his hesitant attempt to learn the traditional drinking songs. No party was complete without the performance of these verses and no serious guest could afford to be mistaken about their precise text and metrical form.

Generic boundaries and a sense of propriety were thus confirmed by the public awareness of them. Naturally, they were felt most strongly at those poetic occasions which were a characteristic of Athenian society and had become a part of the system of public administration. This was true *par excellence* of drama which from the latter part of the sixth century had been given a firm place in the calendar of annual state festivals. I say drama, but it is important to note that for an Athenian the term drama was simply an abstraction; a given play could only be either a tragedy or a comedy or a satyr-play, a form of burlesque related to tragedy. In this respect Greek theatrical expectations were widely divergent from our own.

We are, I should say, much more accustomed to see drama as exhibiting a spectrum of both formal and thematic possibilities; a given play might occupy a band on the spectrum, but it would not surprise us to find that it comprised many moods and made use of a variety of dramaturgical techniques. Shaw's much quoted over-simplification seems to us even more ironical than he meant at the time: 'the popular definition of tragedy is heavy drama in which everyone is killed in the last act, comedy being light drama in which everyone is married in the last act'.[7] We do, of course, have generic criteria at our disposal as well. But they tend to be of an extrinsic kind: is it on SBS or Channel Nine? Is it playing at the Opera House or the Entertainment Centre? Is anyone in the audience likely to be over thirty or not?

For the Greek audience, for most of the fifth century at least,

tragedy and comedy were quite distinct theatrical forms. The essential differences between the two are made the more interesting because in externals, they were so similar. They were both performed at the same public institution, namely the state-run festivals held annually in honour of the god Dionysus. They both obeyed the same broad theatrical conventions involving actors and a chorus who were all male and wore masks in a performance comprising singing, dancing and speaking. But despite these shared features tragedy and comedy were kept strictly separate in the material they presented and the forms they employed.

So too, although in principle performed before the same audience, tragedy and comedy related to that audience in distinct ways. Tragedy almost invariably keeps its distance from the audience and presents itself, unaware of any onlookers, as a slice of life; comedy, on the other hand, regularly encourages the audience to view the play as theatre and to see the figures on the stage not as individuals, but as actors playing roles. Comedy's self-consciousness as theatre is particularly evident in its awareness and parody of the sister genre, its language, staging conventions and the habits of its practitioners. Tragedy, on the other hand, is normally absorbed in the world of its own creation.[8]

Both forms of drama were an expression of Athenian political life, but in different ways. Comedy entered into a direct dialogue with the problems and issues of the contemporary world and those within it. Tragedy's characters and themes went beyond 5th century Athens and its citizens to the larger than life figures and actions of a shared mythical past. By this means it confronted the audience not with the particular and immediate, but with the more fundamental issues of human frailty within an uncompromising environment. Aeschylus, speaking from the Underworld in Aristophanes' *Frogs,* looks back nostalgically to his hey-day sixty and more years earlier. Those were the days, he says, when he was producing real tragedies and confronting the audience with heroic figures who would encourage bravery and resolution in the face of the enemy (ll.1013ff.). Aristotle makes the same point more systematically when he describes the characters proper to tragedy; they are figures of high repute and of great good fortune; what is more tragedy must be the imitation of noble, serious action (*Poetics* 1448a2 and 25; 1449b24).

To these facets of the generic divide we should add the interesting point that the poets themselves were rigidly categorised and that the same poet did not write both tragedy and comedy. Even actors did not normally share their talents between the genres. Socrates at the end of Plato's *Symposium* is able with typical lack of tact to get Agathon the tragedian and Aristophanes to admit that this division of labour is not necessary in principle. But the concession made by the poets is presented as a very grudging one, extracted from them when half asleep and after a heavy night's drinking. In any case, Socrates is talking only of creative possibilities rather than an arrangement at all practicable. The theoretical division itself seems to have been espoused by Aristotle who explicitly connects the character of the poet with his style of writing. The more dignified represented noble actions performed by noble men, the less serious those of low-class people (*Poetics* 1448b24).

It is clear from this review that the division between tragedy and comedy was clearly felt in both theoretical and practical spheres. But this is not to say that the separation of genres was treated as appropriate by all tragedians. Euripides certainly felt that tragedy was due for a change. In the scene from the *Frogs* already discussed he speaks of the tragic muse which he inherited from Aeschylus as bloated with high-flown language and in desperate need of a diet. He slimmed her down and filled his plays with language much more subtle and digestible. Even more important is Euripides' claim to have democratised tragedy, making the art the property of the people. Old women, young women, slaves as well as masters were given a voice in his plays (ll. 949ff). The change of style went hand in hand with a shift of focus in material as the old mythical stories were altered in more or less significant ways to suit the poet's purposes. The comedian Antiphanes grumbled that whereas the comedians had to invent their stories and characters afresh, tragic poets had it much easier in that their plots were already familiar (fr.191K). But this complaint could not be applied readily to Euripides. We find him marrying Electra off to a poor farmer living in the countryside, and replacing Helen the whore with Helen the chaste wife who spends the years of the Trojan war in Egypt warding off the amorous advances of the local ruler.

The innovative features of Euripides' approach to tragedy are

clearly exemplified in the play mentioned earlier, the *Ion,* which was produced about 413 B.C.[9] The mythical background to the play seems to be largely Euripides' invention and is explained in an opening speech by the god Hermes.

Creousa, an Athenian princess, had been raped as a young girl by Apollo. After a miraculously concealed pregnancy she bore her child and left it, hoping that the god would save his son, in a cave on the acropolis. She later returned to find the baby gone and assumed that it had been done away with by birds or animals. In fact the child had been taken by Hermes to Delphi and laid on the steps of Apollo's temple. Here it was found by the god's priestess who brought it up. Creousa has in the meantime married, but has remained childless.

After reporting all this, Hermes gives us what proves to be a misleading preview of the play's action. In Delphi, the setting of the play, Apollo will give his and Creousa's son to Xouthos, Creousa's husband, as his own child and then when safely back in Athens mother and son will be reunited. Ion, as Hermes calls the boy, will thus have all the advantages of legitimate birth and Creousa will be spared further grief over the loss of her baby. Apollo, it seems, has matters well in hand.

At the time the play begins we find that Ion is now a young man, serving Apollo as a temple slave. Creousa and Xouthos have come to Delphi with a retinue of serving women—the play's chorus—to consult the oracle about having a child. Creousa has her own reasons for consulting the oracle: to ask about the fate of her lost baby. At the sight of Delphi she is overcome with emotion as she thinks of her sad encounter with its god and is moved to tell her story—in a thinly disguised form—to the young man she meets in front of the temple.

The intriguing scene between mother and son is interrupted by the arrival of Creousa's husband who after brief preliminaries enters the temple to receive the oracular report. He soon comes out having been told by the oracle that the first person he meets will be his son. Of course, that person is Ion. Too enthusiastic to explain his actions first, he approaches the lad with open arms and endearing words and is immediately rebuffed as a randy paedophile.[10] He then recounts the oracle and convinces Ion that he is the product of an earlier visit to Delphi and a drunken encounter with some local girl. After some misgivings Ion is persuaded to go with his father to Athens where the

news will be broken tactfully to Creousa, whom both expect will be embittered and disappointed. So far the play's action has gone according to plan and Apollo, we feel, is firmly in control.

Things take more than one unexpected turn in the following scenes. Creousa enters with an old man, a family retainer. He is to provide reliable support when the oracle's advice—good or, god forbid, bad—is heard. She first seeks news from the serving women of the chorus. They have, of course, witnessed the spurious recognition of father and son, but have been sworn to secrecy by Xouthos on pain of death. Despite this they blurt out what they imagine to be the truth and add the fictitious detail that according to the oracle Creousa will never bear a child herself. There follows a flood of emotion. The old servant is beside himself with rage at what he imagines is an evil plot on the part of Xouthos and his bastard son to wrest the rule of Athens from Creousa's family. Creousa herself is crushed with grief and bitterness at Apollo's neglect. Having lost all sense of shame she tells openly the story of her rape by Apollo and of the loss of her child in one of tragedy's most beautiful songs.

These emotions soon give way to desire for revenge and between them Creousa and the old man plot Ion's death. They decide to make use of the Gorgon's blood Creousa has in her keeping and to poison with it the wine Ion drinks at a party celebrating his newly found status.

Apollo, we can imagine, must now be very concerned for the fate of his son who is threatened with death for a second time in his young life. A messenger enters to report how Ion is warned by ill-omened words and the death of a dove which happens to fly into the festal marquee and taste some of the poisoned wine. No sooner do we hear of Ion's narrow escape than we must watch the lad come angrily onto the stage in pursuit of the terrified Creousa whom the Delphians plan to execute for her attempted murder. She has sought asylum at the god's sanctuary but ignoring this Ion moves to attack her. He is stopped by the Delphic priestess who comes out of the temple to give him the basket in which he was exposed. Creousa recognises it at once and then after an interrogation involving the contents of the cradle mother and son are finally reunited. The play comes to an end with the epiphany of Athena who assures the doubting Ion that he is in fact Apollo's son and reveals his destiny as

the founder of the Ionian race.

The summary of this incident-filled play makes one think at once of the assertion of Satyrus quoted above. Here indeed we have the rape of a virgin, substitution of children, recognition by means of tokens and complications involving father and son, mistress and slave. Beside these comic elements the entire structure of the play moves in the direction of resolution and satisfaction rather than the ineluctable complication which is the mark of tragedy. Aristotle, it is true, believes that the most effective form of tragedy involves ignorant attempts on a loved one's life who is saved by a timely recognition. But he also states that it is a mark of comedy when enemies become friends at the end and no one is killed by anyone (*Poetics* 1454a4 and 1453a35). Cohering with its structural features is the play's tone which is often light-hearted and prompts us if not to laugh certainly to smile.

On the other hand, key aspects of the play locate it firmly in the tragic tradition: the benevolent (or is it sinister?) involvement of the gods-especially Apollo; the heroic past and the glorious future of Athens and her rulers; the presentation of human suffering which is not alleviated by the outcome, however satisfactory it may seem. We see then in *Ion* something new in generic terms which led to a form of drama which brought together the two old traditions.

Let me turn now to a detailed examination of the play in terms which show Euripides crossing the boundaries which divided comedy from tragedy in the fifth century. In looking at these areas of generic interference I have learned much from the stimulating *synkrisis* of O. Taplin.[11]

Ion's most striking feature is the excellence of its plot. Even from my bald summary it will be obvious that Euripides has created a play full of incident, of unexpected action and of brilliantly contrived mirroring scenes. H.D.F. Kitto saw in this admirable workmanship a sign of the waning of the tragic, of the exclusion of any serious critical strain. He says, in his unforgiving way: 'it is when the poet has nothing in particular to say that he must be most elegant and attractive.'[12] He is right to the extent that the very busyness of the plot sets *Ion* apart from traditional tragedy. It seems to me to have something in common with the uneven, unpredictable and paratactic construction which Taplin associates with comedy. Two particular

characteristics of the comic plot are seen at least *in nuce* in the *Ion*: a freedom with locale and fluidity in the handling of time.

One would not deny that on any strict analysis both unities of time and of place are observed in the play. Nevertheless, the play keeps before our minds, much more intently than other tragedies, the two foci of its action: Athens and Delphi. Coupled with the impression of bilocation is a tendency to move with great frequency from the distant past to the time of the play's setting. So, for example, Creousa describes no fewer than four times her rape years ago by Apollo and the loss of her baby. As she does so she conjures up a vivid image of the cave on the acropolis, the place where Apollo exercised his power over her. Her indelible awareness of Apollo combines in Creousa's mind the acropolis and Delphi, the present moment and the sad events of some fifteen years before. A similar merging can be seen in her feelings towards Ion. The young man she meets is an irresistible reminder of the the son who would have been the same age. Ion's pathetic account of his infant years takes her back to the exposure which condemned her son, if alive, to a similar fate. Past and present blend most graphically in the recognition scene. The three key participants in Ion's post-natal adventures (all four if we include Hermes watching from his hiding place!) are present once more, as the priestess who rescued him gives Ion the basket in which he was abandoned. The instrument of their separation will now bring mother and son together as Creousa recognises the basket which points to the presence of her son. The normal passage of time seems to be arrested as we are told that both basket and olive branch within it have not suffered any damage from the intervening years.

This manipulation of time and place in the structure of the play seems to me more akin to comic that tragic technique. This is not to say that it serves comic purposes. On the contrary, it is used by Euripides to impress on us Creousa's ever-present consciousness of actions which she has hitherto kept concealed through fear and shame.

The role of the chorus is a further aspect of technique which distinguishes tragedy from comedy. Taplin points out that the tragic chorus, like the audience of tragedy, though very involved emotionally, must remain outside the action which it simply

contemplates at a distance. The chorus of comedy, on the other hand, is more active and more directly involved in the plot.

The distance of the tragic chorus is, I think, directly related to the heroic status of the principal figures. While we are dealing with people like Oedipus, Antigone or Medea it is quite natural that, as K. Reinhardt put it, the chorus act like a group standing helplessly on a river bank watching some individual swept away by the current.[13] This is a less explicable attitude when the chorus are thrown into contact with characters who seem to be no less human than they are themselves. Creousa is made a most believable woman by Euripides who presents in minute detail an account of her actions and feelings. The chorus can scarcely adopt the role of paralysed spectators when their mistress is so portrayed. It is no surprise, then, that they lose their tragic detachment and interfere in the plot in a unique fashion. Other choruses are necessarily made privy to plots and then asked for silence or complicity. They are ready to oblige. In *Ion* the chorus is too moved by Creousa's plight to obey their master and, ignoring his orders and threats, tell her what they know, and more. In so doing they set in motion the second half of the plot and play havoc with Apollo's plans. It is significant that this indiscretion is highlighted by their earlier, more conventional, obedience to Creousa's request for silence following her mention of a supposed friend's troubles with Apollo and the child she bore him.

I turn now to a consideration of the play's tonal variety. Desperately difficult to define and to analyse is the tone of a scene, far more so of a whole play which seems to exclude any consistent response. So Taplin is prepared to accept that later Euripides contains some comic touches, but thinks that 'they are there as often as not in order to accentuate tragic tone elsewhere in the play' (p.165). The example he uses is of the false recognition scene between Xouthos and Ion. This is certainly amusing, he says, but it is there not for its own sake but to effect a contrast with the recognition of mother and son later on which is true and dangerous. The difficulty in the way of such a view, shared by many, is that it privileges the tone of one scene against that of another. Furthermore, it does not give sufficient weight to the interaction of divergent tones in the play as a whole. The importance of this I now consider.

The opening scenes of *Ion* are clearly devised to generate an

atmosphere which suggests that our business is not with tense conflicts and harrowing dilemmas. Hermes' account of past events is as breezy as his forecast of the future. All the details, down to the giving of an appropriate name to Apollo's son, seem to have been worked out. It is idle curiosity rather than interest in the unexpected which prompts Hermes to hide, like some comic slave, and watch the events of the play.

This positive atmosphere is emphasised by our first sight of Ion. Euripides had every chance here to twang our heart-strings. A parentless waif, the product of some woman's shame, a temple slave with neither secure dwelling nor livelihood could have been readily exploited by the poet for whom beggars and cripples were stock in trade. Instead we are confronted with a young man who is contentment itself in Apollo's service. To stress the point Euripides has Ion go through part of his daily routine on stage. This activity accompanied by charming lyric poetry must have been as surprising on the stage as it was impressive. The treatise *On Style*, written probably in the 1st century BC, could find no better example of the importance of dramatic delivery for the impact of words on an audience (sect. 195). The prevailing tone of the scene is light-hearted, even comic, and it is meant to allay any anxiety about Apollo's treatment of his child. But its powerful expression of Ion's devotion to Apollo and happiness at Delphi rests on words and action more appropriate to comedy. Thus it raises some questions at the same time. Is this really the man destined to be the founder of the Ionian race? Sweeping of floors, laying dust with sprinkled water and frightening away messy birds are not the tasks of a hero. In fact, Ion's activities remind one of the chores which Polyxena, the sister of Hector, lists in an earlier tragedy (*Hecuba* 359ff) as tasks which make death a preferable alternative to slavery in Greece. We can see, then, from its opening scenes the ambivalence of tone which pervades the play.

The superficial atmosphere of contentment and peace within Delphi is reinforced in the entrance song of the chorus, who are presented as newly arrived tourists gazing with inquisitive delight at Delphi's wonders. The word pictures they paint are of the temple reliefs, from which they can scarcely take their eyes. These are age-old, universal images which excite the chorus' interest precisely because they take them back to sights and stories familiar from

home. The scenes they select for comment are suggestive of the blend of shadow and light which permeates this play. The sundrenched temple face with its fine columns is decorated with scenes of conflict involving fire and sword. But the conflict itself is to a good end as monsters like the Hydra and Chimaera are disposed of by the heroes Heracles and Bellerophon; in the climactic scene we see the elemental powers of darkness, the Giants, overcome by the Olympian deities who represent, in the person of Athena and Dionysus, the refinements of culture. There is a sense of progress towards tranquillity. But this will be upset in the next scene when Euripides first gives voice to that side of encounters with the supernatural which receives scant attention in the traditional visual and verbal accounts.

Creousa enters and for her too Delphi is felt to be familiar territory, but for reasons far more immediate and compelling than the recognition of artefacts. Delphi is for her a metonym of Apollo, the god who robbed her of her virginity and then of her child. The presentation of Creousa lies at the heart of the play; our view and judgement of her fate, our evaluation of the tone in which she is presented are central to our interpretation of what the play implies. Ambiguities abound here, but they seem to me intrinsic to Euripides' purpose and to arise from his decision to bring to his tragedy the almost tangible grief, bitterness and ultimate relief of a young Athenian woman.

The myths are full of the stories of mortal women as victims of supernatural lust: Leda, Danae, Io, Alcmene. These are all famous, but not so much for themselves as for the children they bore. The interests of the women were overshadowed by their offspring which procured for a family or a city a suitably divine ancestor. Like the sculptures admired by the chorus, the conflicts they faced were seen against the broad background of history leading to some progress. In his treatment of Creousa Euripides changes the focus of the traditional stories and turns away from cosmic concerns to the intensely personal interests of the woman. Creousa's repeated account of Apollo's treatment of her, and of her forced disposal of her baby represents tragedy's most vivid presentation of long past events. This is because Euripides is prepared to include the kind of domestic and precise detail which would be found in later comedy.

The scene of Creousa's abduction by Apollo is set with great

care. We are made aware of the time of day, the exact location of the event, and, most important, the mingled feeling of terror and excitement in the presence of the god with his hair shining with gold. Equally detailed is the account of her secret pregnancy and her exposure of her child. The image of a baby holding out its arms appealing to its mother for warmth and nourishment seems to be unique (*Ion* 961). In Aeschylus' *Choephoro* (743ff.) we find the homely description of the baby Orestes with his irregular sleeping habits and uncertain bowels. But these words belong neither to his mother nor his sister, but to the Nurse, a character whom Aristotle would have classed as *phaulos*, lowly. Clearly, Euripides did not allow generic distinctions to stand in the way of his portrait of Creousa's sorrows.

Let me turn now to the second section of the play, in which Euripides introduces two motifs which we tend to associate with the comic: the element of surprise and the concoction of an intrigue. Hermes' promise of a happy ending seems unreliable when we see the elderly servant initiate and then agree to execute the plot on Ion's life. We come to the end of the play breathless after watching mother and son who ought to be reunited threatening to kill each other in acts of misguided self-defence. This change of direction in the plot brings with it, of course, a change in tone as well. There is now a real sense of danger replacing the earlier security. The images of conflict in the entrance song of the chorus recur in the description of the decorated marquee used for Ion's party. Heracles' defeat of the Amazons, struggles involving Greeks, barbarians and a variety of animals are depicted. But here, associated as they are with the proposed site of Ion's murder, the images suggest a grim, forbidding atmosphere. The elderly servant too is used as an index of the shift in mood. At his first entrance he was presented as a mildly comic figure who could barely manage to climb onto the stage and whose loyalty only just got the better of his decrepitude. The account of his behaviour at Ion's party is reminiscent of his doddery earnestness before, but now we are aware that he is not so much a comic as a sinister figure all too efficient at what he is doing.

The grim tone recedes quickly as mother and son are eventually reunited and prepare for their departure to Athens. The sudden appearance of Athena confirms the happy mood and the play seems

set for a truly tragic, that is to say lofty, close. But even now a discordant, faintly comic note is struck. Athena acts as Apollo's second agent in the play and very deliberately explains that he has kept away in case he be scolded for earlier misbehaviour. This is suggestive of some mortal Lothario who had his way with a maid, rather than Delphi's divine patron of truth and the arts. We should not make too much of this, but it does accord with earlier impressions. Creousa's union with Apollo is spoken of as rape, an act of violence, a crime. These terms do nothing to elevate the god's behaviour in our eyes. On occasions, the traditional Apollo shines through and there is a sense of divine favour. But the prevailing impression is more earthy and associated with the irresponsible, unjust deeds of men.

What overall sense can we make of these seemingly centrifugal moods and ideas? What should be our response to Creousa and her treatment?

Many views of the play, it seems to me, do not take seriously the generic and tonal variety which Euripides has been at pains to develop. So, for example, A. P. Burnett suggests that Creousa is presented as short-sighted, as an enemy of the gods, specifically Apollo, and that by the end of the play she repents of her earlier distrust of her divine lover who has had everything under control. His management of affairs could not be faulted; if it seemed to be derailed for a time, that was the fault of mortals and their proneness to jealousy and revenge.[14] Such an interpretation relies heavily on the happy ending and chooses to treat with a certain Olympian distance Creousa's account of her suffering. As I have said, the tone and register of Creousa's words are calculated to invite empathy with her story. Had Euripides wanted to objectify her encounter with Apollo he could have easily done so.

Based on a similar attitude to Creousa's plight is a view like that of Kitto, mentioned earlier, which treats the play as a thoroughly light-hearted melodrama whose only purpose is its own success. Without real meaning, the play encourages us to chuckle quietly at most scenes and to indulge in a little short-term sadness at others. We know, after all, that it is all going to turn out for the best. What is more, the pathos of Creousa rehearsing the loss of her baby must be significantly modified by our knowledge that her son is alive and well and is shortly to be reunited with her. This reductive approach

has found little favour among contemporary scholars.

Recent studies have seen the play as replete with meaning. It represents a bitter attack on Apollo or Delphi or on Athenian xenophobia. It is a defence of women's role in the state and a damaging commentary on the myth of Athenian autochthony.[15] Serious themes like these are undeniable, but their proponents tend to underrate the play's comic elements.

I should say that any attempt at overall interpretation must admit that the play is deliberately ambiguous in its effects and veers purposefully from one emotional band to another. By his transgression of genre boundaries Euripides has given us access to a much fuller account of human experience; at the same time he has denied us the comfort of knowing with some certainty whether tragic fear and pity or comic laughter is the appropriate response. It is only Hermes with his supernatural perspective who can observe events unfold in an apparently untouched way. Hermes himself is the agent of Apollo, who is I believe meant to be seen as a power whose interests transcend human concerns. The suffering of Creousa over many years is of no more import to him than the minor adjustments he must make to his plans during the course of the play. It is precisely this emotional gulf between the human and divine which is at the heart of the play. Euripides can explore this at depth because he shows us figures who are so fully human. At the beginning of the *Oedipus Rex* the old priest very deliberately states that Oedipus is not being honoured as a god but simply as first among mortals. There is no possibility that the central figure of our play could rank with the divine.

It is an obvious question to ask why Euripides felt that the traditional framework of tragedy did not sufficiently accommodate his poetic concerns. Some reasons may be found in developments which occurred around him. We know that in the middle of the fifth century a competition involving the actors in tragedy was introduced.[16] It is likely that this gave to actors an increasing importance and greater claim on the attention of the playwrights. Certainly by the middle of the next century Aristotle could speak of actors as being of more importance than the poets (*Rhet.* 1403b33f.) It is possible that Euripides' expansion of tragic roles both catered to and was encouraged by a sense of greater virtuosity on the part of

actors who wanted more scope for their talents. There was not only the point that the greater emphasis on small details of character and motivation, and more stage business, allowed the actor to engage in mimesis of a kind not found in earlier tragedy. There was also the fact that Euripides introduced characters—Creousa herself is an example—who had little background and who had to be created *de novo* by the text and their realisation by the actors. This must have allowed great scope to an imaginative performer. A final point to make is that Euripides' 'democratization' of tragedy—to use the term put into his mouth by Aristophanes (*Frogs* 952)—saw the actors far less differentiated in respect of allocation of roles. So in *Ion* there is scarcely a significant difference between the protagonist who plays Ion and the deuteragonist who plays Creousa. The role of the tritagonist could be seen as the most demanding of all, since he must range from the Old Servant to the Messenger.

Innovations in music may have been another factor. In traditional tragedy music tended to be the preserve of the chorus, which, as we have seen, dwelt in its songs on the universal implications of the stage action. Euripides' penchant for solo arias, connected, it would seem, with musical developments, allowed for this mode to be employed in the presentation of the stage action itself and on the emotion of the individual. This brought the lyrics of tragedy much closer to those of Old Comedy whose best lyrics are immersed in the particular and concrete rather than the metaphysical.[17] It is in this sense that the feeding of tragedy on monodies—a Euripidean boast in the *Frogs* (ll. 941ff.)—is quite consistent with the need to slim her down after her diet of Aeschylean bombast.

But it was intrinsic factors which chiefly accounted for the invention of this new style of tragedy. Confining tragedy to mythical material and to the tone consistent with the heroic age and characters restricted the themes which could be dramatised and the modes of their presentation. A consistent register did not allow for the exploitation of tonal differences within the confines of a given play. This possibility is first explored by Euripides. By keeping the audience moving from one world to another, from the heroic and serious to the everyday and amusing, he presents us with a new challenge. Emotional uncertainty is not a flaw but an effect deliberately aimed at. This is seen at its most developed and subtle in one of Euripides'

last plays, the *Bacchae*. Here we find the increasing power of the god Dionysus over the young king Pentheus expressed in ways which rely on techniques from comedy and which provoke moments of laughter. But the sight of Pentheus disguised as a woman brings with it none of the comfort we feel at watching the cross-dressing of Aristophanic characters. Rather it is unnerving because the comic attention to detail of dress and attitude foregrounds the relentless dissolution of the young king's mind.[18] It is in such a scene that the proximity of the comic makes the tragic the more painfully disturbing. The sight of Ion happily shooing birds and sweeping floors is integral to the pathos generated by Creousa's sense of loss and betrayal. It was, perhaps, because Euripides refused to be bound by the traditional norms of tragic writing that he was able to create drama of a most affecting kind and earn paradoxically the title of the most tragic of the poets.

Notes

1. *Greek in the University*, Oxford, 1938, p.3.
2. The apparatus criticus of the Oxford Classics Texts of the *Ion*, for example, mentions him on practically every page.
3. Cf. C. Turney et al., *Australia's First: A History of the University of Sydney*, I, Sydney, 1991, 136f., 143ff.
4. For an appreciation of Dunston's work see H. D. Jocelyn, 'La filologia greca e latina nel secolo XX', (*Bibl. di studi antichi* No 56), Pisa, 1989, p.567ff.
5. His work, *The Authenticity of the Rhesus of Euripides*, Cambridge, 1964, is still a standard repository of Euripidean usage and technique in respect of language, metre and dramatic form.
6. Cf. R. Kannicht, *The Ancient Quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry*, Christchurch, 1988, pp.3ff. and R. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, Cambridge, 1992, pp.117ff.
7. 'Tolstoy,Tragedian or Comedian?', *London Mercury* 4 (1921): 31.
8. On theatrical self-consciousness in ancient comedy see F. Muecke, *Antichthon* 11 (1977): 52ff.
9. In the absence of other evidence, metrical criteria are the safest indication of approximate date. See T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides*, London, 1967, pp.2ff.
10. On this interpretation of the scene see B. M. W. Knox, *Word and Action*, Baltimore, 1979, pp.260ff.
11. *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 106 (1986): 163ff.
12. *Greek Tragedy*, London, 1961, p.314.
13. *Sophokles*, Frankfurt, 1947, p.91.
14. *Catastrophe Survived*, Oxford, 1971, pp.101ff.
15. Cf. A. Saxonhouse, in *Greek Tragedy and Political Theory*, ed. Euben, Berkeley, 1986, pp.252ff.; B. Goff, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 34

(1988): 42ff.; F.Zeitlin, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 35 (1989): 144ff; N.Loraux in *Nothing to do with Dionysus?* eds Winkler & Zeitlin, Princeton, 1990, pp.168ff.

16. A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, Oxford, 1968, p.93.
17. Cf. M. Silk, *Yale Classical Studies* 26 (1980): 99ff.
18. On the effects of this scene see F. Muecke, *Antichthon* 16(1982): 30ff.