

# REVIEW ESSAY

## Talking of Michelangelo: Routine and Radical Inquiry into Literature and Aesthetics

**Bruce Gardiner**

How routinely do scholars of literature and aesthetics nowadays radically “challenge pre-established schemes,” as Elio Franzini contends those who contribute to *Strange Sisters: Literature and Aesthetics in the Nineteenth Century* do?<sup>1</sup> My answer must be, not often. Although all the essays in *Strange Sisters* merit serious attention, they routinely beg basic questions that they presume have already been settled, though every inquiry into literature and aesthetics necessarily unsettles them anew.<sup>2</sup>

Ten of the fourteen essays in *Strange Sisters* consider linguistic and literary responses to visual and pictorial responses to sexual or racial matters. Subject matter most agitates the essayists, who are less agitated by pictures and vision, and least by literature and language. The estrangement of the sisters mirrors that of Mary and Martha of Bethany as Luke rather than John characterises them. Taciturn Mary, always a picture, attracts more attention than muttering Martha, persuaded not to make a scene, except in Paola Spinozzi’s essay on D. G. Rossetti’s translations from the Italian.<sup>3</sup> Several of the essays cite Jonathan Crary’s *Techniques of the Observer*, but none any work investigating the techniques of the reader, even though understanding and

---

Bruce Gardiner is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Sydney.

<sup>1</sup> Elio Franzini, ‘Foreword,’ in *Strange Sisters: Literature and Aesthetics in the Nineteenth Century*, eds Francesca Orestano and Francesca Frigerio (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), p. xvii. Hereafter cited as *Strange Sisters*, the book includes essays developed from papers delivered at a conference convened by the editors at the University of Milan in 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Let me at long last thank James Mollison for his exceedingly generous tutelage in art and aesthetics in New York thirty-five years ago.

<sup>3</sup> Paola Spinozzi, ‘Journeying Through Translation: Dante Among the Victorians; Dante Gabriel Rossetti in Medieval Italy,’ in *Strange Sisters*, pp. 77-96.

exploitation of the cognitive, physiological, and technological machinery of language changed more radically through the century than did understanding and exploitation of the machinery of vision.<sup>4</sup> Francesca Orestano mentions “new optical technology” and the “dynamics of vision” but fails to mention either new verbal technology or the dynamics of language.<sup>5</sup> Language is an engine whose offstage noise we no longer hear and vision a curtain that fades to a diaphaneity through which we descry matters of purportedly greater interest, as if language and vision themselves were not indubitably of the greatest interest, inattention to which may sabotage the interpretive capacities that depend on their peculiar licence and limitation. The essays in *Strange Sisters* so seldom encounter matters they cannot interpret that they can hardly have begun to interpret them satisfactorily. Let me consider a local instance of each kind of routine oversight, of literary language, pictorial composition, and interpretation.

First, according to Hilary Fraser, Michael Field’s poem about Giorgione’s “The Sleeping Venus” frankly celebrates lesbian desire by way of sensual detail “lovingly described” and “appreciatively evoked.” But Fraser’s impressionistic description of the poem attends more to the picture Field paints than to the language with which Field paints it, preferring to confirm the obvious relation between “sight and sexuality” that Field establishes rather than elicit the less obvious relation between language and sexuality on which Field depends.<sup>6</sup> Field’s nine quatorzains are in effect anti-sonnets, sestet preempting octet, trochee overthrowing iambus, tetrameter displacing pentameter. In each quatorzain, the sole trochaic trimeter of the penultimate line trumps the sole iambic pentameter of the third, the octet’s choric couplets supplant the sestet’s colloquial interlaced rhyme, and incantatory catalectic trochaic lines extirpate more meditative iambic lines after two attempts in the sestet. Chant overcomes speech, dreaming overcomes wakefulness, and one’s own otherness obscures the otherness of others as masturbation supersedes more extrinsic arousal, including the specifically lesbian arousal to which Fraser would confine Field. But Field here makes the broadest ontological claim that she

---

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> Francesca Orestano, ‘Introduction,’ pp. 2, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Hilary Fraser, ‘Through the Looking-Glass: Looking like a Woman in the Nineteenth Century,’ in *Strange Sisters*, pp. 202, 203, 204. See Michael Field [pseud. Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper], ‘The Sleeping Venus – Giorgione – The Dresden Gallery,’ *Sight and Song* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1892), reprinted in Isobel Armstrong, Joseph Bristow, and Catharine Sharrock (eds), *Nineteenth-Century Women Poets* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), pp. 704-707.

masturbates therefore she is. Her pen or tongue mimes Venus's finger in evoking a womanly body from earth's body, as daughter from mother or figure from ground. She masturbates herself into being by twinning herself, fingered and fingerer, in a spellbound, spellbinding act of palingenesis renewed whenever she arouses language and senses it arousing her, an arousal that defines the literary as the essential fecundity of language, its pictorial and prosodic power of doodling. Field must have Michelangelo in mind when focussing on the finger, as does Frank O'Hara when in *Lunch Poems* he asks "Wouldn't it be funny / if the Finger had designed us" otherwise than it has.<sup>7</sup>

Fraser stymies her inquiry into Field's poem by overlooking not only such literary matters but also the pictorial and art-historical matters that Field herself overlooks when she describes the painting, matters that necessarily inform her understanding of those she does describe. Field overlooks much that the painting depicts, such as the tree stump that protrudes from the ground immediately beyond Venus's self-espousing hand, and much that the painting pointedly does not depict, such as the Cupid who elsewhere routinely accompanies Venus but has here been painted out, a matter of fact revealed during restoration of the painting in 1843. Field also overlooks much else that art historians routinely elicit from the picture, such as Titian's hand in it.<sup>8</sup> Even though Fraser routinely misnames the poet as the Fields rather than Field, by overlooking the collaboration between Giorgione and Titian, whose hands are hardly if at all distinguishable in this painting, she stymies her inquiry into Bradley and Cooper's collaborative creation of Field, who in this poem may see themselves as the painters' progeny, proof of the fertility of their collaboration and of collaboration generally.

Second, according to Linda Goddard, Gauguin's painting *Man with an Axe* depicts in the lower foreground leaves from a tree that are "not realistic, but decorative; they echo the branches above and the curves that divide the surface into patches of bright colour" in ways that indicate "painting can have the same suggestive properties as language."<sup>9</sup> Even so, Goddard's description of the painting attends more to the picture Gauguin paints than to the visual

---

<sup>7</sup> Frank O'Hara, 'Poem [Wouldn't it be funny],' *Lunch Poems* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1964), p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> For the discovery of the obliterated Cupid, and the difficulty of distinguishing the Titianesque in Giorgione's painting from the Giorgionesque in Titian's, see Terisio Pignatti, *Giorgione: Complete Edition*, trans. Clovis Whitfield (London: Phaidon, 1971), pp. 67-68, 108-109.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Goddard, 'Gauguin's Guidebooks: *Noa Noa* in the Context of Nineteenth-Century Travel Writing,' in *Strange Sisters*, pp. 238, 239. Gauguin painted *Man with Axe* in 1891.

means by which he paints it. The sinuous pink lines that Goddard interprets as leaves or their watery reflections are, in terms of form, magnified abstractions of purple ripples created by a boat sailing across the top background and, in terms of colour, seepage, through a purple foreground, of a pink band across the middle ground that must underlie the purple. A striking two-dimensional decorative abstract motif echoes a recessive three-dimensional impressionist figurative one. Conversely, the serpentine purple trunk and branch of the palm tree in the middle ground are, in terms of form, atrophied abstractions of the muscular pliancy of the man and woman in the foreground and, in terms of colour, a capillary through which flows the purple of the foreground. Moreover, the tree lends its solidity and integrity to the man and woman, wooden mannequins rather than human beings, the pair fused by the superimposition of the man's hip and elbow on the woman's hand and head. The tree also lends its curvature to the boat's sail, its colour to the boat's wake, and both its curvature and colour to the boat's outrigger, presumably formed from just such a tree. As the man with an axe abstracts characteristics and components of the tree from itself, so Gauguin's painterly machinery abstracts characteristics and components of a Tahitian scene from itself in order to depict abstraction as such. His decorative composition quotes its disparately realist, impressionist, and expressionist sources just as Puvis de Chavannes quotes his sacred, classical, and neoclassical ones.<sup>10</sup>

The dark blue fabric swathing the figures' loins, dotted with starry and galactic smudges, suggests a world beyond the ken of the human eye and human body that unfolds around them as they sleep and engulfs them during sexual arousal, during which line, colour, and form slough off their routine representational duties and assume an imaginative autonomy through which the mind senses the body's capacity for ecstatic abstract experience, most soberly depicted by Cézanne in *The Bather*,<sup>11</sup> less soberly by Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater in *Thought-Forms*,<sup>12</sup> and ambivalently by Gauguin in *Man with an Axe*. Goddard tries to elucidate Gauguin's ambivalence by analysing his writing rather than his painting, a deflection of attention that prevents her

---

<sup>10</sup> For the abstract tendency of Puvis's compositional practice, which enthralled not only Gauguin but also Picasso, see Edward Lucie-Smith, *Symbolist Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972), pp. 81-86.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Cézanne, *The Bather* (1885-1887), Museum of Modern Art, New York.

<sup>12</sup> For Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater's abstract illustrations of auras and "thought-forms," see Sixten Ringbom, 'Transcending the Visible: The Generation of the Abstract Pioneers,' in *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Paintings: 1890-1985*, ed. Maurice Tuchman (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1986), pp. 131-153.

explaining precisely how “painting can have the same suggestive properties as language.”<sup>13</sup>

Third, according to Francesca Frigerio, Lewis Carroll’s careful compilation of his photograph albums and “their extreme variety and diversity as far as subjects are concerned” disprove the allegation that he is predominantly “a children portrayer.” The “discursive form” of the albums, “the rhythm they build page after page,” allegedly elicits from every photograph a proper meaning necessarily lost when photographs abstracted from the albums “fall prey to an altogether arbitrary right of inspection” that all too easily misinterprets Carroll as such a figure.<sup>14</sup> But any interpretation of the albums depends on an arbitrary right to abstract their elements and imagine them ordered otherwise. Without such speculative disordering we could not understand their actual order. Photograph albums, like literature anthologies, impress us only by arousing our incorrigible perversity to abstract elements from them as we wish. Furthermore, no “system of classification” can avoid suppressing features it deems less significant in favour of others it deems more.<sup>15</sup> Candour about something implies discretion about something else, so classification must entail encryption, a conundrum on which Derrida dwells in *Archive Fever*.<sup>16</sup> The intelligibility of any complex phenomenon alters, however elusively, from one look to the next, both in its entirety, as through Nero’s emerald, and in the salience of any of its particulars, as through Monsieur Dupin’s green spectacles.<sup>17</sup>

The two successive album pages that Frigerio considers closely, on which four photographs of children, three girls and a boy, precede two of tuna skeletons and one of Carroll’s brother, undermine rather than substantiate Frigerio’s thesis.<sup>18</sup> Not only may the tuna serve as an elaborate alibi by their propensity to distract us, but they also import a predatory motif of cold-

---

<sup>13</sup> Goddard, ‘Gauguin’s Notebooks,’ p. 239.

<sup>14</sup> Francesca Frigerio, ‘Out of Focus: A Portrait of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, a.k.a. Lewis Carroll,’ in *Strange Sisters*, pp. 138, 147, 154.

<sup>15</sup> Frigerio, ‘Out of Focus,’ p. 145.

<sup>16</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 54 and *passim*.

<sup>17</sup> For a typical Victorian notice of Nero’s emerald, see Oscar Wilde, on peering like the emperor “through a clear emerald at the red shambles of the Circus,” in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), ed. Michael Gillespie (New York: Norton, 2007), p. 121. For Dupin’s spectacles, and the protection they afford against seeing what one expects to see, see Edgar Allan Poe, ‘The Purloined Letter’ (1844), and John Muller and William Richardson (eds), *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 21, 31, 85 and *passim*.

<sup>18</sup> Frigerio, ‘Out of Focus,’ pp. 152, 292-293.

blooded beady-eyed carnivore, much as does T. E. Brown into his fantastic lullaby “High overhead,” in which a father, imagining both God’s eye and a cod’s eye watching his “little daughter” while she sleeps, fears his own eye may resemble the cod’s more than God’s as he tries to fathom the depths of his desire.<sup>19</sup> Carroll’s collocation of children and tuna is no less surreal than Dalí’s *Tuna Fishing* or *The Spectre of Sex Appeal*.<sup>20</sup> Our interpretation of Carroll’s fiction necessarily organises or disorganises our interpretation of his photo albums, and we very reasonably prefer to cherish him as “a children portrayer” rather than a tuna portrayer because by and large he writes about one and not the other.

I do not press Fraser, Goddard, or Frigerio very hard or far toward the radical in making these suggestions or others like them, such as examining the letterpress of the first edition of Field’s *Sight and Song* or the texture and consistency of the paint in Gauguin’s *Man with an Axe*, or analysing statistically Carroll’s ordering of the photos in his albums, or fathoming why all three scholars and several of their fellows in *Strange Sisters* stop at such a polite and innocuous treatment of sexual desire and its literary and artistic manifestations. Fraser elicits a very civil lesbianism from a lyric about the extravagant power of sexual self-abuse. Goddard emphasises Gauguin’s “troubled attitudes to Tahitian women” rather than the painter’s irremediable anguish at the human body’s constitutive sexual disability, akin to Edna Pontelie’s in Chopin’s *The Awakening*.<sup>21</sup> Frigerio hopes Carroll is no “children portrayer” though if he were his work might help calm the mind-numbing hysteria that passes currently for debate about sexual attachments between older and much younger human beings. Luisa Calè finesses Maria Edgeworth’s relish in *Belinda* of effeminacy, mannishness, sexual divagation, and libertinage generally.<sup>22</sup> Graham Smith does not wonder whether Victorian visitors to the New Sacristy in Florence enthuse so volubly about Michelangelo’s Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, in order to put from their minds his Giuliano, Duke of Nemours, whose flesh-like breastplate and serpentine neck

---

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Edward Brown, ‘High overhead,’ *Poems* (1908), in Christopher Ricks (ed.), *The New Oxford Book of Victorian Verse* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 483-484.

<sup>20</sup> Salvador Dalí, *Tuna Fishing* (1966-1967); and *The Spectre of Sex Appeal* (1934), Dalí Foundation, Figueras.

<sup>21</sup> Goddard, ‘Gauguin’s Notebooks,’ p. 237. See especially Edna Pontellier’s receptivity to Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*, in Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (1899), ed. Margo Culley (New York: Norton, 1994), pp. 61-62.

<sup>22</sup> Luisa Calè, ‘*Belinda* and Exhibition Culture: Fiction, Pictures and Imaginary Ekphrasis,’ in *Strange Sisters*, pp. 13-26.

are as immoderately erotic as Camille Paglia senses in *Sexual Personae*.<sup>23</sup> And Eliza Bizzotto, mulling over Beardsley's erotica, submits all too meekly to a general ruling that pornography is boring, without wondering whether the likes of *The Story of O* or *The Story of the Eye* are so, or whether we might not have to be bored stiff before we can become anything or anyone of consequence, as Heidegger contends in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*.<sup>24</sup>

It behoves us in all literary and aesthetic inquiry to face the most radical formal and substantive issues we can think of: what words say about wording, what pictures show about picturing, and how both establish that what they claim matters does indeed matter. Fraser, Goddard, and Frigerio cannot further answer the questions they pose because they do not ask the more basic questions on which those answers depend. Likewise, Maria Roli cannot further explain the exhilarating and disorienting effect of ballooning in Adalbert Stifter's *The Condor* without adducing the contemporaneous development of projective geometry, a crucial prelude to special relativity, evolving from earlier studies of perspective, especially those in paintings of anamorphoses, apotheoses, and the apocalypse, because imaginary "emancipation" always precedes the actual.<sup>25</sup> And Lucy Bending appears not to understand that Harriet Martineau's guilty childhood fascination with the "pattern in floss silk, gay and beautifully shaded" on a "certain watch ribbon" secretly concedes that her wholesale extirpation of poetry and rhetoric from her prose is illusory. Martineau exposes the "slipperiness of the visual" as she represses the slipperiness of the verbal.<sup>26</sup> Yet Thomas Young and others had already discovered that the polarisation of light generates the iridescence of materials such as shot silk, to which Tennyson likens poetry. Kant had already suggested that our sensitivity to the beauty of elusive phenomena such as rippling water

---

<sup>23</sup> Graham Smith, 'Michelangelo's *Duke of Urbino* in Literature: Travel-Writing and Photography of the Nineteenth Century,' in *Strange Sisters*, pp. 155-175; Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 163-165.

<sup>24</sup> Eliza Bizzotto, 'Blurring the Confines of Art and Gender: Aubrey Beardsley's *Legend of Venus and Tannhäuser*, "The Fragment of a Story",' in *Strange Sisters*, pp. 213-232; Pauline Réage [pseud. Dominique Aury], *The Story of O* (1954); Georges Bataille, *The Story of the Eye* (1928); and Martin Heidegger's 1929-1930 lectures, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, trans. William MacNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 74-167.

<sup>25</sup> Maria Roli, 'A Voyage by Balloon: Stifter's *Condor*,' in *Strange Sisters*, p. 30; Morris Kline, 'Projective Geometry,' *Scientific American*, vol. 192 (January 1955): 80-86.

<sup>26</sup> Lucy Bending, "'Fishing in a Strange Element": Harriet Martineau and the Visible World,' in *Strange Sisters*, pp. 49, 57.

and flickering fire underlies our highest cognitive powers. And Herder had already insisted that language is essentially aesthetic and much the better a vehicle for clear thinking in being so.<sup>27</sup> So Martineau's "bafflement that things designed to be useful should become objects of observation in their own right" applies to her disregard of language as much as her regard for vision.<sup>28</sup>

## II

But what in essence distinguishes radical from routine thinking? Kuhn's "radical" distinction between them is now routine:

No ordinary sense of the term "interpretation" fits these flashes of intuition through which a new paradigm is born. Though such intuitions depend upon the experience, both anomalous and congruent, gained with the old paradigm, they are not logically or piecemeal linked to particular items of that experience as an interpretation would be. Instead, they gather up large portions of that experience and transform them to the rather different bundle of experience that will thereafter be linked piecemeal to the new paradigm but not to the old.<sup>29</sup>

Kuhn differentiates radical intuition from routine interpretation, which he envisages as a kind of plagiarism, much as Heidegger does the peculiarly authentic from the everyday, Coleridge the imagination from the fancy, and classical rhetoricians the metaphor from the metonym.<sup>30</sup> For Coleridge, Heidegger, and Kuhn – Romantics all – radical thinking subverts routine at

---

<sup>27</sup> For Thomas Young, Fellow of the Royal Society, see David Park, *The Fire within the Eye: A Historical Essay on the Nature and Meaning of Light* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 245-254. For Tennyson's reflection that "poetry is like shot silk with many glancing colours," see Hallam, Lord Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: A Memoir* (London: Macmillan, 1899), p. 524. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), p. 127 [5:244]; Johann Gottfried Herder, *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (1772), in *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Michael Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002), pp. 81-97.

<sup>28</sup> Bending, 'Fishing in a Strange Element,' p. 55.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 123.

<sup>30</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), pp. 163-168, 341-348, and passim; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and Walter Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), vol. 1, pp. 304-305; also see 'Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances,' in Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (Hague: Mouton, 1956).

times of crisis, precisely as the divine fiat destroys cumulative human error and prescribes a drastically discontinuous history of thought. But fanciful, metonymic, everyday analysis is no more inherently routine than imaginative, metaphoric, peculiar intuition is inherently radical. Routine thinking always entails what it has yet to think through as much as what it has stopped thinking about, both of which, however routinely obscured, are never radically absent. As Guy Debord insists in *Society of the Spectacle*, even plagiarism may serve as radical critique.<sup>31</sup> The routine and the radical cannot be immiscibly distinct.

Better to distinguish radical from routine thinking in terms of Foucault's analysis in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* of disciplinary discourse into a field of memory ringing one of concomitance that in turn rings one of presence; better still to turn these rings inside out.<sup>32</sup> Instead of Kuhn's either/or, on/off switching, Foucault thinks of thinking as knitting together the here and there and the now and then more or less adventurously. The routine and the radical differ in degree rather than kind. Dean Simonton's research into thinking falls in with Foucault's:

A flat associative hierarchy means that for any given stimulus, the creative person has many associations available, all with roughly equal probabilities of retrieval. Persons who are very low in creativity, by comparison, have steep associative hierarchies in which any given stimulus elicits only one or two responses in a highly predictable fashion.<sup>33</sup>

Both ways of thinking about thinking derive from Plato's allegory of the mind as a cave, thereby exposing its fundamental equivocation.<sup>34</sup> Coleridge, Heidegger, and Kuhn suppose that radical thought is inherently alien to the mind into whose routine it forcibly irrupts, whereas Foucault and Simonton suppose that all thought knits the familiar with whatever is not yet and no longer so; the more curious and catholic its reach the more radical the thought. Heidegger's lectures "On the Essence of Truth" in *Being and Truth* do little more than realise the tendency he shares with his fellow Romantics, all disaffected by the quotidian, to think of the mind as the creature of what it is forced to think rather than as the player that plays more or less freely with

---

<sup>31</sup> Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, anonymous trans. (Detroit: Black and Red, 1977), observation p. 207, explained p. 208.

<sup>32</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972), pp. 57-58.

<sup>33</sup> Dean Simonton, 'Scientific Creativity as Constrained Stochastic Behavior,' *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 129, no.4 (2003), p. 483.

<sup>34</sup> Plato, *Republic* 7.514-519, in *The Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 747-751.

thoughts it shares casually with its fellow players.<sup>35</sup> Psychoanalysis, in cahoots with surrealism, would explain the playful and multifocal ambit of all thought, just as Deleuze's notion, in *Difference and Repetition*, of our inherently discordant mental faculties would explain its ineluctable multimodality.<sup>36</sup>

What then distinguishes the radical from the routine in the way we think together? Contributors to *Strange Sisters* are so beholden to what they jointly inherit and find already handy that little crosstalk between remote and disparate fields leavens their thinking. Intent upon reading if not from the same page then from facing pages, contributors follow Kuhn and Febvre in hoping that the humanities might evolve "laboratories... well-structured teams... well-coordinated investigations" into matters so deep that no lone thinker "could conceive of such an idea in all its magnitude."<sup>37</sup> But it is not at all clear that the concerted single-mindedness of thousands of CERN scientists searching for the Higgs boson as yet outdoes the myriad-mindedness of a lone spectator searching the shadows of Michelangelo's statue of Lorenzo de' Medici. Moreover, contributors to *Strange Sisters* are studiously agreeable even though disagreement so enlivens thought that J. S. Mill insists "if opponents do not exist, it is indispensable to imagine them," a dictum that governs Darwin's thinking even as he disagrees with Mill about everything else.<sup>38</sup> As more recent research reveals, prior differences of opinion generate novel solutions to problems much more reliably than does prior consensus.<sup>39</sup>

With these distinctions in mind, I shall examine the radical problems of language, aesthetics, and interpretation that bedevil three of the nicest contributions to *Strange Sisters*, Calè's on *Belinda*, Orestano's on the picturesque in William Gilpin and John Ruskin, and Smith's on Victorian views of Michelangelo's Lorenzo.

---

<sup>35</sup> Martin Heidegger, 1933-1934 lectures, in *Being and Truth*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 97-145.

<sup>36</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2004), especially pp. 180-181.

<sup>37</sup> Lucien Febvre, 'A New Kind of History,' in *A New Kind of History*, ed. Peter Burke, trans. K. Folca (London: Routledge, 1973), pp. 32, 33; cf. Kuhn, 'The Natural and the Human Sciences,' in *The Road Since Structure*, ed. John Conant and John Haugeland (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Allan Megill links Febvre with Kuhn in 'Coherence and Incoherence in Historical Studies,' *New Literary History*, vol. 35 (2004), pp. 207-231.

<sup>38</sup> John Stuart Mill, 'On Liberty,' in *On Liberty and Other Writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 39.

<sup>39</sup> Charlan Nemeth and Joel Wachtler, 'Creative Problem Solving as a Result of Majority vs Minority Influence,' *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 13 (1983), p. 45-55.

### III

Luisa Calè claims that throughout Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* citation and verbal imitation of pictures awaken in the reader "a higher level of self-awareness," "a more creative engagement," and a sense of "alternative paths" and "alternative endings," whereas in the absence of such pictorial deference and pretence the novel mandates "immersive" and "absorptive forms of reading and acts of misrecognition that end up limiting the reader's freedom." Edgeworth thereby allegedly demonstrates the peculiar "creative potential of texts presented in the form of pictures," undermining Charles Lamb and Lessing's dicta about the basic disparity between them.<sup>40</sup> But three no less basic considerations undermine Calè's own dictum.

First, throughout *Belinda* citation and verbal imitation of other narrative and conversational texts abstract the reader no less liberally. Characters, along with interested readers, calibrate the former's resemblance to the many evoked by Smollett, Madame de Sévigné, La Rochefoucauld, Pope, Sterne, Radcliffe, Rousseau, Bernardin de St. Pierre, Clarence Hervey's letters from the South Coast to Lady Delacour, and advertisements for "Packwood's razor strops."<sup>41</sup> Reading appears to abstract characters from their immediate circumstances as reliably as looking at pictures, if not more so.

Second, self-reflective and self-absorbed being, self-critical and self-forgetful reading, and mesmerised and disconcerted spectatorship are constitutively complementary facets of our experience, envisaged by Bernardin de St. Pierre as the two narrators of *Paul and Virginia*, on which *Belinda* so depends. A young stranger is thrilled by a story he has never heard before from an old neighbour who has mulled over it for twenty years before confronting his younger self in the person of the stranger, not unlike the two narrators of *Wuthering Heights*.<sup>42</sup> One can become absorbed in one's reflections, mesmerised by one's surprise, and self-forgetful even when lacerating oneself,

---

<sup>40</sup> Calè, 'Belinda and Exhibition Culture,' pp. 16, 21, 25. For Charles Lamb's demand that the two arts "sparkle apart," see Orestano, 'Introduction,' p. 2; and see Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. E. McCormick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984). Calè overlooks Susan Egenolf, 'Edgeworth's *Belinda*: An Artful Composition,' *Women's Studies*, vol. 31 (2002), p. 323-348.

<sup>41</sup> For Hervey's letters, see Maria Edgeworth, *Belinda*, intro. Eva Figs (London: Pandora, 1986), p. 361; for the razor strop advertisements, see pp. 17-18, 60, 64, 297-298.

<sup>42</sup> Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul and Virginia*, trans. Helen Maria Williams (Oxford: Woodstock, 1989), pp. 3-5.

because such facets of experience are not simply dichotomous. Specifically, writing by intermittent “word painting” differentiates reading from picturing only by suppressing this very difference so that, however fancifully, we mistake words for pictures, attenuating our sense of the actual materiality of one communicative medium in favour of the imaginary materiality of another, an exercise in imaginative abstraction that may expose aspects of communicative mediation otherwise obviated. Writing by means of intermittent “speech transcription” does likewise with reading and listening, as painting by metonymic citation of sound does with listening and looking. Any communicative medium is and must be liable to advert to its mode of mediation as the mind alternately recalls and forgets the immediate circumstances that press upon it. To identify picturing itself or its verbal pretence with liberation from immediate circumstance and reading as such with absorption by it, and to suppose Edgeworth does so, are untenable, even granting the slender pedagogical value of such an arbitrarily indicative distinction. Every reader is as familiar with Michel de Certeau’s self-possession as with Georges Poulet’s self-abandonment, and recalls turning as many pages as he or she forgets turning.<sup>43</sup>

Third, Calè does not quite grasp the basic entanglement Edgeworth posits between people and representations of themselves, although she recognises that pictorial representations are inherently abstractions (and metalepses). Representations, whether pictorial or verbal, actual or fanciful, trigger the transformation of those they represent by inciting in them a desire to resemble or counter the images of themselves that they and others evolve from their current characters. An ever-changing album of representations refreshes and regulates a native plasticity of personality. Belinda herself is so sensitive to this self-representational machinery or chemistry that she acts as an adjuvant or emollient moderating both the intractability of characters such as Lord and Lady Delacour and the volatility of others such as Harriet Freke, paying due regard to the virtues and vices of each extreme, and fostering and harnessing both as essential imaginative resources. Edgeworth distinguishes this “romance” of person and representation from “common novels” in which people are invariably who they are and representations of them are either true or false, as appears to be the case in Burney’s *Evelina* and, more poignantly, in *Paul and Virginia*, in which the heroine cannot conceive of becoming other than she is, even of disrobing to avoid drowning. She flees from all sociable

---

<sup>43</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 165-176; Georges Poulet, ‘Criticism and the Experience of Interiority,’ in *The Structuralist Controversy*, eds Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), pp. 56-88.

and erotic transfigurations of herself in an agony akin to Thel's as Blake records it.<sup>44</sup> Edgeworth's romance of representation is Shakespearian, Lady Delacour's final reanimation as wonderful as Hermione's in *The Winter's Tale*, whereas Evelina's restoration and recognition as Belmont's daughter, "image of my long lost Caroline," is satisfying in the manner of a police procedural.<sup>45</sup> Edgeworth proposes that representations transform those they represent. Calè acquiesces in Sir Joshua Reynolds's hackneyed dictum that a painting represents "one point of time only," without defining what time is so that it permits such puncturing, and without seeing that Edgeworth regards the persistence, succession, differentiation, and repetition of our self-representation as the medium of our sense of being in time.<sup>46</sup>

#### IV

Our sense of being in time is precisely what escapes Francesca Orestano as she considers Ruskin's theory of the picturesque as a sophistication of William Gilpin's. Orestano finds that in "dealing with the picturesque," Ruskin "acknowledges the impossibility of compounding it into a unified system" chiefly because he cannot reconcile its formal definition with its moral or, rather, pathetic associations except by way of "ambiguity, paradox and estrangement."<sup>47</sup>

Ruskin's misattribution to Turner of engravings of a pair of scenes by Gilpin depicting dawn and sunset does not epitomise Ruskin's mistakes and vacillations over the picturesque as Orestano insists but rather reveals how Ruskin elicits from Gilpin by way of his acutest student a robustly conciliatory theory of it.<sup>48</sup> When noting "Turner's depth of feeling in looking at landscape from youth to age," Ruskin's paired terminal prepositional phrases are ambiguously adverbial, modifying "looking," and adjectival, qualifying "landscape," implying that the looking and the looked at are equally subject to

---

<sup>44</sup> Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul and Virginia*, pp. 186-90; William Blake, *The Book of Thel*, plate 4, in *The Complete Illuminated Books*, ed. David Bindman (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2000), p. 105.

<sup>45</sup> Edgeworth, *Belinda*, p. 345, Hervey allowing Rachel/Virginia romances partly to neutralise Mrs Ormond's unromantic conversation; Fanny [Frances] Burney, *Evelina* (New York: Norton, 1965), p. 354.

<sup>46</sup> Calè, 'Belinda and Exhibition Culture,' pp. 18-19, quoting several comments by Reynolds.

<sup>47</sup> Francesca Orestano, 'Across the Picturesque: Ruskin's Argument with the Sister Arts,' in *Strange Sisters*, pp. 102, 115, 122.

<sup>48</sup> Orestano, 'Across the Picturesque,' pp. 114, 122.

time, and that the “depth” of Turner’s sense is not only spatial but also temporal. The predisposition that Ruskin’s repetition of “already” signals, in his notes on the two engravings, saturates the evanescence of dawn and sunset with a persistence lasting from birth to death, with colour the sign of the first and monochromatic form of the second. For Ruskin, the picturesque evokes the beauty of being in time, the complexity of which involves our concurrent abstraction from one dimension of time, the moment to moment, and subjection to another, the year by year, and their converse, so that we see no less freely through time than through space, both equally “effects of light.” That Turner “retired to put himself under such discipline” as the picturesque denotes suggests that we might cultivate our native susceptibility to time into an ethical, aesthetic vocation whose emblem would be “the ideal of the stone pine” reconciling sensitivity with insensitivity to time, as may the sheep-like rocks and stone-like birds that Thoreau sees as he climbs Mt Ktaadn and as may the leech-gatherer that Wordsworth encounters in “Resolution and Independence.”<sup>49</sup> A “temper as merciless as the rocks” viewing ruin with equanimity and a humane sympathy viewing it with unease, regret, and indignation are not, despite Orestano, simply alternatives.<sup>50</sup> Together they describe the creative and creaturely ambivalence of our being in time, which entails the untimely as much as the timely, as it does, for instance, in the vividly picturesque third stanza of Yeats’ “Easter 1916.”<sup>51</sup>

Gilpin himself comes close to recognising the picturesque as the aesthetic dimension of being in time. Although conceding that “It would be hard to assign a reason why we are more taken with Prospects of a ruinous kind, than with views of Plenty and Prosperity in their greatest perfection,” Gilpin assigns just such a reason when viewing a “dissolving pile, which has triumphed over the injuries of time.” The “fragmentation, mutilation, intricacy, and decay” of the ruin echoes Hutton’s vision of interminable, gradual dissolution and anticipates Carnot’s of entropy, itself deriving from novel mid-eighteenth-century conceptions of heat as atomic perturbation.<sup>52</sup> For Gilpin, the

---

<sup>49</sup> Henry David Thoreau, *The Maine Woods*, ed. Joseph Moldenhauer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 61, 65; William Wordsworth, ‘Resolution and Independence,’ stanzas 8-10.

<sup>50</sup> Orestano, ‘Across the Picturesque,’ p. 114, quoting Ruskin.

<sup>51</sup> W. B. Yeats, ‘Easter 1916,’ stanza 3, in which the human heart may become “Enchanted to a stone / To trouble the living stream,” in *Collected Poems* (London: Macmillan, 1950), p. 204.

<sup>52</sup> Orestano, ‘Across the Picturesque,’ p. 104, quoting Gilpin; Carl Barbier, *William Gilpin* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), p. 115, quoting Gilpin; Orestano, ‘Across the Picturesque,’ p. 113, not quoting Gilpin. For Hutton, see Tom Furniss, ‘A Romantic

picturesque is a technique for producing a picture of time without the allegorical figures on which Claude Lorrain and Nicholas Poussin depend. The landscape itself becomes the figure of time rather than being disfigured adventitiously by it, its evolution over centuries and millennia as clear as its evolution hour by hour. For instance, in the medium-term of several centuries, Gilpin's pictures effectively portray Henry VIII and Cromwell as Great Britain's greatest dilapidators.<sup>53</sup> Yet for Ruskin, the picturesque is the temporal facility of human vision itself, the engine of all beauty and intelligibility, not merely one particular kind of beauty or technique of beautification, the insight at which Gilpin stalls.

Orestano mistakenly agrees with Christopher Hussey that the picturesque was "the first step in the movement towards abstract aesthetic values."<sup>54</sup> But the first step was Kant's; the next steps, in opposing directions, Ruskin and Schopenhauer's. Kant's aesthetics is scrupulous in its ontological neutrality, our sense of beauty indistinguishably the same whether prompted by real or imaginary phenomena, so that neither the real nor the imaginary is inherently or differently beautiful.<sup>55</sup> But Schopenhauer thereupon argues that only disinterested timeless imaginative representation and the non-being it evokes are beautiful, the view to which Wilde finally subscribes in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.<sup>56</sup> On the contrary, Ruskin argues that our imaginative response to being itself, which he never reduces to the here and now, is inherently beautiful, however difficult it might be to understand its beauty, the understanding to which Proust thereupon devotes himself. "Things seen by the artist" and "things as they are" are Ruskin's shorthand for Schopenhauer's distinction between representation and being, the pair that Schopenhauer would sunder and Ruskin reconcile.<sup>57</sup>

Even this does not exhaust the significance of Ruskin's seizure of Gilpin's theory of the picturesque. Analysing Turner's art in *Modern Painters* as quintessentially picturesque, Ruskin extrapolates from it a machinery of unconscious memory, metonymic displacement, metaphoric association, and polysemous condensation that anticipates Freud's *The Interpretation of*

---

Geologist: James Hutton's 1788 *Theory of the Earth*, 'Romanticism', vol. 16, no. 3 (2010), pp. 305-321; for Carnot, see S. S. Wilson, 'Sadi Carnot,' *Scientific American*, Vol. 245 (1981), pp. 134-145.

<sup>53</sup> Barbier, *Gilpin*, p. 116, quoting Gilpin.

<sup>54</sup> Orestano, 'Across the Picturesque,' p. 103, quoting Hussey.

<sup>55</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>56</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 176-181; vol. 2, pp. 367-375.

<sup>57</sup> Orestano, 'Across the Picturesque,' p. 113, quoting Ruskin.

*Dreams*, such that Ruskin and Schopenhauer both lead us from Kant to Freud and Proust, though by contrary paths, Ruskin's path the more picturesque because it is the path of the picturesque itself.<sup>58</sup>

## V

In the strictest sense, the pathway or tradition that Smith traces from Samuel Rogers through Barrett Browning to Hawthorne in their reactions to Michelangelo's New Sacristy statuary is an optical illusion as three tourists on independent paths successively cross the same line of sight. According to Smith, "well-read Victorian pilgrims to the New Sacristy shared a common vision" that "originated with Rogers."<sup>59</sup> But although these pilgrims venerate the same relic by the same name, Michelangelo's statue of Lorenzo de' Medici, they evoke a radically different being and meaning from it, in radically different language, three disparate traditions of interpretation clashing rather than one tradition evolving each time that one of its exponents hands it on to another.

For Rogers, in "Florence," the New Sacristy is a tomb in which he may "Visit the dead" to contemplate being "Turned into stone" like Lorenzo, to remind himself that living entails an imaginative reconnoitring of death that anticipates a last and lasting visit with the dead as one of them.<sup>60</sup> The statuary's uncanny liveliness and the sacristy's intensification of it bring the not-yet-dead as close to the dead as the not-yet-dead can imagine, arresting time itself in the never-to-be-perfected bodies of the four nudes, or *ignudi*. The figure of Lorenzo captures Rogers' attention as he bids everyone "Mark him well" because Lorenzo himself marks everyone well: "He meditates, his head upon his hand" as his shadowed visage "fascinates" like the "basilisk." Lorenzo offers the eye he casts on death, which is also the eye that death casts on the living, to the living themselves so that they may forearm themselves by this imaginative exchange of looks at their being in time. Rogers' blank verse befits this exchange not only by its end-stopped lines that pause expectantly to listen for the slightest whispered response but also by its own whispering repetition of syllables ending in "l," echoing that first heard in an adverbial "still" and

---

<sup>58</sup> John Ruskin, *Of Mountain Beauty*, part 5 of *Modern Painters*, ed. E. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1904), vol. 4, pp. 9-72; Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. Joyce Crick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 211-329.

<sup>59</sup> Smith, 'Michelangelo's *Duke of Urbino*,' p. 175.

<sup>60</sup> Smith, 'Michelangelo's *Duke of Urbino*,' p. 158, quoting Samuel Rogers, 'Florence,' *Italy* (1830).

growing loudest when they chime at four line endings – scowls, scull (*sic*), intolerable, majestic – two each side of Rogers’ mesmerised account of mesmerism – “like the basilisk, / It Fascinates” – as yet unintelligible sounds extorted from the poet by a kind of being he senses as not quite yet his own. The stolid pulse of the verse and the phonemic shiver that ruffles it inoculate it with the deathlike and death-defying durability that Rogers senses in Michelangelo’s marble, so that his writing evokes breath as the sculptured stone evokes muscular animation, both artworks formally miming the substantive dichotomy or “two-fold” that they contemplate. Rogers is to Michelangelo as Pound to Gaudier-Brzeska, both hoping to follow Horace: *exegi monumentum aere perennius; non omnis moriar*.<sup>61</sup>

For Barrett Browning, in “Casa Guidi Windows,” being is simply the here and now and art a residue of the past that happily directs the present to a better future, as Michelangelo might the Risorgimento.<sup>62</sup> Michelangelo’s statuary is fixed forever in the marble-block of its history, his artistic creativity representing a revolutionary spirit that longs to overthrow the political tyranny of his patrons, the Medici. Whereas Rogers ignores the sculptor in favour of his sculpture, Barrett Browning conjures with Michelangelo’s name, takes his work personally, grants him the autonomy she presumes her own, and understands his work immediately as if the same popular will inspires both it and her own. She regards the figures in the sacristy as would the audience of an episode of the *Twilight Zone* mannequins in a department store, suspecting that though they simply “wait” while we look at them they will spring into life as soon as we look away, when the “marble film” “Twixt the artist’s soul and works” dissolves. Just add a measure of revolutionary zest; the times of day, the titanic *ignudi*, will do the rest. Lorenzo is the ensemble’s salient figure for Barrett Browning because she cannot see his eyes or know what they see, which occultation she construes not merely as blindness but a blind repelling her insight, at which she takes offence. Given her popularly endowed gift of penetration, any failure to see or to understand cannot be hers, but must be due to her interlocutor’s obscurantism, despite egregious instances to the contrary, including the veil over Moneta’s face in Keats’ *The Fall of Hyperion* and the

---

<sup>61</sup> Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (New York: New Directions, 1970), referring to Michelangelo on pp. 42, 107. In 1964, Ezra Pound translated these phrases from Horace’s *Ode 3.30* as “This monument will outlast metal” and “Bits of me, many bits, will dodge all funeral,” in *The Translations of Ezra Pound*, intro. Hugh Kenner (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 407.

<sup>62</sup> Smith, ‘Michelangelo’s *Duke of Urbino*,’ p. 160, quoting Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Casa Guidi Windows*, part 1, lines 73-97.

hat over the sower's head in Millet's *The Sower*.<sup>63</sup> Deprecating the "everlasting shadow" on Lorenzo's face, Barrett Browning forgets that shadows are merely the "*trompe-l'oeil* of the sun," as Gauguin quips, effaced by any mirror and candle.<sup>64</sup> Gleefully algorithmic (Florence + Lawrence = abhorrence), Barrett Browning's *ababab* pentameter sexains sound like so many steadily lobbed percussion bombs, the syntax lagging one line behind the stanza so that the second line of each is peculiarly striking, as if each thought explodes in the mind exactly one pentameter after it hits the ear. For Barrett Browning, the interpretation of art is essentially a polemic about the politics of the imagination.

For Nathaniel and Sophia Hawthorne the interpretation of art is sociable and contestable. Not only do one's ways of seeing depend so much on those who have fostered them and on others who may yet influence them, but also each artwork is unlike any other, whether an element of a logical totality or a newly-evolved species of imaginative sensitivity, as Pater would envisage so inconsistently as he vacillated between Hegelian and Darwinian theories of art.<sup>65</sup> Nathaniel and Sophia compare notes, consult Hiram Powers, whose expert opinion they discount, and examine Michelangelo's statue of Lorenzo in light of the casts and pictures of it they have already seen. They conclude that Michelangelo depicts Lorenzo "brooding over some great design," evincing a look "far beyond personal considerations," and thus serving as "a fit medium for disembodied thought," an embodiment of disembodiment in which Michelangelo sculpts "his highest touches upon air and duskiness" as ethereally perhaps as James Turrell now sculpts light.<sup>66</sup> The figure of Lorenzo irritates Nathaniel into a heightened sense of his own sensitivities and of everything that escapes them – "I feel I do not come at all which it involves" – comparing the way in which the statue holds his attention with the way in

---

<sup>63</sup> John Keats, *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream* (composed 1819), canto 1, lines 87-290; Jean-François Millet, *The Sower* (1850), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, along with copies and variants elsewhere.

<sup>64</sup> Paul Gauguin, letter to Emile Bernard (November 1888), in Herschel Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 60.

<sup>65</sup> Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry, the 1893 Text*, ed. Donald Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), in which Pater's historiographical bias wavers irresolutely from essay to essay.

<sup>66</sup> Smith, 'Michelangelo's *Duke of Urbino*,' pp. 161-164, quoting various comments by Nathaniel and Sophia Hawthorne. For Turrell's single-wall and cross-corner light projections of the 1970s and his ambient and fluorescent light works exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, in 1980, see Craig Adcock, *James Turrell: The Art of Light and Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

which the ghost in *Hamlet* holds his son's, Shakespeare as usual betokening the imagination's nearest approach to comprehending the incomprehensible.<sup>67</sup>

Yet as disparate as are these three interpretations of Michelangelo's Lorenzo, they each overlook the same flagrantly emblematic details: the eyes on the aquiline visor obscuring Lorenzo's own and the eyes and ears of the cat-like, bat-like chimera carved on the end of the box, perhaps a despatch box, on which his left arm rests.<sup>68</sup> Lorenzo sees with the eyes of the sharpest-sighted diurnal and nocturnal spies, with a superhuman penetration befitting one who must see not only what all his subjects see but also what they cannot yet see that can nevertheless already see them, intelligence he may just have gleaned from a despatch, if that is what his clenched left hand enfolds. He is, after all, the dedicatee of Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Dalí offers an extraordinary reading of Michelangelo's figure in his *Warrior*, in which Lorenzo's eyes become miniatures of his face, in the form of masked Catalan warriors, whose lances project from his eyes' tear ducts, a general in Hobbesian fashion composed of his own troops.<sup>69</sup>

The reader will decide if the inquiries into literature and aesthetics in *Strange Sisters* are more radical than I allege and mine less than I hope. Confining myself largely to the evidence that the volume's contributors adduce, I worry how meagrely they gloss the texts they quote and the pictures they describe and reproduce. Apparently, reading and looking closely are radical departures from current critical routine, though their necessity is confirmed not only by the greatest exponents of literary and aesthetic inquiry but also by the subjects of our particular inquiries – Edgeworth on Bernardin de St Pierre, Ruskin on Gilpin, and Rogers and others on Michelangelo – whose example we must try to emulate in order to uncover, as Heidegger has it,

the unthought in a thinker's thought... What is *un*-thought is there in each case only as the *un-thought*. The more original the thinking, the richer will be what is unthought in it. The unthought is the greatest gift that thinking can bestow.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Smith, 'Michelangelo's *Duke of Urbino*,' p. 162, quoting Nathaniel Hawthorne.

<sup>68</sup> Not having visited the New Sacristy myself, I rely on Aurelio Amendola's very fine photographs of it in James Beck and others, *Michelangelo: The Medici Chapel* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), pp. 109-115.

<sup>69</sup> Salvador Dalí, *Warrior* (1982), one of a series of paintings inspired by Michelangelo's New Sacristy sculptures, all painted in the same year, in Gilles Néret, *Salvador Dalí: The Paintings* (Köln: Benedikt Taschen, 1994), vol. 2, pp. 699-710.

<sup>70</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), part 1, lecture 7, 76.