Masterpieces of Philosophical Literature

Thomas L. Cooksey

Greenwood Press

MASTERPIECES OF PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE

Recent titles in
Greenwood Introduces Literary Masterpieces

Masterpieces of French Literature
Marilyn S. Severson

Masterpieces of Modern British and Irish Drama
Sanford Sternlicht

Masterpieces of 20th-Century American Drama
Susan C.W. Abbotson

Masterpieces of Classic Greek Drama
Helaine L. Smith

MASTERPIECES OF PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE

Thomas L. Cooksey

Greenwood Introduces Literary Masterpieces

GREENWOOD PRESS
Westport, Connecticut • London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Masterpieces of philosophical literature / Thomas L. Cooksey
p. cm. — (Greenwood Introduces Literary Masterpieces, ISSN 1545–6285)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0–313–33173–1
1. Philosophy in literature. 2. Philosophy I. Title
PN49.C634 2006
809'.93384—dc22 2005035164

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2005035164
ISBN: 0–313–33173–1
ISSN: 1545–6285

First published in 2006

Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881
An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.
www.greenwood.com

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48–1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To my Elizabeth
Teacher, tender comrade, wife,
A fellow-farer, true through life.
—Robert Louis Stevenson

Contents

Introduction

> Through art alone are we able to emerge from ourselves, to know what another person sees of a universe which is not the same as our own and of which, without art, the landscapes would remain as unknown to us as those that may exist on the moon.
>
> —Marcel Proust

> So, Theaetetus, start again and try to explain what knowledge is. Never say it is beyond your power.
>
> —Plato, *Theaetetus*

This book brings together ten works under the heading "masterpieces of philosophical literature." They fall into one of two categories: works of philosophy that also stand as significant contributions to literature, and works of literature that draw on philosophy or have especially contributed to philosophical discussion. This book reminds us that literature, as a document of human experience, is rich in philosophical implication. In turn, it also reminds us that philosophical discourse comes out of language, and is enriched and illuminated by our awareness of the conventions of literature. The ultimate goal of this book is precisely to heighten the reader's awareness of the philosophy in literature and the literature in philosophy. In turn, one of the virtues of philosophical literature as distinct from a literature centered on a genre, a historical period, a theme, or a national literature, is its diversity. The works that I bring together cross linguistic, generic, and historical boundaries.

Each chapter centers on one book: Chapter 1. Plato's *Republic*; Chapter 2. Augustine's *Confessions*; Chapter 3. Dante's *Divine Comedy*; Chapter 4. More's

Utopia; Chapter 5. Voltaire's *Candide*; Chapter 6. Goethe's *Faust*, Part 1; Chapter 7. Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*; Chapter 8. Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; Chapter 9. Huxley's *Brave New World*; and Chapter 10. Borges's *Labyrinths*. Each chapter serves as an introduction not only to the work in question but also to its author and to the relevant philosophical background. "To imagine a language," said Wittgenstein, "is to imagine a way of living" (qtd. in Rhees 290). I have attempted to synthesize the scholarly literature; however, rather than merely summarizing it, I have tried to venture original interpretations or perspectives. In addition to the general bibliography at the end of the book, each chapter includes a list of suggested readings, as a guide to the scholarship.

While each chapter centers on one work, I have also situated each work in its philosophical context. As the Argentine writer, Jorge Luis Borges notes: "A book is not an isolated being: it is a relationship, an axis of innumerable relationships" (qtd. in Garcia 165). Thus, each chapter also devotes some time to the author's life and other works, and, where relevant, to other philosophers or philosophical movements that are important to understanding the central work in question. In turn, I have devoted some time to considering the influence of these works, especially in terms of other works that they have stimulated or to which they have contributed.

Although there is necessarily an element of arbitrariness in the selection covered here, I have been guided by four criteria. First, I have followed a historical progression that touches the major periods in Western philosophy and literature. Thus I begin with Plato and the classical Greeks, then Augustine and the later Classical Latin era. I then move on to Dante as exemplar of the Middle Ages, followed by Sir Thomas More as exemplar of Renaissance humanism. Goethe embodies the spirit of Romanticism, while Kierkegaard represents a profound response to it. Nietzsche summarizes tendencies of the late nineteenth century, pointing the way to modernism and postmodernism. Huxley is fully a modernist, while Borges traces a path in the labyrinth to postmodernism.

Second, I have been alert to national, linguistic, and cultural diversity. One of the great dangers was that a book such as this could easily have become 10 works of Greek philosophical literature, or French, or German, or English. Thus, among the works selected, one was originally written in Greek, two in Latin, one in French, one in Danish, two in German, one in English, and one in Spanish. Keeping in mind that translation is a form of interpretation, I have examined each of the ten works in its original language, though have also relied on multiple translations. (Editions and translations are identified in the bibliography.)

Third, I have shown the wide range of generic or formal diversity in philosophical literature. Philosophical discourse is not limited to treatises.

"It is often the case," observes the American poet Wallace Stevens, "that concepts of philosophy are poetic" (183), to which we might further add that its forms are also often poetic. Few of the works considered here have much in common in terms of genre. Plato presents his ideas in the form of a dialogue. Augustine uses an extended autobiographical prayer addressed to God. Dante presents his vision in a long poem, while Goethe draws on the resources of theater. Voltaire and Huxley write novels, and Borges, short stories. Finally, Thomas More, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche play with masks, pseudonyms, and hybrid genres and are difficult to categorize. Because of this diversity of form and genre, each chapter unfolds according to its own logic in order to accommodate the special features of the work in question.

Fourth, I have limited my selection to works that are widely recognized as significant and influential, each representing an acknowledged masterpiece. By this I do not necessarily mean works that purport to have the final word. Such a claim would be contrary to the spirit of philosophy. What I do mean are works that retain the power to provoke and challenge beyond their own time and place, beyond what the eighteenth-century critic Samuel Johnson called the influence of "party." To understand what this means and how it works, it is important briefly to consider the origins of philosophy.

LITERATURE TO PHILOSOPHY

Ever since Plato supposedly banned the poet from the ideal community (in some dialogues, such as *The Laws* he seems more sympathetic), the relationship between philosophy and literature has been complicated. Some philosophers have been hostile, pointing to the power of language and literature to move people or create realities independent of any truth-value (consider advertising, propaganda, sophistry). Recognizing the dangers, British philosopher Jeremy Bentham complained that the elevated rhetoric of the French Revolution was nothing more than "nonsense upon stilts," adding that "this rhetorical nonsense ends in the old stain of mischievous nonsense" (qtd. in Singer 271). Others have simply been dismissive. In the *Discourse on Method,* Descartes praised the fine stories and fables he had received in his formal education, but felt that he must look elsewhere for the foundations of clear and distinct knowledge.

Much of this antipathy grows out of the origins of philosophy as it emerged from the transition from oral wisdom traditions to written culture. By its nature the transmission of oral wisdom depends on memory, and so tends to keep close to the surface of the "life world," conserving and reproducing itself in memorable phrases that can easily be repeated. While the verbal act exists

as a unique moment in time, the written word as a sign is detachable from the original point of articulation. It turns the word into a generalization and an abstraction. "Tree" is not a particular tree. The written sign allows the writer to unfold a complex argument, which can be easily transmitted. Writing is crucial for the possibility of a philosophical discourse even as philosophy denies it. (Imagine trying to remember and orally repeat a paragraph of Kant or Hegel without the aid of writing.) For that matter, it is equally crucial to the development of literature. (Imagine trying to remember a passage of Henry James or Marcel Proust without the aid of the written word.) Because the writer or the reader can glance back up the page to see what previously was written, it is easier to sustain a process of abstraction or nuanced description. Although, like oral communication, written communication has its formulas both grammatical and rhetorical, the conservative transmission of sayings proper to the former can give way to analysis and open-ended amplification and development in the latter. Walter J. Ong eloquently describes the impact of written culture on the mind and thinking, thus explaining what it means to be a "literate" human being, that is, a being with the "technology of writing." "Without writing," he states, "the literate mind would not and could not think as it does, not only when engaged in writing but normally even when it is composing its thoughts in oral form. More than any other single invention, writing has transformed human consciousness" (78).

Writing makes philosophical thinking possible. The elements of writing transform the cognitive process, and, conversely, an appreciation of the conventions of writing and literature illuminates our understanding of how thinking works. Philosophical style and literary style inform each other. But at the same time, writing also points to the traditional prejudice of some philosophers against literature. Detached from its source, the written word is subject to ambiguity or error; I cannot ask the absent speaker for clarification. To compensate, the written work may try to make its assumptions as clear as possible, or it may resist finality, inviting reinterpretation. A vivid example of the transformation from oral wisdom tradition to written philosophy is found in the movement from Jesus's. Golden Rule, which he attributes to the prophets, to Kant's categorical imperative. Thus "so whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them" (Mt. 7.12) becomes "act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only" (Kant 47). The first *asserts* "be good," the second *implies* "what do I mean when I say 'be good'?" In short, the essence of philosophy is always about asking what I *meant* to say, always seeking clarification. This is the heart of the Socratic dialectic, and indeed, all great philosophy. I should also add that this is equally true of non-Western philosophical

traditions as well. The *Vedas* give rise to the *Upanishads*, which in turn engenders the many subsequent schools of Indian philosophy. The Dao of Lao Tzu is developed in the books of Chuang Tzu, and the oral traditions of the *Analects* (the *sayings* of Confucius) find elaboration in the commentaries of Mencius which in turn inform the books of contemporary Asian philosophers such as Tu Wei-Ming. The central characteristic of all great works of philosophy is a pattern of reinterpretation, a perennial reexamining of the basic assumptions. All of this helps us to understand the nature of philosophical literature.

PHILOSOPHY TO LITERATURE

With an eye on the origins of philosophy and the nature of writing, we may say that masterpieces of philosophical literature share three characteristics. First, a work of philosophical literature is a literary text with a rich philosophical content. Second, it is a work that represents a certain mode of thinking and cognition. Third, it is a work that remains eternally current. At certain levels these characteristics tend to overlap or point toward each other. It is therefore useful to elaborate briefly on each.

The first and most obvious characteristic is that some works of literature have an especially strong or suggestive philosophical content, whether they be essentially works of philosophy put into a literary form, such as Lucretius's philosophical poem, *De Rerum Natura* (*Concerning the Nature of Things*), or Sartre's *Nausea* and *No Exit*, or works of literature that stimulate philosophical thought because of their acute observation of the world or the human condition. It is for this reason that novels such as those of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Proust or Thomas Mann, or more recently Yukio Mishima, Iris Murdoch, Walker Percy, Milan Kundara, or Kenzaburo Oë are perennial favorites.

This brings us to the second characteristic, namely that philosophical literature is about modes of thinking. Literature also provides philosophy a means of expressing things where language and logic are unable to tread, to *say* what is too deep for words. It is this evocative aspect of literature that makes many philosophers most uncomfortable, since it is here that language seems to touch what we might call the irrational or the mystical. For this very reason, however, it offers philosophy a route to the deepest aspects of our being and the human condition. Thus many philosophers have turned to poetry by authors such as Rilke, Celan, Hölderlin, Wordsworth, or Eliot for insights into the depths of the psyche; or to metafictions such as those of Kafka, Borges, Angela Carter, or In-hwa Yi for shattering the conventional

habits of time and space; or to science fiction from Campanella and Cyrano de Bergerac to Karel Čapek and Ursula K. Le Guin for visions of alternative realities. Even Socrates feels compelled to tell stories or parables in order to point his would-be disciples to enlightenment.

To briefly illustrate, consider the short poem, "On My First Son," in which Elizabethan poet and playwright Ben Jonson commemorates the death of his seven-year-old son. The poem rehearses the Stoic argument that our loved ones are "loaned" to us by nature, that death is merely the repayment of that loan. He also recalls the theological argument that his son is now in a better place, or will at least have "'scaped world's and flesh's rage." Such rational arguments, however, are cold comfort. Left with neither answer nor comfort, he tells his dead son that though he may *love* someone more, he will never *like* anyone else as much. "For whose sake henceforth all his vows be such / As what he loves may never like too much" (11, 12). Jonson's reply is about the failure of philosophy in the narrow sense of reasoned argument. Despite his inability to *say* what he means, the poem manages to *express* his profound sadness, exactly in the failure of reason. By uncovering something about the depths of his psyche, Jonson has managed to achieve a philosophical insight.

Finally, the third feature, and that which most explicitly makes a work of philosophical literature both a work of philosophy and a masterpiece, is its ability to remain eternally current. This is the potential of a work to transcend historical time and context. There are two elements at play here, which at first blush seem to contradict each other. The first relates to how it sets the terms for discussion, how it establishes the problems and themes that later philosophers feel compelled to address. Second, for this very reason, later philosophers keep coming back to these works, reconfronting and reinterpreting them, so that the works continue to live, transcending their time and place. It is exactly this openness to reinterpretation, the text's resistence to any finality of meaning, that is the written analogue to Socrates's dialectic. It relates to its ability to make connections, to provoke doubt and reflection, to stimulate further thought, rather than to assert any specific claim of authority. A work that claims to carry some fixed or eternal truth reduces itself to the pattern of the archaic wisdom tradition. It is precisely in such a claim of wisdom that it is no longer wise.

To summarize then, a work of philosophical literature: (1) Draws on the resources of language and literature in order to describe and illustrate; (2) is a mode of truth that is open to interpretation and creates alternative realities; (3) is eternally current, both setting the terms for future discourse and inviting and provoking perennial reinterpretation.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Burkert, Walter. *Greek Religion*. Trans. John Raffan. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.

Cornford, F.M. *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Dumézil, Georges, *Archaic Roman Religion*. Trans. Philip Krapp. 2 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Garcia, Jorge J. E., Carolyn Korsmeyer, and Rodolphe Gasché, eds. *Literary Philosophers: Borges, Calvino, Eco*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Hadot, Pierre. *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* Trans. Michael Chase. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002.

Havelock, Eric A. *Preface to Plato*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1967.

Johnson, Samuel. *Samuel Johnson: The Major Works*. Ed. Donald Greene. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Jonson, Ben. *The Complete Poetry of Ben Jonson*. Ed. William B. Hunter. New York: New York University Press, 1963.

Kant, Immanuel. *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Lewis White Beck. Indianapolis: Bobbs and Merrill, 1959.

Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. London: Routledge, 1982.

Pritchard, James B., ed. *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*. 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958.

Rhees, Rush. *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*. Ed. D.Z. Phillips. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Singer, Peter, ed. *Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Stevens, Wallace. *Opus Posthumous*. Ed. Samuel French Morse. New York: Vintage Books, 1982.

1

Plato
The Republic
347 B.C.E.

> [F]or his sailing has not been like that of Palinurus but that of Ulysses or rather, of Plato.
>
> —Thomas More, *Utopia*

There can be little disagreement with Alfred North Whitehead's famous assessment that Western philosophy is a footnote to Plato and Aristotle, and even Aristotle's philosophy can be seen as a response to that of Plato. Plato is one of the most important philosophers in history, and Plato's *Republic* is one of the most influential works in philosophy, and perhaps the greatest masterpiece of philosophical literature. The actual title of Plato's dialogue is the *Politeia* (the "commonwealth" or "political matters"). We know the *Republic* through the Latin version of its title, *Respublica* (literally, "concerning public matters" or "politics").

BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Plato (427–347 B.C.E.) was born in or near Athens, to a wealthy Aristocratic family. His older brothers included Glaucon and Adamanteus, who play prominent roles in the *Republic*. His stepfather, Pyrilampes, was a friend of Pericles and an important advocate of democracy, while his uncle, Charmides, was a member of the oligarchy known as the Hundred, and his uncle, Critias, was a leader in another, the infamous Thirty. Early in his life Plato met Socrates, whom he later describes in a letter as "the justest man of his time" (Letters 324e). Plato grew up during the turbulent course and

aftermath of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.E.) between Athens, Sparta, and their surrogates. The collapse of Athens led first to the tyrannical oligarchy of the Thirty (404, 403 B.C.E.), followed by a reconciliation with the Spartans and the restoration of the democracy. In 399 B.C.E. Socrates was tried and executed under dubious charges. Disgusted, Plato withdrew to Megara and then traveled around the Mediterranean, eventually making the first of three visits to the court of Sicily, meeting the tyrant Dionysius of Syracuse. There, according to some accounts, he intrigued with Dionysus's son, Dion, and was imprisoned, ransomed, and eventually returned to Athens. Plato is silent about the details of what happened, but kept up a correspondence with Dionysius, Dion, and later Dionysius II, nurturing the futile hope of creating a philosopher-king. Back in Athens, Plato founded a philosophical school, which he called the Academy after the public gymnasium named in honor of the legendary hero Academus. His most famous pupil was Aristotle. Plato's experiences with oligarchy, democarcy, and tyranny deeply inform both his personal turn away from public life, and the political analysis contained in the *Republic*.

Much of what we know about Plato is based on a series of letters attributed to him, most notably, the seventh. There were also a number of early biographies, including a long if anecdotal account given by Diogenes Laertius (third century) in his *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*. Plato's philosophical and literary activities extend over some 50 years. There are 26 extant philosophical dialogues that can be attributed to him. An exact chronology cannot be established, and Plato had a reputation for revising them throughout his life. The ancient critic Dionysus of Halicarnassus joked that "up to his eightieth year Plato never ceased combing and curling and every way braiding his own dialogues." Focusing on shifts in philosophical doctrine and stylistic evidence, scholars divide them into three periods, roughly pivoting around his three voyages to Sicily. Thus the *Apology*, *Crito*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, *Hippias minor*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Ion*, and perhaps *Hippias major* fall into an early period from before his first trip in 388/387 B.C.E. The middle period from 388 to 367 B.C.E. includes the *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Euthydemus*, *Menexenus*, and *Cratylus*. The late period falls between a second trip to Sicily around 367 B.C.E. and a third around 361, and includes the *Parmenides*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Politicus (Statesman)*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Philebus*, and *Laws*.

The impetus of the original dialogues was to defend the reputation of Socrates, and feature him in debate with some antagonist. The arguments tend to focus on moral or ethical issues, in which the interlocutor, for whom typically the dialogue is named, makes a statement, and is then interrogated

by Socrates. These represent the purest instances of the Socratic method, in which Socrates moves toward some understanding of the issue by determining what he does not know, even if he cannot establish with certainty what he does know. It is thought that these early dialogues most closely reflect the views of the historical Socrates, though even in these, Plato alters the historical record to transform Socrates into the ideal philosopher. For instance, in his version of the *Apology*, Socrates' court defense, the Delphic Oracle had claimed that no man was *wiser* that Socrates. On the other hand, in the account of Xenophon, a friend and contemporary of Socrates, the oracle says that Socrates was the most *just* of men, a view that Plato himself mentions in his seventh letter to Dion. The dialogues of the middle period take on a more friendly tone. The animated and often hostile arguments of the early dialogues give way to long stretches of exposition. The *Symposium* (or Drinking Party) features a succession of encomia praising love. Although morality and virtue are important, they are situated in discussions of metaphysics and epistemology. The works of the third period extend the tendencies of the middle period. The figure of Socrates moves to the background in the *Sophist* and *Politicus*, and disappears altogether from the *Laws*, giving way to an interlocutor identified simply as "the Athenian." In these late dialogues, Plato is primarily concerned with questions of knowledge and a critical re-examination of his early ontological doctrines.

PLOT DEVELOPMENT

Plato's *Republic* begins with one of the most famous opening lines in Western philosophy. "*Katébēn khthès eis Peiraia meta Glaukōnos* (I went down to the Piraeus yesterday with Glaucon)" (327a). The first word, *Katébēn*, the verb "went down," marks the structure of the plot, but also a series of motifs that point to the central themes. Socrates narrates the story of a conversation with a group of interlocutors during the course of an evening at the house of old Cephalus. On the surface, this recollection seems little more than a transcript of the discussion. Closer examination quickly reveals that Plato has carefully choreographed his characters and plot to dramatize and symbolize his themes, which he builds up out of many reinforcing layers. The narrative is about going down on a number of levels, and correspondingly going up. Socrates *goes down* to the Piraeus in the same sense that one *goes down* town. At the same time, the movement from Athens to the Piraeus, the port that served Athens, involved a process of literally going down a hill to sea level. On a more figurative level, Socrates and Glaucon are tourists, slumming in a social netherworld. The Piraeus is a port, an area

of exchange between merchants and travelers, and as such full of foreigners and sometimes even dangerous elements. They have gone down to witness the dedication of a temple to the Thracian goddess, Bendis, an alien influence that challenges the purity of Athenian culture. The narrative seems to commence near the end of day, with the sun's *going down*. The conversation seems to run through the course of the night, ending finally as the sun *comes up*, and Socrates finally *going up* from the Piraeus back to Athens. The paired motifs of *going down* and *going up* link various themes. On a deeper level these motifs parallel the theme of the fate of the philosopher in terms of exiles and return, or the concept of *Being* as relation between moving outward or inward, between emanating from and returning to the One. Socrates talks about the moral descent of communities, which he relates to the moral decline of individuals. He introduces the famous "Parable of the Cave," about going up and down in relation to enlightenment. He also paints the "Parable of Er," a vision of a man *going down* to the underworld to witness the fate of various souls, who *go up or down* according to their moral condition. Though the *Republic* is divided into ten books, the movement of the plot is marked internally by various interventions on the part of Glaucon to block Socrates' return to Athens, or to bring his digressions back to the main topic. It is also marked by the telling of a succession of parables.

The *Republic* begins with Socrates and Glaucon who, having witnessed the dedicatory ceremonies, are about to return home. They are stopped on their way by Polemarchus, an acquaintance who lives in the Piraeus, who invites them to dinner with a promise that the festivities will last all night. When Socrates at first demurs, Polemarchus insists that they will compel him to come because there are so many of them. When Socrates asks if he cannot persuade them to let him go home, Polemarchus replies, "could you . . . persuade men who do not listen?" (327c). The tone of this exchange is friendly, but it also hints at Plato's deep discomfort with democracy. Polemarchus and the other denizens of the Piraeus believe that power is based on the weight of numbers rather than on reason.

Socrates and Glaucon are escorted to the home of old Cephalus, ostensibly the head of the household, though we may assume that the family business is now run by his adult son Polemarchus. Cephalus greets Socrates, expressing his regrets that he does not visit more often, adding that now that he is too old for anything else, he enjoys the pleasure of good conversation. This backhanded compliment leads Socrates to ask about the advantages of old age. In the classic Socratic gambit, he asks Cephalus whether it is old age, or the fact that he has wealth that makes his old age tolerable? Cephalus replies

that his wealth allows him to pay his debts to his creditors and to the gods through sacrifices, sententiously citing the authority of the poet Pindar to the effect that a good or just man is one who pays his debts and tells the truth. The discussion now starts to take on an ethical focus, exploring just what is meant by being a just man.

Socrates, while agreeing that the just man tells the truth and pays his debts, asks if performance of such activities makes him just, unfolding a counter-example in which telling the truth and paying back a debt seem to result in an injustice. Here Polemarchus bursts in, reaffirming his father's position, this time citing the authority of the lyric poet Simonides. Cephalus uses this opportunity to retreat, letting his son "inherit" his role as moral spokesman.

Polemarchus now tries to reply to Socrates by recasting the formula of paying debts to the effect that the just or good man is useful or beneficial to his friends and correspondingly harmful to his enemies. In response, Socrates leads him into a series of semantic conundrums. One is useful only with regard to things that one is not using, because when one is using such property, he does not need anyone to protect it. Similarly, the person most expert in protecting one's property is also most skilled in stealing it, because he knows how it is protected. This would seem to force us to conclude that the just man is also (at least potentially) a thief. Socrates summarizes this with characteristic irony, "It follows that justice, according to you and Homer and Simonides, appears to be a craft of thieving, of course to the advantage of one's friends and to the harm of one's enemies. Is this not what you meant?" (334b). Flustered, Polemarchus can respond only, "No, by Zeus . . . I don't any longer know what I meant, but this I still believe to be true, that justice is to benefit one's friends and harm one's enemies" (334b). Exasperated by this indecisive sparring, Thrasymachus the sophist roars into the middle of the group, like a "wild beast," seizing control of the argument.

As a sophist, Thrasymachus recognizes Socrates' dialectical strategy of contradicting and negating the propositions of his opponents. "You know very well," he charges, "that it is much easier to ask questions than to answer them" (336c). He therefore challenges Socrates to offer his own positive definition of justice rather than simply refuting those of others. Rather than hold to his challenge, however, Thrasymachus, true to his name (*thrasos*—fierce or rash and *makhē*—fighter), is cajoled into offering his own definition of justice, initiating an intellectual wrestling match between Thrasymachus and Socrates, the sophist and the philo-sophist. While much of what follows is a Platonic satire of sophistic argument, it also introduces a number of the central themes of the *Republic*.

Thrasymachus bluntly declares that justice is nothing more than "the advantage of the stronger" (338c). Though perhaps cynical in his views, Thrasymachus, like Machiavelli, also shows an astute appreciation of the realities of political life. In effect he offers the position of the ethical relativist, that is, that moral standards are determined by each community, in terms of its own self interests. Thus a monarchy will establish values that are monarchic; a democracy will posit values that are advantageous to its interests. In the first round of the debate, Socrates asks whether, by advantage, the ruler seeks his *real* advantage, or his *apparent* advantage. In other words, cognizant that people often confuse real benefits and interests with their desires, is it possible for the ruler to make a mistake? Equating the knowledge or body of skills with the agent (a person *is* as he does), Thrasymachus rashly insists that the ruler never literally makes a mistake because if the ruler is by definition one who possesses the knowledge of rulership, then to make an error would mean that he lacked the knowledge and so failed to satisfy the definition.

Responding ironically to Thrasymachus's sophistry, Socrates shifts his attack to the concept of advantage. Is it the physician or the patient who receives the advantage of the craft of medicine? Seemingly it is the patient. Is it the horse-breeder or the horse that receives the advantage of the craft of breeding? In short, it is the recipient of the craft rather than the agent who receives the advantage. By analogy then, Socrates, argues, it is the governed rather than the ruler who receive the advantage of rulership—contrary to Thrasymachus. Thrasymachus replies with a counter analogy—that of sheep and shepherds. Does the shepherd have the well-being of the sheep in mind, or is he thinking about wool and mutton? Thrasymachus further ups the ante by suggesting that the corrupt despot is the happiest of all people because his power and corruption give him the freedom to have anything he wants.

Socrates presents two arguments in reply. First he tries to make a distinction between the craft performed for its own sake and the parallel craft of wage. In the former, the practitioner performs his skill for the sake of the recipient. At the same time he earns wages for his act, thus satisfying his own needs. In the second argument, he puts together Thrasymachus's equation of the person and his craft, the seeking of advantage, and the theme of corruption. Good people seek only an advantage over bad people, while the bad or corrupt seek it over both the good and the bad. Similarly, the wise person seeks only an advantage over the foolish, while the ignorant try to get the better of both the wise and the foolish. Insofar as people who in the same way are the same, the good person is also like the wise, and the bad or corrupt person is also like the ignorant fool. Bearing down

on Thrasymachus, Socrates concludes, "So we find that the just man has turned out to be good and wise, and the unjust man ignorant and bad" (350c). At this point Thrasymachus, perspiring profusely, can respond only by blushing. Although they clarify several other minor issues, that brings the first book to a conclusion.

At the end of Book One, if we ask the answer to the central question, what does it mean to be a just person? we must reply that we do not know. We can say only that justice is *not* telling the truth and paying debts, being useful to our friends and harmful to our enemies, or the advantage of the stronger. Many scholars believe that Book One originally began as a separate work, perhaps titled *The Thrasymachus*. Its approach and conclusion closely resemble the approach of the earlier dialogues. As it stands, it provides (as Socrates notes) "a prologue" to what follows in the remaining nine books, subtly dramatizing the major themes of the *Republic* as a whole. Thus it addresses the ethical question, what is justice?, suggesting that the answer relates not to outcomes or consequences, but to a disposition. In this regard, Plato lays the groundwork for what contemporary ethicists call "virtue ethics" (in other words, the desire to show why it is better to be good than not). Next, the ethical questions are related to the nature of knowledge (the craft of the ruler) and what sources of knowledge have authority over the rest. Finally, it becomes evident that the succession of interlocutors subtly dramatizes the nature of political transformation, providing the standard for critiquing society. The tone of the remaining nine books becomes more friendly and is characterized by long stretches of exposition. As such the plot can be summarized more briefly than that of the first book.

Book Two commences with Socrates observing that he thought the conversation was finished with the silencing of Thrasymachus. Glaucon, however intervenes, reiterating Thrasymachus's original challenge to defend justice for its own sake. He wants to believe that one is a better person for being just, but is perplexed by those who relate justice to success, the implication being that justice seems to imply simply being thought to be just or appearing so. To illustrate his point, he offers the (anti)parable of "The Ring of Gyges" (359c–360d), about a shepherd who, given the power of invisibility uses it to rape and seize power, the moral being that people will do whatever they can get away with. Accepting the challenge, Socrates suggests that to understand justice for its own sake they must understand it in relation to the individual. In turn, to understand that, they must first consider where justice comes into play with regard to the community. To this end he proposes to derive a community, a theoretical model derived from first principles. Arguing that people form communities to pool their knowledge with regard to survival, he

describes a self-sufficient community, combining the knowledge necessary to provide food, shelter, and clothing. Glaucon finds this "a city of pigs" (372d). Our physical (animal) needs are satisfied, but isn't there more to *human* life? Obliging Glaucon, Socrates imagines a "luxurious" or "feverish" city, adding various luxury crafts not necessary to survival, but pleasant.

Such a community, Socrates thinks, also gives rise to the need for guardians to protect its interests. Much of the rest of Book Two and then Book Three describe the training of such guardians. This involves a moral training that entails eliminating everything from the traditional culture that might encourage immoral behavior on the part of the guardians, or that appears to blaspheme the gods. The effect of this eliminates large sections of Homer and the other poets in the process. Socrates takes the even more radical view that art predicated on imitation is bad, because such claims to represent reality are necessarily false and so morally a lie. Here he eliminates drama, painting, sculpture, and even some musical forms that imitate the human voice. These passages are the basis of the famous charge that Plato bans the poet from the ideal society. It is soon evident, however, that Plato's concerns are more complex, especially when Socrates proposes to justify such a rigorous honesty by means of a lie, "a noble fiction" (414b). This fiction leads to the next parable, the "Myth of the Metals" (414a–417b), which he attributes to the Phoenicians.

The "Myth of the Metals" asserts that humanity emerged from the earth with the result that each of us contains a mixture of metals, though one is predominant. Those in whom gold predominates are those best suited to rulership. Those with a predominance of silver are the auxiliaries (the warrior class) who help the rulers, and those with iron and bronze are the farmers and other workers. Thus, according to Socrates, society is predicated on a three-fold division according to natural abilities. Socrates next evokes the traditional virtues: wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice. Playing on the idea developed in the aforementioned debate with Thrasymachus over skills, he concludes that the skill of wisdom is most essential for the ruler, courage for the warrior, and moderation for the worker. A just society, then, is one in which this is precisely the situation. He next argues that the soul or self (*psyche*) is composed of three independent faculties, the reason, the will, and the appetites. Looking again at the virtues and capacities, he concludes that the definitive virtue for the faculty of reason is wisdom, for the will, courage, and for the appetites, moderation. A just person is thus one in whom the faculties are in harmony, governed by the reason with the aid of the will, and the appetites desiring in moderation. Similarly an unjust person is one whose soul is out of balance, where the will or appetites have overcome the

rulership. Thus we often speak of willful people, or weak-willed people, or people who are controlled by their appetites.

The "Myth of the Metals" also raises implications about social structure. Because people are mixtures, it is possible, in a foreshadowing of Mendelian genetics, that gold parents might give birth to silver or bronze children, or iron parents might produce gold children. To ensure that people are placed in society according to their abilities and not simply their parentage, Socrates imagines a program of radical social engineering to eliminate the traditional family and to enhance the best breeding, all under the guidance of wise and benevolent rulers. He also suggests that there should be no private property in this community, everyone's efforts directed toward the good of the whole. The ideal society he describes informs much later utopian fiction, from that of Thomas More to Aldous Huxley. Some commentators see in this model the forerunner of the modern totalitarian state, while others conclude that Plato is suggesting the impossibility of such a society, the conditions being too radical ever to achieve. Indeed, the discussion turns when Glaucon interrupts Socrates' lengthy dissertation with the question of whether it is possible to found such a city. In good philosophic fashion Socrates replies with a question: "Do you think our discussion less worthwhile if we cannot prove that it is possible to found a city such as we described?" (472e). He suggests, anticipating the next direction of the argument, that the theoretical model is more illuminating than the actual reality, just as the painting or sculpture of an idealized body is more beautiful than bodies as they actually appear. Socrates finally answers Glaucon's question with the statement that we will have a just community only when we have "philosopher kings" (when our rulers are selected for their wisdom, not because they persuade us that they will serve our narrow interests).

In positing the philosopher king, Socrates now shifts the entire discussion from matters of ethics to matters of epistemology and metaphysics. Instead of asking, what is a just man?, he asks, what is a philosopher? To his way of thinking, the just person and the philosopher are the same. In basic terms, the philosopher of wisdom is the "lover of wisdom," but to get at what wisdom means, Socrates asks about love. The dialogues *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* are Plato's definitive explorations of love, but here he suggests that whatever love is, it involves the love of the whole of its object. When I love someone, I do not just love a nose, eyes, or other part, but the entire person. That being the case, how do we love the whole of knowledge? If I understand knowledge as facts or information, or those skills about which Thrasymachus spoke, the task is open-ended and ultimately impossible, since the accumulation of information is unlimited. Instead, Socrates suggests that

we think of the whole of knowledge, in the sense of wisdom, in terms of the capacity to know; that is, what I know is circumscribed by my capacity to know. Lacking the capacity to see, the blind man does not *know* color except as a word. If I have some comprehension of my capacity to know *what* I know, then I can be said to understand the limits of what I am capable of knowing. Socrates conceives this capacity in terms of what he calls forms. This is the basis of Plato's theory of Forms or Ideas (*idéai*—form, or *eídos*—shape or sort of things). These forms relate both to the basis of true knowledge and the ground of being, the unchanging essence of a thing beneath its unstable, changing appearance.

Socrates now proposes to explain why philosophers are misunderstood, and the corollary danger of the sophist. He begins by offering yet another parable, this one about the pilot of a boat (488b–489c) who possesses special skills that allow him to navigate. Sailors lacking such knowledge do not understand what the pilot is doing. To those who do not understand navigation, the pilot seems simply to be staring into space, when he is most busy. Anticipating a later analysis of the limits of democracy, Socrates considers what would happen if such sailors overthrew their pilot and appointed one of themselves by lottery to sail the ship. By analogy, those who do not have the understanding of the philosopher, neither comprehend what philosophy is about, nor are competent to judge the pronouncements of the philosopher. As such, they run the risk of confusing a persuasive falsehood with the truth. They cannot distinguish the wisdom of the philosopher and the self-serving rhetoric of the sophist.

Socrates pulls all of the themes together in the "Parable of the Cave" (514a–519d). The most famous of Plato's noble fictions, the "Parable of the Cave" presents the theory of knowledge and being, the nature of philosophical enlightenment, the fate of the philosopher, and the nature of true education. As a prologue, Socrates describes what he calls a "twice divided line" (509d–511c) to show the levels of knowledge and their relation to the levels of reality. The first division separates the illusory realm of generation and decay (perpetual becoming), which we know in terms of sense perception, and the reality of unchanging being, known through reason. Each of these realms is in turn subdivided, thus "twice divided." Under the heading of belief / becoming come the mental acts of imagination (*eikasia*) and the corresponding images, and opining (*pistis*) and corresponding opinions. Under the heading of intelligence / being come the mental acts of reasoning (*dianoia*) and its corresponding abstractions, and understanding (*noesis*) and the corresponding forms or ideas. Another way of thinking about this is to consider that when an infant first becomes conscious, it is primarily aware

of an undifferentiated barrage of sense data. As it matures, it supposes that these images are real, forming opinions on what it supposes it has seen. If I look at the sun moving across the sky, I might form the opinion that the sun orbits the earth, but can I trust these opinions? Plato thinks not. For true knowledge, I must look away from what my senses tell me, and try to grasp how my mind is creating knowledge. Reasoning works by a process of abstracting. The highest level of reasoning is understanding, the insight that my knowledge relates to the forms or ideas.

In the "Parable of the Cave," Socrates asks Glaucon and company to imagine men living in a cave deep underground (again we have *gone down*). From birth, these men are prisoners, bound so that they can only look at the wall in the back of the cave. Behind these prisoners are braziers of fire, an artificial source of light. Between the men and the light source, others place objects with the effect that shadows are cast on the wall that the prisoners watch. Because the prisoners know nothing but these shadows, they suppose these to represent reality, even forming opinions about them. Socrates now imagines that one of these prisoners is released, turned so that he sees that there is something other than the shadows, and indeed that the shadows are produced artificially by the objects and braziers of fire. At first the liberated prisoner will have difficulty seeing and comprehending what is before him. The prisoner is slowly led up and out of the cave (*going up* or ascending). Outside he sees real objects and, with great difficulty, the sun, the source of light.

It is readily evident that the realm inside the cave resembles the division in the first part of the Twice-Divided-Line, dramatizing the mind's understanding of the world based on sense perception. The philosopher is like the released prisoner, who learns to see the world differently from others. In the drama of the cave, he must literally turn his back on the flashing shadows, just as the philosopher, in Plato's sense, must turn away from knowledge as information and sense data. His 180-degree turn symbolizes an inward movement as does the prisoner's move upward and out of the cave. The realm outside of the cave corresponds to the second half of the Twice-Divided-Line. The glimpse of the sun is the enlightenment of the philosopher, understanding the forms.

Socrates now asks what would happen to the enlightened prisoner if he were to return (*go back down*) to the cave. Glaucon readily observes that he would be scorned by those who had not gone and therefore could not appreciate what he had understood. To those who remained, the prisoner-philosopher would appear as the pilot appeared to the uncomprehending sailors. In a chilling remark, in which Plato's Socrates foreshadows his own fate, he says,

"As for the man who tried to free them and lead them upward, if they could somehow lay their hands on him and kill him, they would do so" (517a). In our world, the philosopher faces the unhappy prospect of misunderstanding and even martyrdom. "Like a man who takes refuge under a small wall from a storm of dust or hail driven by the wind," says Socrates a bit earlier, "seeing other men filled with lawlessness, the philosopher is satisfied if he can somehow live his present life free from injustice and impious deeds, and depart from it with a beautiful hope, blameless and content" (496d–497a).

The "Parable of the Cave" also dramatizes the process of education. As true understanding is not based on information, but a turning away from the senses, a search for abstractions culminating in an apprehension of forms or ideas, education is not about acquiring information; rather, it is about comprehending the patterns, intuiting the capacities to know that are already present. Like the process dramatized by the movement of the prisoner, "one must turn one's whole soul from the world of becoming until it can endure to contemplate reality, and the brightest of realities, which we say is the Good" (518c). The rest of this section largely focuses on a philosophical training based on the study of mathematics as the best means of strengthening mental skills related to abstraction, deductive reasoning, and turning our backs on the authority of the senses.

Having explained his conception of the philosopher and philosophical training, Socrates returns to the ethical problem outlined at the end of Book Four—namely, how the relationship between the tripartite faculties of the soul explain the types of community in the world—and, by extension, returns to Thrasymachus's challenge, asking why the corrupt tyrant is the most unhappy of people. The ideal society for Socrates is a just one. Its rulers are the wisest, its warriors the most courageous, and its workers the most moderate. Such a society is the collective identity of just souls, those whose reason is marked by wisdom, whose will is courageous, and whose appetites are moderate. Socrates terms this aristocracy (*ē aristokratía*), which in its original sense means "rule of the best born" or "aristocracy" in our usual sense of the word, but here more broadly means "rule by excellence," because here "best born" implies wisdom and a balanced soul rather than blood ties. In turn, he suggests that the various ways the soul can become imbalanced account for the various forms of government, forming a descending hierarchy. Thus the dominance of the will gives rise to timocracy or rule based on glory. The increasing prominence of the appetites gives rise first to oligarchy, rule by wealth, then democracy, rule by popularity, and finally tyranny or dictatorship, rule based on the exercise of raw power. In other words, Socrates asks, what do we value most in our rulers, wisdom, accumulated glory, wealth, popularity, or power? In writing of timocracy, Plato

has in mind the warrior kings of Homeric antiquity, rulers whose authority owed more to their prowess on the battlefield than their wisdom. The oligarchy and democracy reflect Plato's experience in the Athens of Pericles and subsequently the infamous Thirty, and the dictatorship, his observations of rulers such as Dionysius of Syracuse. Socrates notes that most adults are fixed in their personalities, the balance of their reason, will, and appetites, so are impervious to dramatic change. Thus, he is especially interested in the unformed minds of youth, those who are not yet fixed in their values or habits of thought. Such a concern relates to the theme of education that runs through the *Republic* as well as the importance of a morally healthy environment. Socrates imagines a situation in which the impressionable sons of the aristocrats are tempted by the pleasures of wealth, leading to a compromise that in turn opens their souls to the appetites. To avoid such corrupting influences, Socrates would ban private property from the ideal community. He notes that in the "real" world, a reputation for honor or glory is often little protection against political disaster. Plato's account is deeply informed by the fate of many Athenians during the course of the Peloponnesian War. For Socrates, the deep ethical issues relate to the process of inversion in which wealth and the satisfaction of appetites become the basis of the good instead of wisdom or honor, a movement from a normative ethics based on principles to one based on outcomes, the same position he challenged in his earlier debates with Cephalus, Polemarchus, and Thrasymachus.

Such conditions, Socrates argues, lay the groundwork for the tyrant. Democracy emerges from a seizure of wealth from the oligarch by the majority, as with Polemarchus, the force of numbers. The tyrant emerges as a demagogue who promises to protect the interests of the majority, if given extraordinary powers. But since the primary values relate to self-interest and the satisfaction of appetites, the tyrant quickly turns the machinery of government toward himself. There is, however, an inherent paradox. Since honor and wisdom have been devalued, there is little to protect the tyrant but his own vigilance. Rather than loyal friends, he has accomplices who serve him only insofar as their own interests are satisfied. They are otherwise only waiting for their own opportunity to seize power. The actual dictator, suggests Socrates, "is in reality enslaved in the worst kind of slavery and in the greatest need to flatter, a flatterer of the most wicked men." More to the point, "he cannot in any way satisfy his appetites; he is in the greatest need, and is truly poor if one knows how to observe his soul as a whole; he is full of fear, convulsions, and pain throughout his life, if indeed his condition is similar to that of the city over which he rules" (579d–e). In short, far from being the happiest of people, contrary to Thrasymachus, the tyrant is the most unhappy.

The *Republic* concludes with one last parable, the story of Er of Pamphylian, which subtly pulls together everything that preceded. Er, supposedly a fallen warrior, awakes suddenly on the funeral pyre just before it is lit. He tells of his soul *going down* to the underworld where he witnessed the fate of the souls of the dead. Those souls who had lived commendable lives *go up* to heaven (*o ouranos*—heaven or starry firmament), where they received 1,000 years of purification and happiness, while those who had lived wicked lives *went down* into the earth, where they received 1,000 years of purgation and punishment. Er learns that there is an exception to this process. Some people, especially some tyrants, were so irredeemably wicked that their souls were seized as they were about to emerge from the cave, and were dropped into the pit of Tartarus, never to be seen again. In the last of the vision, Er witnesses the purged and purified souls selecting new lives in which to be reborn. Their previous lives often influenced their selection for the future. Thus Orpheus, the famous singer of mythic antiquity, decides to come back as a swan. The fierce Homeric warrior Ajax decides to come back as a lion. Similarly angry with the human race, Agamemnon chooses to come back as an eagle. Finally, Odysseus (Ulysses in the Latin form of his name), the last of the Homeric heroes, selects the quiet life of an obscure man. Once the souls have made their choices, they are given their fate, to drink of the waters of Oblivion, and to go forward to be reborn in their new lives.

Socrates closes his final parable with the hope that "if we are persuaded by me to believe that the soul is immortal and that it endure all evils and all blessings, we shall always hope to go on to the *upward journey* [my emphasis] and we shall in every way practice justice with wisdom" (621c). With this we may infer that the conversation at the Piraeus draws to a conclusion, that the sun is probably rising, and that Socrates at last begins his trip back up to Athens, bringing the *Republic* to a close.

Much of the "Parable of Er" parodies Odysseus's visit to the underworld in Book Eleven of the *Odyssey*. There again we have Ajax and Agamemnon, and other fallen comrades, among the shadowy figures. In turn, Odysseus's choice of an obscure life subtly echoes Achilles' despairing reply to Odysseus's praises:

> No winning words about death to me, shining Odysseus!
> By god, I'd rather slave on earth for another man –
> some dirt-poor tenant farmer who scrapes to keep alive –
> than rule down here over all the breathless dead. (11.554–558)

Plato's parody of Homer differs in two significant ways. First, he has added a significantly non-Homeric dimension when he imagines the souls going

through a process of purification in preparation for rebirth. Such a notion is entirely absent in the archaic worldview of Homer. In the realm of the dead, all souls are reduced to an eternal cold shadowy state of existence and non-existence, thus Achilles' lament. Such a return to the earth can be found in other archaic worldviews as well, as in the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the subterranean oblivion of *Shoel* in pre-rabbinic Judaism, Vedic Hinduism, early Daoism, as well as some of the traditional religious views found in Africa, in which the soul of the dead shifts from a state of "living-dead," with a personal immortality, to a non-existent, collective immortality. Second, the absence of Achilles in Socrates' account is striking. In Homer, he appears after Odysseus's conversation with Agamemnon. His words in the Odyssey are hinted at by Odysseus's choice of an obscure life, yet Er is silent about him. Given his stature as the only hero to bear the epithet, "*best* of the Achaians" (*aristeúein*), signifying his cultural prominence as archetypal hero, the silence speaks loudly. Given the description of the underworld, Socrates offers an unstated, but subtle, hint that the soul of Achilles was dropped into Tartarus. In turn Odysseus's selection of the life that Achilles describes in Homer suggests that Socrates, and by extension Plato, would displace Achilles with Odysseus as the archetypal ideal. In other words, he posits that we aspire to a hero noted for his wisdom rather than his military prowess, that the aristocracy embraces the harmonious soul rather than then the best blood. To have a just society and a philosopher king, we must fundamentally rethink what we value, what we understand to be good.

All of the characters of the *Republic* are based on historical figures. Thrasymachus, for instance, was a real sophist, for whom a few textual fragments survive. Polemarchus was a successful shield maker, and later a victim of the judicial murders of the Thirty. Glaucon was Plato's older brother. But it is also clear that each carries an allegorical weight, embodying certain types that relate to the major themes of the *Republic*. Old Cephalus, who shares a name with a legendary hunter and early founder of Athens, embodies the values and traditions of the past. His son Polemarchus, whose name means something like *battle commander* or *chief—polemarchos*—is the present, trying to adopt the values inherited from his father. Thrasymachus the sophist offers one vision of the future, while Socrates the philosopher offers another. Glaucon, whose name derives from *glukus*, signifying *sweetness* or metaphorically *dear person*, is a bright young man at the point of deciding on what future life to choose for himself, whether to be active in the political life of the community, or something less public. In turn, each of the characters possesses a concept of justice that rehearses the transition between types of community. Cephalus's concept of justice as telling the truth and paying

debts has one foot in timocracy and one in oligarchy. Polemarchus, with his desire to be useful to his friends, and also cognizant of the power of numbers, represents the transition from oligarchy to democracy. Thrasymachus with his advocacy of the strong and his "seizure" of the argument, points to the transition from democracy to tyranny. Turning to the transition from aristocracy to timocracy, we might posit the absent Achilles, willful and obsessed with glory, that which initiates the process of *going down*, the fall from the ideal.

THE FIGURE OF SOCRATES

Socrates is Plato's greatest creation. The Socrates featured in Aristophanes's comedy, *The Clouds*, is a sophistic scoundrel. Xenophon's Socrates is sympathetic, but more pedantic. Plato, on the other hand, transformed his Socrates into the ideal philosopher, honest, prudent, self-sufficient, blending passion with disinterestedness, humility with nobility. Indifferent to personal gain or self interest, he pursues the truth despite the consequences. As he tells the court in Plato's account of the *Apology*, "the unexamined life is not worth living." If most subsequent philosophers have observed this injunction in word more than deed, Socrates remains, nevertheless, the goal toward which we should aspire. "And even if you are not yet a Socrates," writes the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, "still you ought to live as one who wishes to be a Socrates" (*Enchiridion* 483), words that Benjamin Franklin echoes in his autobiography: "Imitate Jesus and Socrates" (81). John Stuart Mill makes the same point when he writes that "it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied," also alluding to Glaucon's remark about a city of pigs (Plato, 372d). The Danish philosopher Kierkegaard focuses on the ironic Socrates, with the play of identities, parables, and verbal games. Friedrich Nietzsche presents a more complex response to Socrates; he is drawn to the irony, but also rejects Socrates' rationalism as a symptom of a cultural decadence that covers up the tragic.

SUBSEQUENT INFLUENCE

The *Republic*, the *Symposium*, and the *Phaedrus* are the most influential of Plato's dialogues, his greatest contributions to philosophical literature. The medieval world knew Plato only by reputation, and indirectly through other philosophers such as St. Augustine. Among the dialogues, only the *Timaeus* was available in a Latin version. With the recovery of classical learning, the

body of Plato's works, including the *Republic*, made their way into Western culture, first printed in Geneva in 1578 under the guidance of the humanist, Henri Estienne (Stephanus in Latin), the standard edition for all subsequent versions. (The marginal numbers used to identify passages in Plato refer to the pages of the Stephanus edition, much as we cite passages in Shakespeare not by the specific page, but by act, scene, and line number.) Even before that, however, humanist scholars were reading the *Republic*. Long sections of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) paraphrase sections of the *Republic*. The five books of the *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* (1532–1562), by the French humanist François Rabelais, draw on both More and Plato. Sir Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1627) owes much to both the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*, our source for the story of the (old) Atlantis.

The title of the philosophical novel, *The Cave* (2000) by the Portugese Nobel Laureate, José Saramago, points to the continued influence of Plato. The *Republic* exercises a profound influence, bringing together most of the major Platonic themes and doctrines. The "Parable of the Cave," for instance, is an important part of our culture, a profound metaphor for describing the human condition. Socrates' apparent banning of the poet from the ideal society has opened a perennial debate over the value of art and the relationship between art and truth. The realm of political philosophy and, by extension, the utopian tradition in literature down to the present look back directly or indirectly to the *Republic*. Plato has set the standard and established the terms by which we subsequently think about the ideal society and its possibilities.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Brickhouse, Thomas C. and Nicholas D. Smith. *Plato's Socrates*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Epictetus. *Enchiridion [The manual]*. *The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers*. Ed. Whitney J. Oates. New York: Random House, 1940, 468–487.

Franklin, Benjamin. *The Autobiography*. New York: Vintage Books/Library of America, 1990.

Friedländer, Paul. *Plato: An Introduction*. Trans. Hans Meyerhoff. New York: Harper and Row, 1958.

Guthrie, W.K.C. *Plato: The Man and His Dialogues, Earlier Period*. Vol. 4 of *A History of Greek Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

———. *The Late Plato and the Academy*. Vol. 5 of *A History of Greek Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Viking, 1996.

Kofman, Sarah. *Socrates: Fictions of a Philosopher*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism*. Ed. George Sher. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1979.
Morgan, Michael L. *Platonic Piety: Philosophy and Ritual in Fourth-Century Athens*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
Plato. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, including the Letters*. Ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.
———. *Opera Platonis*. Ed. John Burnet. 8 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1902.
———. *Plato's Republic*. Trans. G.M.A. Grube. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1974.
———. *The Republic of Plato*. Trans. Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1968.
Vlastos, Gregory. ed. *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays*. 2 vols. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971.
White, Nicholas P. *A Companion to Plato's Republic*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1979.
———. *Plato On Knowledge and Reality*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976.

2

St. Augustine
The Confessions
400

I want to know God and the soul.

—Augustine, *Soliloquies*

The *edifice of your pride* has to be dismantled. And that is terribly hard work.

—Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*

St. Augustine is variously described as either the last great philosopher of classical antiquity, or the first of the Middle Ages. Grouped with St. Jerome (331–419/420), St. Ambrose (340–397), and Gregory the Great (540–604), he is also described as one of the four Latin "Fathers of the Church," the bridge between the classical and medieval worlds. Augustine considered himself a philosopher rather than a theologian (the latter term he applied to mythographers such as Marcus Terentius Varro, writing about the pagan gods). The love of wisdom implies the love of God. "[S]ince divine truth and scripture clearly teach us that God, the Creator of all things, is Wisdom," he writes in the *City of God*, "a true philosopher will be a lover of God" (8.1). It is, however, in his *Confessions* that Augustine stands both as the first modern philosopher and the first modern author. Ostensibly an account of his philosophical and spiritual development, the *Confessions* represents the first extended record of the interior nature of the self and the role that the will and passions play in shaping our consciousness of time and space. It is also the first work to explore the central

Excerpts from *St. Augustine: Confessions* edited by Henry Chadwich translator (Oxford University Press, 1991). By permission of Oxford University Press.

role that the will and passions play in the nature of evil. Augustine, a rhetorician by training, is the first thinker to confront systematically the relationship between reality and language, and the concomitant problem of interpretation. As the modern philosopher Wittgenstein remarked, the *Confessions* is "the most serious book ever written" (qtd. in Monk 282).

BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Aurelius Augustinus was born in the Roman North African city of Thagaste (now the Algerian city of Souk-Ahras), November 13, 354 C.E. Augustine's home was Latin in language and culture, though the culture of Roman North Africa was a diverse mixture including Berbers and Phoenicians speaking the Semitic language Punic, an urban merchant class speaking Greek, and the official and educated class speaking Latin. Before the arrival of Christianity, many North Africans worshiped Mountain Gods, most notably the "Supreme Father" or "The Old Man," related to the Semitic Jehovah. Also, especially around Carthage, the "Goddess of Heaven" (Dea Caelestis) was worshiped. Later, the Roman North African Lucius Apuleius (born c. 124 C.E.) centered his novel *The Golden Ass* (*The Metamorphoses*) on the Greco-Roman Platonic cult of Isis, which identified the Egyptian mother goddess as the single underlying and unifying principle of the divine.

Augustine's father Patricus, a landowner of limited means, was pagan until a deathbed conversion. His mother, Monica, probably of Berber/Numidian origins, was a devout member of the Catholic Church of Africa. Seeing Augustine's intellectual abilities as a route to preferment and success, his parents nurtured his education. Thus after primary studies in Thagaste, he continued his studies, first in Madauros, made famous by Lucius Apuleius, and later in Carthage. His training centered on rhetoric and the liberal arts, with the notion that persuasive speaking was the best way to achieve public success in an oral culture centered in the Forum and the courts.

Writing his *Confessions* between 397–401 C.E., Augustine traces the first 33 years of his life and spiritual growth. He writes of his petulant disgust at his father's behavior and ambitions, his contempt for his education, which centered too much on rote memorization and the rod, and of his early frustrations as a teacher of rhetoric, first in Thagaste, then Carthage, and then Rome (383 C.E.). He recounts his love of Latin literature and the power of fictional characters to move him to tears even while oblivious of his own condition. "What is more pitiable than a wretch without pity for himself who weeps over the death of Dido dying for love of Aeneas," he notes with bitter irony, "but not weeping over himself dying for his lack of love for you,

my God" (1.13.21). At the age of 18 he discovered Cicero's philosophical dialogue, *Hortensius* (no longer extant). This awakened in him a lifelong taste for philosophy, leading him to declare, "Suddenly every vain hope became empty to me, and I longed for the immortality of wisdom with an incredible ardor in my heart" (3.4.7). Encouraged by his mother, Augustine turned to the scriptures, but found their style crude and simplistic next to the eloquence of Cicero. The New Latin Bible of Jerome, the Vulgate, which was the first complete Latin translation, was still a work in progress (about 384–405). The Old Latin Bible available to Augustine was, says Henry Chadwick, a "rather primitive version made by half-educated missionaries in the second century" (11). Augustine therefore turned to the doctrines of Manichaeism which seemed better able to address his questions about the nature of good and evil in a philosophical manner. In broad terms, Manichaeism derived from the teachings of a Babylonian named Mani (216–276 C.E.), which reinterpreted Christianity in terms of a dualistic cosmology between Good and Evil, Light and Dark, Spirit and Matter. Pantheistic, it saw the divine trapped in matter, positing a rigorous ethical asceticism in order to seek purification and redemption. Toward the end of his teaching career in Carthage, Augustine began to admit serious doubts about Manichaean cosmology, especially as it related to astrology and the prediction of the future.

Amid Augustine's search for wisdom were more personal struggles. He was obsessed in retrospect with his wicked or unbalanced values (*iniquitas*), loving the things he should hate and hating the things he should love. Early in the *Confessions* he tells about stealing some pears, not out of hunger but for the thrill of stealing. "I had no motive for my wickedness except wickedness itself [malitiae meae causa nulla esset nisi malitia]. . . . I was seeking not to gain anything by shameful means, but shame for its own sake" (2.4.9). At the same time, he expressed his sense of shame and disgust with his father's ambitions, drunkenness, violent temper, and infidelities. "But this same father did not care what character before you I was developing, or how chaste I was so long as I possessed a cultured tongue" (2.3.5). Much of Augustine's antipathy to his father can be seen as a projection of his own sense of weakness and impurity, a subtle recognition of himself in his father. Thus he railed against his father's worldly ambitions for him, but admited to his own desire for worldly success. Even more pronounced were his own strong passions and sexual appetite. He described Carthage as a hissing cauldron of illicit love. He noted, "I sought something to love, I was in love with love [quaerebam quid amarem, amans amare], and hated safety and a path free of snares" (3.1.1). Later, he recalled with irony, "I was an unhappy young man, wretched as at the beginning of my adolescence when I prayed you for chas-

tity and said: 'Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet'" (8.7.17). To gain some control of his lusts, he took at age 17, a concubine who bore him a son, Adeodatus. Later, while he was in Milan, Monica sent this concubine back to Africa in order to facilitate a marriage between her son and a girl with a large dowry and family connections. As this girl was still three years short of age for marriage, Augustine took another mistress.

Augustine found his prospects in Rome disappointing, the students even worse than those in Carthage. In 384, through the influence of Symmachus, prefect of Rome, he obtained an appointment as professor of rhetoric and public orator. At this time, Milan was the administrative center of the empire; Rome was only the symbolic cult center. In his new role as public orator, he came to know Ambrose, Catholic bishop of Milan. Through Ambrose he entered the Neoplatonic circle of Milan, where he came to know Simplicianus, a Christian intellectual who in turn introduced him to the character and writings of the rhetorician Marius Victorinus, who had translated the "Platonic Books" of Plotinus and Porphery into Latin. The Neoplatonic philosophy of Plotinus resolved many of his philosophical quandaries, firmly liberating him from the materialism, dualism, and determinism of Manichaeism. In turn, these studies illuminated the Platonic language in the Gospel of John and the Epistles of Paul, especially Corinthians, stressing the importance of interiority, and the spirit beneath the word. Perhaps equally significant was the example of Victorinus. In Rome he had been a potent defender of the pagan cults; however a close philosophical examination of the scriptures led him to a public expression of faith. In the *Confessions* Augustine recounted,

> The old Victorinus had defended these cults for many years with a voice terrifying to opponents. Yet he was not ashamed to become the servant of your Christ, and an infant born at your font, to bow his head to the yoke of humility and to submit his forehead to the reproach of the cross. (8.2.3)

In a similar fashion, Augustine learned with the aid of philosophy to humble his ambitions and desires. Thus after much struggle, he finally experienced the long-sought spiritual assent that marked his final conversion to Christianity in August 386.

From 386 to 387, Augustine and his friends retired to the villa of Cassiciacum on the outskirts of Milan, to reflect on the meaning and implications of their spiritual struggles and conversion. The *Cassiciacum dialogues*, among his earliest extant writings, are the product of this period. Perhaps most significant are the *Soliloquies* (Augustine coined the word), presented in the form of an interior dialogue between Augustine and Reason, which posit

the role of philosophy and the liberal arts as important parts of a religious education. On Easter Day 387, Augustine, his son Adeodatus, and his friend Alypius were baptized in Milan by Ambrose. His conversion now complete, Augustine hoped to return to Africa for a life of contemplation. He and his family traveled to Ostia, but the port was blockaded because of the revolt of Maximus. So delayed, he began work on his treatises on the immortality of the soul (*De immortalitate animae*) and on music. The latter, though never completed, played an important role in the medieval curriculum. While in Ostia, Augustine and his mother experienced a profound mystical experience, which he reported as the narrative climax of the *Confessions*. Shortly thereafter Monica fell ill and died. She was 56 years old.

The rest of Augustine's life we know from the account of his friend and first biographer, Possidius (370–440), bishop of Calama, and from the huge body of surviving letters and other works. In 388 Augustine went to Rome in search of passage to Africa. During this time he engaged a series of projects, including *The Magnitude of the Soul*, a polemic against the Manichaeism, and the first of the three books of *The Problem of Free Choice*. Later in the year he was finally able to travel to Carthage, and from there back to Thagaste, where he established a community of devout laymen. During this period he worked on *The Teacher*, which makes an early and important contribution to the study of non-verbal communication. In 390, Augustine's son Adeodatus died at about the age of 17.

Augustine's life took a dramatic and unexpected turn while he was visiting Hippo in 391 with the intention of founding a monastery. A busy seaport, Hippo Regius, now Annaba in Algeria, is about 40 miles from Thagaste. The Catholic church in Africa was in a state of crisis and struggle with the Donatist church. Recognizing Augustine's talents, Valerius the Catholic bishop of Hippo ordained him to the priesthood. He was consecrated co-bishop in 395, so that when Valerius died the following year, Augustine became the sole bishop of Hippo, a position he held until his death, 34 years later. Compelled by a sense of duty, Augustine always insisted that the ordination and ecclesiastical office were against his will. In a later sermon he declared, "I was seized, made a priest, and through this grade I passed to the bishopric" (*Sermons* 355.1.2).

The next 34 years of Augustine's life were filled with the duties of a bishop: preaching, participating in church councils, adjudicating legal disputes, responding to various national crises, and engaging in a succession of polemical disputes, often vitriolic, with the Manichees, the Donatists, the Pelagians, and the Arians. The result is a huge body of sermons, letters, commentaries, and treatises. Of special note are *De doctrina Christiana* (395–426),

The Confessions (401), *On the Trinity* (419), and the monumental *De civitate Dei* (*The City of God*), which he produced from the period 413 to 425.

The Donatist heresy, which had initially compelled Augustine into the priesthood, dated back to a persecution of the church by the emperor Diocletian (303–305 C.E.). Many in the African church, especially from Numida thought that the Catholic church had not adequately resisted the secular forces, even accusing it of cooperating with authorities in the surrender of sacred books and vessels. The crisis broke in 311 when the bishop of Carthage died and was hastily replaced. In response, the Numidian faction consecrated a rival bishop, Donatus, causing a schism in the church, resulting in two competing parallel churches, each claiming authority, often resulting in violent clashes. In 409 this violence led to secular intervention in support of the Catholic church. Deploring violence and aware that state coercion was not an effective means of church policy, Augustine spent many years trying to calm the situation, though the Donatist and Catholic churches remained rivals until the Muslim invasion of Africa.

On August 24, 410, the army of Alaric the Goth entered Rome, initiating three days of looting and burning, an act that sent shockwaves throughout the empire. Although the administrative centers of the Western Empire had moved to Ravenna, the city of Rome remained the spiritual and symbolic center for both pagans and Christians. To the pagans, the sack of Rome by the (Arian Christian) Goths signified divine retribution for the abandonment of the old gods. For the Christians, it raised doubts about the relationship between religion and the secular state. Augustine took up both issues. Working sporadically from 413 to 426, he produced his theological *magnum opus*, the *City of God* (*De civitate Dei*), one of the most important works of Christian theology. Drawing on his command of history, philosophy, classical literature, and the Bible, Augustine offered a sophisticated defense of Christianity against its still vociferous pagan critics, and, more fundamentally, an attempt to elaborate a comprehensive explanation of Christian doctrine in order to create a Christian vision of history and universal society.

In the midst of his work on the *City of God*, Augustine also entered into dispute with the Pelagians, having been alerted to their doctrine by the imperial commissioner, Marcellius. Pelagius, a rhetorician and lay thinker, originally from Britain and living in Rome since 380, had argued that humans are free to choose life or death. As a result, divine grace is nothing more than the capacity of free wills to save themselves. Caelestius took this a step further, suggesting that freedom was incompatible with the notion of grace, understood as an internal divine impulse. He also suggested that baptism was not necessary for the salvation of infants, contrary to Augustine's

position. Finally Julian, bishop of Eclanum (in southern Italy), argued that freedom was emancipation from God. In 411 the Council of Carthage under Augustine's leadership condemned Caelestius, and in 418 the Council condemned 9 Pelagian propositions as heretical, an act which Pope Zosimus ratified, making the condemnation official throughout the Western Church. Julian was very much Augustine's equal in learning and rhetorical skill, often pushing Augustine into hasty and occasionally extreme positions. These exchanges led Augustine back to his earlier obsessions, arguing that carnal generation is the root of sin. Marriage, he asserted, was not about sexual gratification, but procreation, mutual fidelity, and sacrament, a doctrine that influenced the subsequent conception of marriage. This doctrine also contributed to the medieval understanding of the Virgin birth. The struggles with Julian and the Pelagians also led Augustine to advocate an extreme view on the doctrine of predestination. While the Catholic church did not follow these doctrines, they later influenced the Calvinists and Jansenists during the Reformation.

Invasions by the Goths and other Germanic tribes into the empire raised new political and theological crises. Most of these peoples were Arian Christian, which from the perspective of the Catholic church represented a trinitarian heresy dating back to the doctrines of the Alexandrian priest Arius (250–336 C.E.). Arius had argued that if God is uncreated and indivisible, then, necessarily, Christ cannot share divine substance or be one with God. The Catholic church responded with the Nicene Creed in 325, affirming the consubstantially of Christ with the Father. Despite this, Arian doctrine was carried to the Germanic tribes outside the empire through the missionary efforts of Ulfilas (Wulfila), who also translated the Bible into the Gothic language. In 429, the Arian Vandals swept across the Straits of Gibraltar to attack North Africa. Roman resistance collapsed and Hippo was surrounded. Active to the end, Augustine felt ill with a fever, dying August 28, 430 at the age of 75. The following year Hippo was conquered, though Possidius managed to survive, along with Augustine's library and manuscripts.

THE *CONFESSIONS*

Augustine wrote the *Confessions* during his first three years as bishop. At the time, he was engaged with the church Council of Carthage in its struggle with Manichaean heresies, producing polemical works such as *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* (397 C.E.), *Contra Felicem Manichaeum* (398), *De natura boni contra Manichaeos* (399), and *Contra Secundinum Manichaeos* (399). Narrowly speaking, the *Confessions* can be seen as part of that polemic

insofar as it traces Augustine's own initial attraction and then subsequent disillusionment with Manichaean doctrine. If this is the seed, the *Confessions* soon grew to something much greater. Following the model he developed in the *Soliloquies*, Augustine conceived the *Confessions* as a prayer or interior dialogue between himself and God. He offered a retrospective account and interpretation of his alienation from God. Thus Augustine the narrator speaks about the development of Augustine the subject, addressing God as the implied audience as distinct from us as reader, the explicit audience. The *Confessions* is divided into 13 books, the first nine following a more or less autobiographical progression, tracing the first 33 years of his life, from his birth through the death and burial of Monica. The details of the plot are outlined above in the account of Augustine's early life. The remaining four books center on a discussion of the nature of memory, time and eternity, creation, and the problems of interpretation applied to the first chapters of Genesis 1. The narrative fiction that the work is a conversation invites the reader to conceive it as open-ended. Like Plato in his dialogues, Augustine uses the conventions of writing to suggest the immediacy of oral performance. Unlike a written treatise, which deploys a linear argument towards the demonstration of a specific thesis, a conversation unfolds dialectically through a series of revisions that envelop and reconcile what has come before. It is less concerned with an end, than with a rethinking of the significance of the beginning, the meaning underneath appearance, behind the word. Robert McMahon characterizes this dialectic in terms of a return to the origin. Augustine begins with his own birth and origins, traces his movement away from God and then his return to God in his conversion and mystical experience. The commentary on Genesis 1 treats the origins of the world outward from God, and the role of the Church as that which returns humankind to God. The latter part of the *Confessions* invites us to see Augustine's early life and spiritual struggles allegorically as representative of the more general pattern. In this way the book of *Genesis* interprets Augustine's life, giving it signification. Correspondingly, his life presents a concrete expression of the process described in Genesis. In this process Augustine reads Christianity through Platonism.

In broad terms the *Confessions* is an extended character study about the growth and transformation of Augustine himself as he struggles to hear the voice of God under the noise and clatter of his ambitions, ego, and lusts. He reveals himself as a man of restless energy and strong emotions, which he describes in vivid, often hyperbolic terms. Thus he characterizes himself as in love with love, consumed with passion. "My love was returned and in secret I attained the joy that enchains. I was glad to be in bondage, tied with

troublesome chains, with the result that I was flogged with the red-hot iron rods of jealously, suspicion, fear, anger, and contention" (3.1.1). Elsewhere, writing of his sexual appetites, he says, "Fettered by the flesh's morbid impulse and lethal sweetness, I dragged my chain, but was afraid to be free of it" (6.12.21). Even the account of his conversion is marked by violent action. "I threw myself down somehow under a certain fig tree, and let my tears flow freely. Rivers streamed from my eyes" (8.12.28). He utters "wretched cries," wondering when his conversion will come. "As I was saying this and weeping in the bitter agony of my heart," he hears the voice of a child chanting, "Pick up and read, pick up and read" (8.12.29). Following this cue, he returns to where he has left a copy of *Romans*. "I *seized, opened, and read* in silence the first passage on which my eyes lit [*arripui, aperui et legi* in silentio capitulum, quo primum coniecti sunt oculi mei]" (8.12.29). There in silence he reads from *Romans* 13.13–14: "Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts" (8.12.29). Thereafter he is flooded with calm, his last doubts dispelled.

In the course of describing his own development, Augustine sketches a number of other characters, presented with brief but memorable anecdotes. His long-time friend Alypius had been a student of Augustine's in Thagaste and had himself traveled to Rome, seeking a career in the law, and was later present at Augustine's conversion. In one instance, Augustine recounts how Alypius had a violent aversion to gladiatorial shows, finding such spectacle cruel and murderous. Nevertheless he was once dragged to a show by some friends. Refusing to watch, he covered his eyes. "Would that he had blocked his ears as well!" Augustine writes (6.8.13). "A man fell in combat. A great roar from the entire crowd struck him with such vehemence that he was overcome with curiosity." Overcome, Alypius was soon on his feet, shouting with the rest, caught up in the blood lust. The anecdote provides significant illustration both of our vulnerability to the pressures of the outside world to inflame desires and pervert the will, and of the role of language and sound as the mediator of that outside world.

As part of the dialectical development within the *Confessions*, Augustine often deploys his characters in contrasting pairs. The ambitious but patient Monica stands in a contrasting but paired relationship with her ambitious but intemperate husband Patricus. Augustine's unnamed concubine pairs with his unnamed betrothed. His friend and former student Alypius pairs with another friend and former student, Nebridius, both of whom are instrumental in teaching him about chastity. His friend and philosophical mentor Simplicianus pairs with Victorinus. Of particular note is Augustine's pairing

of Ambrose, the Catholic bishop of Milan, with Faustus, the Manichaean bishop.

While still in Carthage, Augustine began to entertain serious doubts about Manichaean doctrine. He was assured that Faustus could resolve these problems. The encounter, however, proved disappointing.

> When he came, I found him gracious and pleasant with words. He said the things they usually say, but put it much more agreeably. But what could the most presentable waiter do for my thirst by offering precious cups? My ears were already satiated with this kind of talk, which did not seem better to me because more elegantly expressed. Fine style does not make something true, nor has a man a wise soul because he had a handsome face and well-chosen eloquence. (5.6.10)

Given Augustine's own career as a rhetorician, dedicated to eloquence, his disappointment is especially ironic. In contrast, he describes an early encounter with Ambrose. Known by the epithet, "the Honey Tongued Doctor," Ambrose, like Faustus, was also known for his eloquence. As with Faustus, Augustine wished to question Ambrose about his problems, but found that he was prevented because of the crowds around him. One day Augustine and his friends came upon Ambrose reading silently to himself. Although by no means unheard of, reading in silence was not typical, the usual practice being to read aloud or even chant the text (thus the name carrels given to library reading desks). "[H]e restored either his body with necessary food or his mind by reading. When he was reading," Augustine recalled, "his eyes ran over the page and his heart perceived the sense, but his voice and tongue were silent. . . . After sitting for a long time in silence (for who would dare to burden him in such intent concentration?) we used to go away" (6.3.3). The contrast between Ambrose and Faustus is evident. Faustus's words present an elegant noise to the ear, but are really a distraction from their lack of content, a beautiful but empty cup that will not quench his thirst. Ambrose's silent reading, on the other hand, are words full of meaning and sense, food for his mind. Reflecting on the pair, Augustine wrote, "Through Manichaean deceits Faustus wandered astray. Ambrose taught the sound doctrine of salvation" (5.13.23).

The most extended and thematically most significant character sketch centers on Augustine's mother, Monica. Augustine's early remarks about her are brief, focusing on her ambitions for her son, her concerns about the salvation of his soul and that he be baptized, and her warnings that he should not carry on with married women. All of this Augustine dismisses as "womanish

advice which I would have blushed to take the least notice of" (2.3.6). At other times, she emerges as a strong figure. Augustine lets slip that Monica had thrown him out of the house and banned him from the family table because of her revulsion at the "blasphemies of my error" (3.11.19), relenting only when reassured by a providential dream that he would eventually become a Christian. Later she followed him to Milan from Africa, enduring the dangerous voyage across the Mediterranean and the journey through Italy. Once in Milan, she quickly affiliated herself with Ambrose and his struggles with the Arian Justina, the mother of the Goth king and emperor Valentinian. This even included participating in a sit-down strike in the cathedral to prevent its occupation by the Arians on Easter 386 C.E.

Before describing what seems to be a joint mystical vision and her death in Book 9, Augustine reflects at some length on Monica's early years and personality. She had an abundance of high spirits, "which can overflow in playful impulses" (9.8.18). At an early stage she found that she could best achieve her ends by patience and gentleness. By this means she won over the heart of her mother-in-law, and by this means she controlled the often violent and unfaithful husband, Augustine's father Patricus. Because of this, Augustine asserts, there was no sign that Patricus ever beat his wife. By contrast, "many wives married to gentler husbands bore the marks of blows and suffered disfigurement to their faces" (9.9.19).

> She knew that an angry husband should not be opposed, not merely by anything she did, but even by a word. Once she saw that he had become calm and quiet, and that the occasion was opportune, she would explain the reason for her action, in case perhaps he had reacted without sufficient consideration. (9.9.19)

Her patience was predicated not on blind obedience, but on an awareness that it is not possible to reason with a person whose anger and vanity were in the way. The voice of reason can speak only in the context of calm and quiet when the noise of the will and ego has abated. In the end, Monica's efforts were rewarded by Patricus's deathbed conversion.

The importance of this account is not only what it reveals about Monica, but what it reveals about Augustine. The relationship between Patricus and Monica is not unlike that which Augustine describes between himself and God, the text inviting an interpretation of the relationship between husband and wife in allegorical terms. Repeatedly throughout the *Confessions* Augustine speaks of God as "deeply hidden yet most intimately present" (1.4.4), the silent but patient and steadfast presence, not unlike the attributes he cites in his mother. The sense of separation derives from Augustine's

turning away or refusing to hear. He speaks of his deafness to the silent voice because of his passions and willfulness, his ambitions and restlessness. Rather than listen to the inward voice of God, he has been focused on the external noise of the world. His conversion comes only when he turns inward, calms his ego, and listens to the silence. In this he resembles his father more closely than perhaps he cares to admit, the contempt for his father's ambitions an expression of self-contempt. Correspondingly, God, like Monica, waits calmly and silently, always at hand, for the passions to cool. Philosophically, it is a reminder of the problem that Socrates raises early in the *Republic*, namely, that reason works only with a person who is willing to listen, whose ego is open and receptive to reason. In other words, Augustine's conception of God, at least in terms of a personal relationship, is deeply informed by his understanding of his mother. Throughout his writings Augustine's references to the Virgin Mary are few and perfunctory, a nod to the creed but little more. In the *Confessions* his relationship with God is direct and unmediated. His conception of God is informed not by the masculine image of a distant fiery patriarch, the wrathful God of retribution, "the Old Man," but by the feminine image of the patient mother or wife, intimate, calmly waiting with her arms crossed. In this, neither God nor Monica should be seen as passive. They are passive only in the sense of not taking direct intervention, but not passive in the sense of submissive acceptance. Analogously, no one would ever consider the "passive resistance" of a Gandhi or Martin Luther King as passive in the latter sense. Paradoxically then, the stillness or *passiveness* that Augustine attributes to God and mother is an active stance of waiting for the calm and silence that opens the self-absorbed husband or son, making them receptive to the possibility of something beyond the ego. Such a vision is consistent with Augustine's Neoplatonic conception of God as the transcendent, immutable unity behind the Word and the world of appearance.

It is not surprising that Augustine's mystical experience of divine unity occurred after his conversion and baptism, and in the context of his reconciliation with his mother. In a house in Ostia, Augustine and Monica found themselves alone, leaning out a window together, overlooking a garden. "Alone with each other, we talked very intimately. Forgetting the past and reaching forward to what lies ahead" (9.10.23). The conversation led from a discussion of the eternal life of saints to the difference between the world of the bodily senses to the life of eternity. "Our minds were lifted up by an ardent affection towards eternal being itself," he records.

> Step by step we climbed beyond all corporeal objects and the heaven itself, where sun, moon, and stars shed light on the earth. We ascended even further

> by internal reflection and dialogue and wonder at your works, and we entered into our own minds. We moved up beyond them so as to attain to the region of inexhaustible abundance where you feed Israel eternally with truth for food. There life is the wisdom by which all creatures come into being, both things which were and which will be. But wisdom itself is not brought into being but is as it was and always will be. (9.10.24)

Positing the goal of God or ultimate wisdom as that which is transcendent, eternal, and unchanging, they then imagine an absolute stillness: "[if] the very soul itself is making no sound and is surpassing itself by no longer thinking about itself, if all dreams and visions in the imagination are excluded, if all language and every sign and everything transitory is silent" (9.10.25). From this stillness, Augustine describes the brief flash of mystical union with the divine that he and Monica experienced. "That is how it was when at that moment we extended our reach and in a flash of mental energy attained the eternal wisdom which abides beyond all things" (9.10.25). This description owes something to Plotinus's account of the ascent of the soul to the good: "One sees with one's self alone That alone [God], simple, single and pure [*autō menō autò mónon ídē eilikrinés*]" (Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.6.7.10) in terms of shock, wonder, and delight (1.6.7.15). While the Neoplatonism offers Augustine the means of interpreting his experience, situating it in a larger philosophical and religious context, the experience remains deeply personal.

THEMES AND MOTIFS

Edward Gibbon (1734–1794), English historian and author of the famous *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, complained that Augustine's learning was too often borrowed and his philosophical arguments too often his own. Henry Chadwick argues the opposite assessment, showing that many of Augustine's arguments were borrowed from Cicero, Plotinus, and Porphyry, but that his learning was his own (Chadwick 126). Because his training was in rhetoric and the liberal arts rather than formal philosophy, Augustine avoids many of the technical issues of logic, categories, and predication which fascinate professional philosophers and frustrate would-be students. In the *Confessions*, he prefers to confront the life-and-death issues that draw people to philosophy in the first place, equating the personal struggle of his soul with the general quest for wisdom, the individual in an allegorical representative of the human condition. Although not without qualification, he takes many of the arguments of the Neoplatonists as axiomatic. His philosophical commitments are most evident in his rhetorical strategies, especially

in his use of a series of antithetical themes and motifs. Thus, throughout, Augustine plays on the opposed relationship between the hidden and appearance, inwardness and outwardness, stability and instability, rest and restlessness, internal things and external things, silence and noise, and the figurative and the literal. These relate to analogous Platonic and Neoplatonic oppositions such as the one and the many, identity and difference, mind and body, ascent and descent, intellection and perception. Here I will focus on three philosophical themes prominent in Augustine's personal struggles in the *Confessions*: the problem of evil; the problem of the language (especially as it relates to interpretation and the boundaries between the figurative and the literal language and to the problem of interpretation); and the role of memory in creating the mind and time.

The need to understand the nature of evil is one of the impetuses driving Augustine's quest for wisdom. Throughout the *Confessions* he speaks of the sense of his own wickedness. Some of this behavior seems motivated by appetites, as with his sexual drives. But the case of the stolen pears raises a more disturbing problem, since the act was motivated not by need, but simply by willfulness for its own sake. Augustine was first drawn to Manichaeism because its dualistic cosmology offered a clear explanation, positing a struggle between real external forces of good and evil. Thus his ethical struggles had a metaphysical underpinning that gave them a meaning. On the other hand, its materialist cosmology made poor science, giving rise to other problems, especially with regard to making predictions in astronomy. At the same time, Augustine was initially dissuaded from Christianity because of the problem of evil. If instead of a Manichaean dualism, one explained the cosmos in terms of God, how can one explain evil? "Is not my God not only good but the supreme Good?" Augustine asks. "Why then have I the power to will evil and to reject good?" (7.3.5). In other words, if God has created everything, and if God is all good, how could God cause evil? How can what is all good create evil?

The solution to his problem derives from the Neoplatonism of Plotinus, which transformed Platonism into a theology, identifying God with the principle of unity. From the One (*hen*) emanates the Mind (*nous*), from the Mind emanates the soul (*psyche*), from the soul, nature (*phūsis*), and finally from nature, matter (*hylē*). Pure matter is a complete deficiency in order or measure. Reality exists as a hierarchy of being, from absolute form to formlessness, from perfection to imperfection. Ethically, Plotinus equates the good with form and order, evil with formlessness and chaos. In this way, evil is regarded not as a substance, but the absence or privation of order. "So then," writes Plotinus in the *Enneads*, "let unmeasure be the primary evil, and that

which is in a state of unmeasuredness be likeness or participation evil in a secondary sense, because its unmeasuredness is accidental. . . . Vice, which is ignorance and unmeasuredness in the soul, is evil secondarily, not absolute evil: just as virtue is not primarily good, but that which is made lie to or participates in it" (Plotinus 1.8.40–45). Wickedness relates to a self-assertiveness. Living beings sometimes incline toward what is better and sometimes what is worse, becoming habituated in their behavior. Evil *per se* is always present insofar as the created world is imperfect. Evil or wicked behavior relates to the individual soul's disposition within the hierarchy of being, whether toward perfection or away from it. Translating this into psychological terms, Augustine conceives evil in terms of willfulness. "I inquired what wickedness is; and I did not find a substance but a perversity of will twisted away from the highest substance, you O God" (7.16.22). This allowed him to reconcile the problem of a good God with the presence of evil. It also focused the ethical problem on the false desires of the will, and why it is inherently better to be virtuous than not.

An awareness of the limits of language run throughout the *Confessions,* not surprising in a professor of rhetoric, deeply cognizant of the possibility of language to move or manipulate people. Early in Book 1, he describes what is sometimes termed an "ostentation model" of language acquisition, a process of pointing and naming. "[W]hen people gave a name to an object and when, following the sound, they moved their body towards that object, I would see and retain the fact that the object received from them this sound which they pronounced when they intended to draw attention to it" (1.8.13). In the opening of his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein cites this passage as an example of a problematic model of languages, describing how the association of sounds and concepts is often ambiguous. Indeed, Augustine himself is not unaware of the problem. In *De magistro* he takes up the issue that language is not just about communication of information, as in the case of singing. He also notes that simply articulating verbal signs and pointing at the ostensible object or activity can lead to ambiguities. In pointing at a person walking quickly, am I communicating the concept of walking or hurrying? (*De magistro* 3.6). What is most important in the *Confessions*, however, is the arbitrary nature of the relationship between the sign and its underlying meaning. Corollary to this is the power of language to create compelling fictions that have no necessary connection to the world, thus his complaints about the power of poetry to move him to tears, the "word spinning" of Faustus and the Manichaeans, and the temptation of Alypius at the gladiatorial show. Even more fundamentally, language relates to Augustine's concern about *hearing* the silent voice of God and the reading and interpretation of

the scriptures and by extension the signification of the divine *Word*. He adds with dry irony, "[a]ll too frequently the poverty of human intelligence has plenty to say" (*Confessions* 12.1.1).

Augustine's play on the oppositions of silence and noise with the interior and exterior and with God and the world of senses, posits a conception of language that anticipates many modern views. Language is the only way we have for *talking about* things, but, by its very nature, language is unable to express anything about the divine, because it is bound to the realm of sense-perception. In naming things and creating categories, our language separates us from the very things it attempts to articulate. At best our attempts at knowing the divine are "either a knowing which is aware of what is not knowable or an ignorance based on knowledge" (*Confessions* 12.5.5), a version of the Socratic maxim that the truly wise person knows that he does not know. Yet as Socrates also says, the unexamined life is not worth living. In the late Platonic dialogue *Theaetetus*, Socrates reassures the struggling Theaetetus, "Never say it is beyond your power; it will not be so, if heaven wills and you take courage" (151d). Such a view also informs Augustine's model of language and its implicit theory of knowledge.

Augustine's views on language have significant implications when we turn to the interpretation of the scripture. First, our reading will necessarily always be figurative rather than literal. To assume a literal reading would be to equate the divine with the realm of sense perception. Second, all of our readings are necessarily tentative or provisional as a consequence of the limits of language and the limits of the interpreter. Too often we judge an interpretation to be valid because it is *our* interpretation. This in turn posits two more implications. First that there is no single right interpretation, and second, that some insight is to be found in the efforts of sincere authors who may have had different intentions from those discerned by the interpreter. Thus, for instance, the Platonic philosophers offer profound insight into Christianity, though that was not their concern. In words analogous in spirit to those of Socrates to Theaetetus, Augustine concludes, "[t]he understanding presupposed in my confessions is that if I have said what your minister [Moses in Genesis 1] meant, that is correct and the best interpretation; and that is the attempt I have to make. But if I have been unsuccessful in that endeavor, I pray nevertheless I may say what, occasioned by his words, your truth wished me to say" (12.32.43).

Memory (*anamnesis*) is central to the Platonic doctrine of forms. For Plato, understanding or illumination is a recollection of knowledge from an earlier existence, a doctrine that posits the independent existence of the soul, and by implication the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul. Augustine

affirms the difference between body and soul, but rejects both the idea and the implication that the soul has an independent existence. Nevertheless memory plays the crucial role in his theory of mind and knowledge, which he examines in an extended treatise in Book 10 of the *Confessions*. It begins with the prayer, "[m]ay I know you, who know me. May I 'know as I also am known'" (10.1.1). In other words, what does it mean to have knowledge of God outside of the fleeting mystical experience described at the end of Book 9? What is the object of my love of God? The answer is not in the specific things of the cosmos of which I am aware through sense-perception. "Truth says to me: 'Your God is not earth or heaven or any physical body.' The nature of that kind of being say this. They see it: nature is a physical mass, less in the part than in the whole" (10.7.10). Knowledge of God, then, relates to what I may understand about the whole. Here, for Augustine, the key is memory (*memoria*).

> I come to the fields and vast palaces of memory, where are the treasuries of innumerable images of all kinds of objects brought in by sense-perception. Hidden there is whatever we think about, a process which may increase or diminish or in some way alter the deliverance of the senses and what else has been deposited and placed on reserve and has not been swallowed up and buried in oblivion. (10.8.12)

Augustine identifies the memory with the mind itself, and as "the stomach of the mind" (10.14.21). All of my experiences of the world are saved in the memory, and so, correspondingly, all of my knowledge of the world is based on memory. His conception of memory is, however, larger than our modern one, entailing not merely recollection, but a combination of consciousness and unconsciousness. "It is I who remember, I who am mind" (10.16.25).

There are two kinds of memory, Augustine suggests, that of distinct particulars and that of general categories (10.7.13), a view not unlike that offered by modern scientists, trying to describe the function of the brain. When I recollect something, it is not the object itself, but a mental image that the earlier experience had imprinted in my mind. By this mechanism, Augustine argues that he can explain not only my knowledge of events and specific experiences, but things I have learned, imaginary things, and even mathematical knowledge. Even more significantly, memory is the key to the nature of time. Experientially, I am aware only of the present moment. Only the present moment has an actual existence. When I speak of knowing the past or future, I am really appealing to mental images drawn or projected from my memory. Time, in other words, has no real existence; it is created by the mind. In a move that later informs Marcel Proust, he suggests that when

we speak of the past and future, we are more properly speaking of a "present of things past," and a "present of things to come" (10.20.26).

Augustine explores the ontological implications of memory and time more fully in the *City of God* and *On the Trinity*. Here we might point to two themes. First, if time is created by mind / memory, then the ground of being is an eternal present. By this he proposes to explain God's timeless and unchanging character. Second, we have the possibility of inferring some knowledge about the form of reality, only in the totality of the experience that fills memory and from that grasping something about the divine unity. The *Confessions* itself is a sort of narrative present that characterizes Augustine as he *now* is, but a now composed of what he imagined he was and hopes he will be. His soul, mediated by his memory in the broad sense of the term, is built on the three aspects of time. "The present considering the past is the memory, the present considering the present is immediate awareness, the present considering the future is expectation" (11.20.26). In a deep sense this theme brings us back to the narrative structure of the *Confessions* itself, for the Augustine of the present, recalls the Augustine of the past, in hopes for the Augustine of the future.

SUBSEQUENT INFLUENCE

Augustine's influence on later thinkers and writers cannot be overstated. Henry Chadwick goes so far as to say that Augustine is the most influential philosopher of the ancient world after Plato and Aristotle. His prominent role in the development of Church doctrine is readily apparent. At the same time, his humanism, his psychological insight, and even his mystical side appealed to those who found the formal rigors of scholasticism at times arid. During the Reformation, both sides appealed to his writing in debates over predestination, grace, and Church authority. By contrast, the thinkers of the Enlightenment rejected many of the doctrines of Augustinianism, seeing in it the root of many of the controversies and much of the sectarian violence of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. They ridiculed Augustine's denial of human perfectibility. "How we have imported the reveries of an African!" sighed Voltaire, "sometimes Manichee, sometimes Christian, sometimes debauchee, sometimes devotee, sometimes tolerant, sometimes persecutor" (qtd. in Rist 1 [my translation]). Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*, different in tone and substance from Augustine, represents a direct response. Augustine's influence on philosophy is also readily apparent. Montaigne, Descartes, Malebranche, Arnauld, and Pascal most directly draw on Augustine. The early existentialist thinkers such as

Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard are deeply sympathetic to Augustine, while Friedrich Nietzsche is deeply hostile, finding fault with Augustine's psychology. Augustine reaches directly and indirectly into contemporary philosophy through Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), a seminal figure of Anglo-American philosophy, and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), the most influential figures in Continental philosophy. Wittgenstein, as we have already seen, is attracted to Augustine's examination of language. Heidegger looks at Augustine's treatment of being.

Augustine's influence on Western literature is extensive, profound, but subtle. Dante includes the person of Augustine among the theologians in the *Paradiso*, and the narrative structure of the *Confessions* and Augustine's psychology also informs the *Divine Comedy*. The humanists of the North European Renaissance, Thomas More, Erasmus of Rotterdam, and François Rabelais, were drawn to Augustine's background in eloquence and rhetoric, his attention to the liberal arts in the philosophical curriculum, his treatment of language, and in the importance he gave to the mystical or non-rational. However, probably the most important route of Augustine's transmission into literature is through the Italian poet and humanist Francesco Petrarca—Petrarch (1304–1374).

Petrarch, a lover of classical literature, and especially of Cicero, felt a lifelong kinship with Augustine. He composed a series of philosophical dialogues known as the *Secretum* on the model of the *Soliloquies*, imagining a series of interior conversations between himself and Augustine. His narrative, "The Ascent of Mt. Ventoux," explicitly echos Augustine's conversion experience. Having climbed the mountain, Petrarch first feels pride as he views the world at his feet and then shame for his pretensions, compelling him to take out his copy of the *Confessions* and read at random. But it is through Petrarch's poetry, especially the *Rime sparse*, his cycle of sonnets and canzoniere about his love for a lady known as Laura, that Augustinian psychology enters Western literature. Petrarch's *Rime* subtly shifts the concept of poetry to the interiority of the poet. The poet becomes the subject of the poem, his or her shifting states of mind, the tension between time and eternity, and the instability of the world. Laura may be the object in his poetry, but Petrarch and his vacillating emotions are the real subject. Transmitted through the Petrarch tradition, this Augustinian psychology directly and indirectly shapes much subsequent poetry from Shakespeare to the Modernists.

Trying to explain the decline and fall of Roman greatness in terms of the rise of Christianity to his eighteenth-century audience, Edward Gibbon sniffed that "[a]ccording to the judgment of the most impartial critics, the superficial learning of Augustin *[sic]* was confined to the Latin language,"

adding in a note that some modern critics would consider his lack of Greek as disqualifying him from expounding the Scriptures (2.601). To this he adds, "his style, though sometimes animated by the eloquence of passion, is usually clouded by false and affected rhetoric. But he possessed a strong, capacious, argumentative mind; he boldly sounded the dark abyss of grace, predestination, free-will, and original sin" (2.601). Perhaps faint praise, yet despite himself, even as he dismisses Augustine's doctrines, Gibbon acknowledges Augustine's boldness and passion, his willingness to confront the deepest mysteries of human existence.

Indeed it is just this boldness and passion, the ability to provoke thought, that makes the *Confessions* an enduring work of philosophical literature. Augustine's work is not merely the transition between ancient and medieval thought, but a bridge that shows the spiritual link between the ancient and the modern.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Augustine. *The Confessions*. Trans. Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

———. *Concerning the Teacher (De magistro) and on the Immortality of the Soul (De immortalitate animae)*. Trans. George G. Leckie. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1938.

———. *St. Augustine's Confessions with an English Translation*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960.

———. *Sermons. The Essential Augustine*. Ed. Vernon J. Bourke. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1974.

Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

Chadwick, Henry. *Augustine: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Curtius, Ernst Robert. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.

Durling, Robert M. "Platonism and Poetic Form: Augustine's *Confessions*." *Jewish Culture and the Hispanic World: Essays in Memory of Joseph H. Silverman*. Ed. Samuel G. Armistead and Mishael M. Caspi. Newark: Juan del la Cuesta, 2001.

Fitzgerald, Allan, ed. *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1999.

Gibbon, Edward. *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Abridged by D.M. Low. 3 vols. New York: Washington Square Press, 1962.

Gilson, Etienne. *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*. Trans. A.H.C. Downes. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1993.

Hadot, Pierre. *What is Ancient Philosophy?* Trans. Michael Chase. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002.

Knowles, David. *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*. 2nd ed. London: Longman Group, 1988.

McMahon, Robert. *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent: An Essay on the Literary Form of the Confessions*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989.

Monk, Ray. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*. New York: Penguin Books, 1990.

Paffenroth, Kim and Robert P. Kennedy, eds. *A Reader's Companion to Augustine's Confessions*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

Petrarch, Francis. *My Secret Book*. Trans. J.G. Nichols. London: Hesperus Press, 2002.

Plato. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.

Plotinus. *Plotinus*. Trans. A.H. Armstrong. 7 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Rist, John M. *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Stock, Brian. *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996.

3

Dante
The Divine Comedy
1321

> [S]uch things have been revealed to me that what I have written seems but straw.
>
> —Thomas Aquinas to Reginald of Priverno

> [T]here came to me a miraculous vision in which I saw things that made me resolve to say no more about this blessed one until I would be capable of writing about her in a nobler way.
>
> —Dante, *Vita Nuova*

The Divine Comedy is at once medieval and modern, both the masterpiece of a remote Middle Ages and one of the enduring works of philosophical literature. Dante firmly grounds his vision in the particulars of his own world, its sights and smells, its local politics, its sectarian disputes. Yet at the same time *The Divine Comedy*'s powerful imagery, its quest for unity, and the transformation of its hero resonates with modern readers. Paradoxically we are drawn both to the intricate clockwork of Dante's form and to the realism that transcends it. We are fascinated by the allegorical logic and the moral taxonomy, but moved by the naturalism, the attention to gesture and personality that make Dante's characters both memorable and recognizable. The power of *The Divine Comedy* as a work of philosophical literature has less to do with illustrating a specific philosophical system (though that is certainly important) than with its ability to capture a recognizable world that provokes us to question our own certainties, that challenges us to transform.

BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

The Italian poet Dante Alighieri is the most important writer of the Middle Ages, and stands with Homer, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Goethe as indisputably one of the most influential figures in Western literature. Many of the details of his life are conjecture, but we do know that he was born in the Tuscan city of Florence in May or June 1265. He was baptized in the Florentine parish of San Martino del Vescovo on March 26, 1266, in the Baptistery of San Giovanni, which he lovingly recalls in *Inferno* 19. His father, Alighiero di Bellincione, was a member of the minor aristocracy, though with no great wealth or power. Upon the death of his father, Dante became the head of the household, entering into public life. According to extant records, Dante was betrothed to Gemma Donati on January 9, 1277, marrying her in 1285. In 1287 the first of their four children was born. Given Dante's famous celebration of the lady Beatrice, one is tempted to recall the words of Andreas Capellanus from the *Art of Courtly Love* that "marriage is no real excuse for not loving." Between 1286 and 1289 Dante participated in two military engagements against Siena. While on campaign he may have spent some time in the university city of Bologna. During this time he also came to know the philosopher Brunetto Latini (1228–1295) and the poets Cino da Pistoia (c.1270–1336) and Guido Cavalcanti (c.1250–1300). Taking up poetry, Dante began to circulate *rime* among friends, who would in turn offer poetic replies. In one sonnet, he imagines them sailing in a magic ship with a group of lovely ladies ("Guido, i'vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io") (*Dante's Rime* 15). Cavalcanti, the leading advocate of a revolutionary poetic movement known as the *dolce stil novo* (sweet new style) quickly transformed Dante's style into something more natural and less mannered.

Dante's early introduction to philosophy is hard to ascertain. He may have become familiar with scholasticism through Remigio de 'Girolami, who taught at Santa Maria Novella in Florence and had studied under Thomas Aquinas in Paris. Among Dante's known mentors was the Florentine philosopher and rhetorician Brunetto Latini, whom Dante encounters in the realm of the Sodomites (*Inferno* 15.13–124). Brunetto, having returned from exile in France in 1267 with the triumph of the Guelphs, played an important role in subsequent Florentine public life. In France he had prepared his *Livres dou Tresor* (Treasure Books), an encyclopedic compendium on rhetoric, ethics, politics, history, and natural science written in French and meant for a general readership. In Italian he composed the fragmentary didactic poem *Il Tesoretto* (*The Little Treasure,* also referred to as the *Tesoro*),

an important influence on Dante. It is written in the tradition of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, Alain of Lille's *Complaint of Nature*, and Guillaume de Lorris's allegorical *Romance of the Rose*, each playing on the narrative frame of a dream-vision. The narrator of *Tesoretto* finds himself wandering lost in a "strange wood" near Roncevalles, beginning a journey of instruction initiated by Lady Nature, and leading him to the lands of Philosophy, Fortune, and Love, and eventually to Mount Olympus. At about this time there appeared two works often attributed to Dante, *Il Fiore* (*The Flower*), a series of 232 sonnets, and the narrative poem *Detto d'Amore* (*Tale of Love*). Both are based on the *Romance of the Rose* of Guillaume de Lorris and the later scholastic additions of Jean de Meun.

Dante was also influenced philosophically by his friend Guido Cavalcanti, known for his knowledge of natural philosophy rooted in the materialist cosmology of Epicurianism, which posits the death of the soul with the body. In the realm of the heretics (*Inferno* 10), Dante encounters Cavalcanti's father in a stone sarcophagus reserved for Epicureans, an ironic allusion to their souls remaining with their dead bodies. Cavalcanti's poetry was rooted in Averroism, which entered Europe through Siger of Brabant. Siger had drawn on the commentary of the Islamic Aristotelian Averroës (Ibn Rushd) to argue that individual humans have two souls, the intrinsic "sensitive" soul, and the intellective soul. The latter is an impersonal collective consciousness, shared by all people, the basis for universal concepts, but also eliminating free will from the individual. On the other hand, Aquinas, Siger's chief opponent at the University of Paris, argued that the individual soul is unified: "[T]here is no other substantial form in man besides the intellectual soul; and that the soul, as it virtually contains the sensitive and nutritive souls, so does it virtually contain all inferior forms, and itself alone does whatever the imperfect forms do in other things" (*Summa Theologica* 1.76.1). While Dante's account of the soul in the opening of the *Vita Nuova* and *Purgatorio* 25.61–66 is contrary to Siger's, he portrays him placed next to Aquinas among the wise in *Paradiso* 10, receiving his praise. Cavalcanti's famously difficult canzone, "Donna me prega" ("A lady asks me"), an Italian version of the so-called *trobar clus*, an obscure, hermetic style of writing derived from the Troubadours, hints at an Averroist conception of the soul. He imagines love as an external force, conceiving of beauty as something transcendent, acting through the lady. "[T]herefore, Love leads, who from her proceeds [dunqu'elli meno, che da lei procede]" (124). Dante's first significant work, the *Vita Nuova* (*New Life*), completed around 1295, traces his rejection of Cavalcanti's position, and the development of his own identity as an independent poet and thinker. Here he introduces the great theme of his life and poetic

vision, his love for the lady Beatrice. Given its importance to understanding the *Commedia,* I will examine the *Vita* in greater detail later.

To be eligible for political office, Dante was inscribed as a member of the Guild of Physicians and Apothecaries in 1295, inaugurating a tumultuous and often bitter career in Florentine and Italian politics. Here it is necessary to give some background to the situation in Italy at this time, since it plays such a prominent role in Dante's life and work. In broad terms politics in twelfth-century Italy was a complex intersection of national, regional, local disputes, and shifting alliances. At the outermost level, there was a long-standing dispute between the (German) Holy Roman emperors and the (Italian) popes for secular authority in Italy. After the death of Frederick II, the Hohenstaufen emperor (grandson of Frederick Barbarossa) in 1250, who had held court in Palermo since 1220, the struggle continued with his illegitimate son Manfred (whom Dante meets in *Purgatorio* 3), and the boy emperor Conradin. The papacy backed the French Charles d'Anjou, who broke the power of the Hohenstaufen at the battles of Benevento (1266), where Manfred was killed, and Tagliacozzo (1268), after which Conradin was executed. Many of the communes and cities of central and northern Italy took an anti-Imperialist stance, less from loyalty to the pope than from a desire for preservation of their own sovereignty. The names Guelph and Ghibelline, which dated back to an eleventh-century feud between the Bavarian Welf family and the Waiblingen, a Hohenstaufen stronghold in Germany, were taken as the battle cries respectively to the supporters of papal and imperial authority. In 1260 the Florentine Guelphs were defeated by the Ghibellines led by Farinata degli Uberti (*Inferno* 10) at the battle of Montaperti near Siena. In turn, the Ghibellines were defeated in 1269 and expelled from Florence. By the time Dante entered political life, the Guelph party had fragmented into the Whites, affiliated with the guilds (new money) and the general populace of Florence, and the Blacks, affiliated with the old patrician magnates.

Dante, a member of the White faction, was elected one of the six priors in the signoria of Florence. A brawl led to the exile of 15 aristocrats, including Guido Cavalcanti who subsequently died of malaria. The Black faction successfully appealed to pope Boniface VIII for help, who in turn put pressure on Florence through Charles of Valois. While Dante was on an embassy to Rome, Charles entered Florence to "restore order," and allowed Corso Donati and the Blacks to return and wreak havoc. The White faction was expelled, and Dante was exiled on trumped up charges. Refusing an offer of amnesty (if he paid a fine) he with 14 others were sentenced *in absentia* to death March 10, 1302, beginning his many years of wandering.

The exiled White Guelphs became *de facto* Ghibellines, though Dante eventually broke with them. Traveling to various Italian courts, he took up the cause of the empire, especially after Boniface's successor, Clement V moved the papacy to Avignon in southern France. Dante found temporary hope in the election of Henry VII as the emperor in 1308. Clement V had first supported the election of Henry, inviting him to be crowned in Rome. Opposition developed, Clement withdrew his support, and Henry died during a campaign against Naples in 1313. Dante repeatedly condemned Clement in the *Commedia,* "a lawless shepherd of even uglier deeds [than those of Boniface VIII]" (*Inferno* 19.83,84). Dante even has him damned by Saint Peter, the first pope (*Paradiso* 27.57–59). During this period, Dante began work on *De Monarchia,* a political treatise advocating the empire and defending the secular authority of the emperor. Reversing the position of Augustine in the *City of God,* Dante praises the idea of the pagan Roman empire, arguing for the importance of one universal secular rule to give order and direction to human purpose. He advocated that this secular power needed spiritual guidance, restoring a balance with the papacy. "Let Caesar, therefore, observe that reverence to Peter which a first-born son should observe to a father," Dante concludes in Book 3. *De Monarchia* is sometimes compared with *Defensor Pacis* (1324) by Marsilius of Padua and *Dialogus* (1338–1346) by William of Ockham.

Throughout his years of exile, Dante continued his literary work. Around 1303 he began work on the Latin treatise, *De vulgari eloquentia* (*Eloquence in the Vernacular*), a defense of the vernacular language instead of Latin as a fit medium for serious poetry. He also began work on the *Convivio* (*The Banquet*), though he set it aside around 1307 to concentrate on the composition of the *Inferno*. Written in Italian and perhaps inspired by Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, the *Convivio* continues the autobiographical manner of the *Vita Nuova*. Each book opens with a canzone (the "meat" served at the banquet table) followed by a series of philosophical compendia, summarizing human knowledge (the "bread"). These provide an allegorical gloss on the canzone, thereby underlining the philosophical weight of his vernacular poems. He explains that in seeking solace for the death of Beatrice, he turned to philosophy, discovering the beauties of Lady Philosophy. "I imagined it as having the form of a noble lady, and I could not imagine her with a bearing other than full of pity; consequently, my power to perceive truth found such delight in gazing on her that I could scarcely turn it elsewhere" (*Banquet* 66). Dante began work on the *Inferno* some time around 1304, finishing about 1309. Evidence suggests that he worked on the *Purgatorio* from about 1310 to 1316, and was already working on the *Paradiso* when he first made public the

completed canticles of the *Commedia,* dedicated to Can Grande della Scala in 1316. He completed the *Paradiso* in 1321. The *Commedia* was Dante's general title for the three canticles. The designation *divina* (divine) did not appear until the 1555 Venetian edition edited by Ludovico Dolce.

In 1310 Dante moved to Verona, living there until 1316 under the patronage of Can Grande. A Ghibelline victory at Montecatini in 1315 led Florence to offer another invitation of amnesty to its exiles on the condition that they pay a fine. Dante proudly rejected this offer as unworthy of "Dante's fair fame and honor" (*Latin Works,* 341). In 1318 he resettled in Ravenna, at the court of Guido Novello da Polenta, where he continued his literary efforts and performed various diplomatic duties. By this time his fame as a poet had begun to spread. Acknowledging Dante's achievements, but fundamentally missing the point, Giovanni del Virgilio, a professor at the University of Bologna, called on him to compose in Latin instead of Italian, arguing that it was the nobler language. Dante responded with two Latin eclogues amid an exchange of letters between 1319 and 1320. His last work after the completion of the *Paradiso* in 1321 was a brief scientific treatise, *Questio de aqua et terra.* He died in Ravenna on 13 or 14 September, 1321 at the age of fifty-six, and is buried next to Ravenna's Church of San Francisco. Belatedly, Florence installed a tomb for Dante in Santa Croce among those of its other famous citizens, including Michelangelo, Machiavelli, and Galileo; the tomb remains empty to this day. As Dante said of himself in the famous letter to Can Grande, he was "Florentine by birth, not by character [*florentinus natione non moribus*]" (*Latin Works* 343).

THE *VITA NUOVA*

Dante treats his major poetic works, the *Vita Nuova*, the *Convivio*, and the *Commedia*, as a sort of autobiographical continuum. Next to the *Commedia*, the *Vita Nuova* is his most important work, anticipating the major themes of the *Commedia* and serving as a sort of prologue. Part autobiography, part spiritual confession, and part treatise on poetry and courtly love, Dante called it his "Book of Memory." In it he comments on a selected series of sonnets and canzone on the mystery of love, and especially the stages of his love for Beatrice. Finding his prototypes in Ovid's *Remedia amoris* and the song books of Provence, which collected the poems of the troubadours accompanied by *vida* (lives of the poet) and *raza* (prose commentaries), Dante offers a sophisticated synthesis of the courtly love tradition, the *dulce stil nuovo*, and philosophy. The *Vita* is composed of 42 chapters, symmetrically arranging 31 poems in a tripartite structure. Part one (chapters 1–16) contains ten

poems (sonnets and ballade); part two (chapters 17–32), one canzone, four poems, one canzone, four poems, one canzone; part three (chapters 32–42), ten poems. The first and third parts pivot around the three canzone of the second part.

Part one centers on Dante's infatuation with Beatrice through a succession of encounters and dreams, first when he is nine, again when he is eighteen, and thereafter. He recounts the experience in terms of the conventions of *amour courtois* codified by Andreas Capellanus in the *Art of Courtly Love*. Like the conventional beloved he is wounded through the eyes by Love, by means of the sight of the lady, responding with pallor and palpitations. Hiding the true object of his feelings, he focuses his attentions on various "screen ladies." At this time he takes up poetry, taking his friend Guido Cavalcanti (1225–1276) as his guide. In Part two, Dante turns to a new theme, imagining the possibility of losing Beatrice, either through her spurning him or more profoundly through her death. Part two culminates in her actual death (28). Dante seeks new guidance in the poetry of Guido Guinizzelli. In the sonnet "Love and the gracious heart are a single thing [Amore e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa]" (30), Dante alludes directly to Guinizzelli's "Al cor gentil," the poetic manifesto of the *dulce stil nuovo*. Guinizzelli, unlike the French trouvers and Provençal troubadours of the courtly love tradition, conceived the lady more abstractly. Dante also finds sympathy with a group of "ladies who have intelligence of love [donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore]" (19). At this time he also includes essays on the courtly love tradition in poetry (25), and on the symbolism of the number nine (29). In Part three, Dante explores his grief, sharing it with a *donna gentile*, becoming his own poetic guide. The *Vita Nuova* concludes in a "miraculous vision [*mirabile visione*]," after which he resolves to say no more about Beatrice, "until I would be capable of writing about her in a nobler way" (42).

A number of critics point to similarities between the organization of the *Vita* and that of the typical medieval saint's life, organized around the life, death, and miracles of its subject. We can also relate it to the typological logic of the medieval cathedral which conjoins the Bible, history, and eschatology with architecture and art. In the typical architectural arrangement, the northern wall of the cathedral features windows and decorations related to the Old Testament. The eastern wall behind the sanctuary treats the life and passion of Christ, and the southern wall commemorates the lives of the saints, history since the Bible. The western wall, which closes a circle by joining the northern and the southern, presents visions of the Last Judgement, often punctuated by a rose window. Symbolically it joins the alpha of the beginning of time and history with the omega of the end.

Whether in the Michelangelo painting of the *Last Judgement* on the western wall of the Sistine Chapel, the western entrance to the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, or more relevantly, the ceiling mosaics in the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence, Christ sits in judgment; at his right the blessed proceed to salvation and at his left, the damned are dragged to Hell. In this regard Dante transforms his personal experience of love into the general condition of man, his autobiography an expression of world history. The three parts of the *Vita* are his cathedral in words: his early love of Beatrice a sort of Old Testament; the death of Beatrice, the passion of Christ; the subsequent ruminations, his saints' lives, all culminating in the *mirabile visione,* which most take to be the inspiration for the *Commedia,* his vision of the Last Judgment, from Hell to the mystic rose.

Transformation is the central theme of the *Vita Nuova*. In Part one, Dante's love for Beatrice focuses on the physical, what he knows through sense perception, an external Beatrice of gesture and appearance. As Dante becomes aware of the fragility of the image, he internalizes Beatrice. In Part two he begins to abstract from the sense image, to evoke her internally by means of his imagination. Instead of speaking *to her*, "dire *a lei*" (17), he begins to speak *about her*, "parlare *di lei*" (18). Finally, in Part three, as Dante shifts from the guidance and authority of Cavalcanti to Guinizzelli, and finally to himself, he conceives Beatrice through his intellect, free of the limits of perception. Anticipating the outcome of this transformation, he describes Beatrice in his prologue as "the *now* glorious lady *of my mind* [la gloriosa donna de la mia mente]" (2). This metamorphosis of Beatrice echoes the tripartite levels of human knowledge Thomas Aquinas describes (*Summa Theologica* 1.84.6–85.8). The person transformed, of course, is not Beatrice—she remains an irreducible "other"—but Dante himself and his understanding. Aquinas writes in the *Summa*, "since our mind is not born with actual knowledge but acquires it, to arrive at complete, distinct, determinate knowledge it must go through a stage in which its knowledge is incomplete, indistinct and confused" (1.85.2). At the end of the *Vita*, Dante realizes that his understanding of the true nature of Beatrice is inadequate. Commenting on the final sonnet, he notes, "my thought ascends into the nature of this lady to such a degree that my mind cannot grasp it" (*Vita* 41). He then describes having his *mirabile visione* followed by his refusal to write more about Beatrice until more "capable." Dante's silence underlines the philosophical core of both the *Vita* and the *Commedia*, an acknowledgment of the mystery at the center of divine creation, and the limits of the human mind coming to grips with it. Speaking of human knowledge of God, Thomas Aquinas writes in the *Summa*, "because we

cannot know what God is [*Quia de Deo scire non possumus quid sit*], we have no means for considering how God is, but rather how He is not" (1.3). Dante, like Aquinas, begins his quest for clarity by recognizing what is unknowable.

THE *COMMEDIA*

The narrative frame of *Vita Nuova* begins in the present, with Dante the narrator turning to the past to explain how he got to where he is, and how in turn that points to the future. It ends anticipating the closure of a circle, evoking the faith in a future transformation that will redeem the past and the present. The *Commedia* follows a similar circular movement. Plot, setting, and theme of Dante's journey are closely linked. In broad outline, the *Commedia* opens with Dante lost in a dark forest late on the evening of Maundy Thursday, April 7, 1300:

> When I had journeyed half of our life's way,
> I found myself with a shadowed forest,
> for I had lost the path that does not stray.
> [Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
> mi ritrovai per un selva oscura
> ché la diritta via era smarrita.] (*Inferno* 1.1–3)

Thirty-five years old, the halfway point of the average human life according to the Bible, Dante posits himself as both individual and everyman, representative of the human condition, lost and seeking salvation. As the sun begins to rise on Good Friday morning, Dante finds himself driven from his path by three wild animals, first a lion, then a leopard, and then a she-wolf. Running in panic, he is stopped only by the ghost of the ancient Roman poet Virgil, author of the Latin epic *Aeneid*. Virgil explains that he has been sent by Beatrice to guide Dante to safety. This journey of salvation will, however, require a harrowing trip through Hell, paralleling the experience of Christ between crucifixion and resurrection. Thus from Good Friday, April 8, 1300, to the morning of Easter Sunday, Dante will witness the torments of those eternally condemned to Hell, including Lucifer, or Satan, who thrashes in impotent rage, imprisoned from the waist down in a frozen lake formed by the tears of the damned at the center of the globe. In Dante's cosmology, this is the farthest point from God. On Easter morning Dante and Virgil emerge at the base of the mountain of Purgatory, in the southern hemisphere of the earth, in Dante's geography the polar opposite of Jerusalem in the northern

hemisphere. The two poets spend the next three days working their way up the terraces of the mountain, witnessing the penalties of the contrite souls being purged of their sins. On Thursday, April 14, they finally arrive at the Garden of Eden, located on the top. Here Beatrice appears in an elaborate allegorical pageant and Virgil quietly disappears. The reunion of Dante and Beatrice is the climax of the *Commedia*, the first time in the body of Dante's work where Beatrice speaks. "Look here! For I am Beatrice, I am! [*Guardaci ben! Ben son, ben son Beatrice*]" (*Purgatorio* 30.73). Their meeting is far from the joyous reunion Dante has been anticipating. Beatrice proceeds to castigate him at length for his faithlessness, perhaps a reference to Dante's flirtation with Lady Philosophy in the *Convivio*. Dante is reduced to tears. Finally reconciled, they prepare for the final stage of the pilgrimage. At noon on Thursday in the Garden of Eden (and midnight in Jerusalem on the opposite side of the globe), Dante looks up at the sun, and is translated with Beatrice into the spheres of Paradise. Since their travel is in synchronous motion with the earth, it remains constantly noon. Thus although Dante passes through psychological time, he transcends the physical time measured by astronomical motion. They travel through the successive spheres of the planets, the stars, primum mobile, and finally the empyrean, witnessing and speaking with the various orders of the blessed. Here Beatrice resumes her place with the Virgin Mary, and is replaced by a third and final guide, Bernard of Clairvaux, who directs Dante to a vision of God in the mystic rose. (Bernard's masterpiece *Sermons on the Song of Songs* was one of the most important medieval works on the spiritual interpretation of love.) Finally, although his cognitive faculties finally fail him, Dante nevertheless experiences a brief flash of insight, and feels the force of divine love.

> But then my mind was struck by light that flashed
> and, with this light, received what it had asked.
> Here force failed my high fantasy [*l'altra fantasia*]; but my
> desire and will were moved already—like
> a wheel revolving uniformly—by
> the Love that moves the sun and the other stars
> [*l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*]. (*Paradiso* 33.139–145)

Here the *Commedia* ends. It is still noon on Thursday, April 14, 1300, closing the cycle of a full week.

Theme, form, and symbolism are integrally connected. As with the *Vita*, the *Commedia* plays on number symbolism. It is divided into three canticles: the *Inferno*, the *Purgatorio*, and the *Paradiso*. The *Inferno* is composed of 34

cantos, or one prefatory canto followed by 33 more. The *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* each have 33 cantos, thus 1 + 33 + 33 + 33, adding up to 100, or the three yielding the one, or unity. In turn each of the canticles is subdivided into threes and sevens, relating variously to the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), the tripartite faculties of the soul (reason, will, appetites), the three holy virtues (faith, hope, and love), the three elements of repentance (contrition, confession, and satisfaction), the seven deadly sins, and so on.

Broadly speaking the *Inferno* centers thematically on the virtue of hope; in other words, Hell means the abandonment of hope, as Dante reads over the entrance: "*Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate* [Abandon every hope, you who enter here]" (*Inferno* 3.9). It is divided into three regions, each in turn subdivided into a succession of rings according to the increasing gravity of the sin. After a vestibule for the neutrals, those neither bad enough for Hell nor good enough for salvation, Dante and Virgil enter Limbo in Hell proper, the realm of the noble pagans whose only sin was not to be Christian. Here he sees Aristotle, "master of the men who know" (*Inferno* 4.131). Among the other philosophers he sees even Averroës, "of the great commentary" (*Inferno* 4.143). Virgil also introduces him to the "bella scola," the poets of antiquity, Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan, who invite Dante to join their numbers. The *Inferno* then turns first to the sins of incontinence (lust, gluttony, avariciousness and prodigality, wrath and sullenness), then to those of violence (heresy, murder, suicide, wastefulness, blasphemy, sodomy, and usury), and finally to those related to perversions of intellect. Dante subdivides this last group into fraud—the realm of the *Malbolge* or Evil Pouches—(panderers and seducers, flatterers, simonists, diviners, barrators, hypocrites, thieves, false counselors, schismatics, and falsifiers), and into treachery (against kin, homeland, guests, and benefactors). Dante's tripartite division follows Aquinas and Aristotle, relating sin to perversions of the three faculties of the soul (appetites, will, and intellect).

The *Purgatorio* treats love (charity), organized around the seven deadly sins, conceived as distortions of love. Thus pride, envy, and wrath are seen as perverted love; sloth is insufficient love; and avariciousness, gluttony, and lustfulness are excessive love. Dante's Purgatory is arranged into terraces, and like the *Inferno*, divided into three regions. The first is Ante-Purgatory, the realm of the late repentant, and including the excommunicates, the indolent, those who suffered violent deaths without last rites, and the valley of the rulers. Purgatory proper is divided into seven terraces, organized around the seven deadly sins. Where the sins in the *Inferno* become increasingly more serious as Dante descends, the sins treated in the *Purgatorio* become less serious as Dante ascends. Further, the penitent of the *Purgatorio* differ from

the damned of the *Inferno* in being repentant. Their sins have not entirely perverted their character and they, unlike the damned, are willing to confess their guilt. The mountain is topped by the Garden of Eden, the earthly paradise, where Dante will at long last be reunited with Beatrice. Symbolically the Garden of Eden signifies a return to human origins, and the limits of human reason without the intervention of divine grace (blessedness—thus the significance of the name Beatrice).

The *Paradiso* is about faith and Dante's struggle to understand God, transcending reason, time, and space. Dante organizes the third canticle according to the Ptolemaic model of the cosmos. The earth is at the center, then surrounded by the seven spheres of heaven—the Moon for the inconstant, Mercury for the active, Venus for the amorous, the Sun for the wise, Mars for the militant, Jupiter for the just, and Saturn for the contemplative. This is followed by the sphere of the Fixed Stars, the realm of the triumphant, then the primum mobile, the place of the Angelic Choirs, and finally the empyrean and the mystic rose, where Dante has his fleeting vision of God.

ALLEGORY AND MORAL LOGIC

Medieval writers took seriously Paul's injunction that "the word kills" (2 Cor. 3.6), that we must read the spirit of the Bible as well as the literal text. Thus theologians developed an allegorical system of exegesis, in order to bring out the spiritual sense of the Bible. Augustine, for instance, distinguished between meaning *in verbis* (in words) related to their common usage, and meaning *in facto* (in things). Aquinas makes a similar distinction when he says that things are signified by words, but also that things themselves (*res ipsas*) have a signification, because the workings of nature are an expression of divine order. In turn, words themselves have a dynamic character, inviting a mystical understanding. "The brief Word is, despite its size, living and powerful," declares Bernard of Clairvaux (qtd. in Evans 66). Bernard links this to the appropriateness or congruity (*congrue*) of the word to the concept. Dante elaborates a four-level system of interpretation in both the *Convivio* and the *Letter to Can Grande*, similar to that established by Gregory the Great. The text, Dante declares, is "polysemous" and in broad terms may be read on the literal (historical) level, and on the allegorical level. In turn the allegorical level may be subdivided into the figural (limited allegorical), the moral, and the anagogical (mystical or prophetic) levels. The literal focuses on the surface meaning of words. The figural level pertains to how the specific historical individual is also representative of humanity. The moral level expresses the moral order as related to Aquinas's characterization of things themselves

as an expression of the divine order. In other words, if nature expresses a moral order, and if our actions are a part of nature, then our actions are also an expression of that moral order. The analogical level takes the moral level a step further, relating our actions to the ultimate ends of the divine order and eschatology, and explaining how they pertain to our salvation and to divine purpose. Applying this system broadly, we might say that on the literal level, the *Commedia* is about an individual named Dante Alighieri who travels through the underworld on the Easter weekend in 1300. On the figural level, Dante's journey exemplifies the human search for meaning and salvation. On the moral level, what Dante witnesses shows how our actions are part of moral logic, that our punishments or purgations are appropriate to our sins, part of the structure of nature. Finally on the anagogical level, Dante sees how our actions point to certain ultimate outcomes, whether these be eternal suffering in Hell or salvation in heaven. In turn, they indicate God's ultimate ends signified by the sacrifice of Christ, which in turn points to the final closure of history. It is important to elaborate more on the figural and the moral, as these are of special relevance in linking Dante's philosophical position with his poetic practice.

In relatively simple allegories, such as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* or the medieval morality play, *Everyman*, the characters dramatize abstractions. The character Everyman not surprisingly represents all human beings, his friend Goods, material possessions. But in the *Commedia*, Dante's characters, while also representative of abstractions, are vividly individual. In the classic essay, "Figura," critic Erich Auerbach describes the poet's characters in terms of figural allegory or figuration. "The figural structure preserves the historical even while interpreting it as revelation; and must preserve it in order to interpret it" (68). Dante's guide, Virgil, is not merely the representation of reason; he is both Virgil the great Roman poet and the embodiment or figuration of earthly reason and wisdom, both a unique individual and the fulfillment of an unconditional truth. In Bernard of Clairvaux's terms, we might say that it is not incongruous to *figure* reason with Virgil. Similarly we could say that Francesca da Rimini (*Inferno* 5) is both a real, vividly realized individual, and the embodied fulfillment of unrepentant lust, or that it is not incongruous to use Brutus, Cassius, Judas, and ultimately Lucifer as the ultimate embodiments of the betrayers (*Inferno* 34). Auerbach argues that this figuration enters medieval literature through the Platonizing tendencies in Paul. Parallels can also be drawn with the Aristotelian-Aquinian doctrine of substance, which sees the universal as contained and manifested in the particular, the individual an instantiation of the more general substance.

Figuration is the key to Dante's realism. With an eye for telling gesture and detail, an ear for the revealing phrase, and a sympathy for the complexities of the human condition, he presents real characters in their full particularity as individuals, yet at the same time he selects and shapes them so that they exemplify a sort of ideal or archetype. Dante's skill is in balancing his narrative elements so that the symbolic weight never crushes his characters. They exemplify and figure their sin, yet typically Dante does not dwell on this fact in his exchanges with them. The conversation is often an occasion for talking about politics in Italy, the fate of some friend, or the character telling his or her story. Dante's encounter with Vanni Fucci in the ring of the thieves offers a good example (*Inferno* 29) of Dante's methods. Virgil questions a sinner, who then responds, "I am Vanni Fucci / beast; and the den that suited me—Pistoia" (*Inferno* 29.125, 126). The blunt syntax and line division reveals the brutal nature of Vanni Fucci, historically a violent partisan. He then describes his life of crime, plundering the sacristy of the church of San Zeno at Pistoia. Most of his words, however center on his prediction of trouble between the Blacks and Whites in Florence. Violent and defiant to the core of his being, he then makes an obscene gesture at God.

> When he had finished with his words, the thief
> raised high his fists and with both figs cocked and cried:
> "Take that, O God; I square them off for you!" (*Inferno* 25.1–3)

At this he is garotted by serpents that leap around his neck and bind his arms and legs. Dante then witnesses a metamorphosis as the forms of Vanni Fucci and the serpents blend into each other. Their exchange focused on the fate of the White faction in Florence, yet Vanni Fucci's way of talking and gestures, as well as the particulars of his punishment dramatize the violence of his personality, are indicative of his nature as a thief. It is a realistic portrait, yet exemplifies the true nature of the bestial thief.

Much of the fascination with Dante's vision derives from the moral level of the allegory. This is the key to the elaborate system of punishments for which the *Commedia* is famous. Underlying the moral level of allegory is the so-called logic of *contrapasso* (counter-suffering), a system of retribution that relates the punishment or purgation to the nature of the sin. There are two aspects at work. First, Dante borrows the concept and term *contrapasso* from Aquinas (*Summa Theologica* 2.2.61.4), who in turn is drawing on the biblical law of retaliation (*lex talionis*) which requires the manner of punishment to be similar to the crime ("an eye for an eye"). In the realm of the schismatics, Dante encounters the Provençal poet, Bertran de Born, carrying his severed

head like a lantern, who explains "in me one sees the laws of contrapasso" (*Inferno* 28.142). Second, the punishment is itself related to the sin, part of Aquinas's system of natural theology (*Summa Theologica* 1.2.87.4), coupled with Aristotle's conception of moral virtue (*Nichomachean Ethics*). That is, because the moral and natural order are related, the sin that violates the moral order also violates the natural order, resulting in a natural punishment. Sin, in other words, is its own punishment. Correspondingly, virtue is its own reward.

In the *Inferno*, because the sinners are unrepentant, the punishment is the literal embodiment of a metaphoric expression of the sin. Some are fairly conventional, if wryly ironic. The Murderers (*Inferno* 12), for instance, are in rivers of boiling blood, the Flatterers (*Inferno* 18) wallow in excrement, the Barrators (*Inferno* 21–23), those who take bribes for political favors, are in boiling tar (sticky fingers), and the Schismatics, those who create division and discord (*Inferno* 28), are dismembered. Some of the instances of *contrapasso* are famously complex. The souls of Suicides (*Inferno* 13) are condemned to inhabit twisted, gnarled, leafless thorn trees. Harpies fly among the trees, breaking branches, blood oozing from the breaks. In committing violence against themselves, the Suicides have sacrificed their lives, so are barren, unable to produce leaves or fruit; and because they have sacrificed their free will and moral agency, they have become as immobile as trees, helpless to protect themselves against the harpies. Among the most famous of Dante's punishments is that of the Simonists (*Inferno* 19). Simony is the especially medieval sin of selling church offices. The name alludes to Simon Magus (the magician) who tried to buy the secret of healing from the apostle Philip (*Acts* 8.9–14). The sinners are crammed headfirst into holes in the "livid rock," only their bare feet and legs protruding. In turn, the soles of their feet are scorched with tongues of fire. Because these churchmen preferred material goods to those of the spirit, they are literally oriented downward into matter, crammed like gold coins into a sack. The Pentecostal fire sears their feet instead of illuminating their spirits. As an added touch, when Dante approaches the hole reserved for simoniacal popes, its most recent inhabitant, Pope Nicholas III mistakes the hem of Dante's gown for that of Boniface VIII, a device that allows Dante to imagine the still-living Boniface in Hell.

For many modern readers the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* are more conventionally medieval in their allegory, and therefore less accessible than the *Inferno*. Dante also confronts the aesthetic problem that evil and suffering are easier to represent, more a part of our continued shared experience, than the divine. In the *Purgatorio*, as the souls are repentant, the punishments are

therapeutic, a purgation or balancing of their sins. As a result the *contrapasso* is expressed as the opposite of the sin. The Envious (*Purgatorio* 13) have their eyes sewn shut. While the unrepentant Gluttonous in the *Inferno* (6) wallow in filth like pigs, the Gluttonous in the *Purgatorio* (23) are starved; while the Lustful of the *Inferno* (5) are whipped about in a violent wind, the Lustful of *Purgatorio* (25–27) pass through a purging flame so hot that Dante imagines cooling himself in molten glass by way of contrast. The *Paradiso* is the realm of the blessed; *contrapasso,* therefore, does not apply. Rather, Dante celebrates the virtues in songs of praise and elaborate displays of light. In the Sphere of Mars (*Paradiso* 14), the spirits of the Church Militant form the flaming image of Christ on the cross. In the Sphere of Jupiter (*Paradiso* 20), the souls of the just rulers form the image of a giant eagle, the emblem of Rome and the empire.

COMEDY AND METAMORPHOSIS

Several times in the *Inferno* Dante speaks of his "comedy:" "by the lines / of this my comedy, reader, I swear" (*Inferno* 16.127, 128). In this particular context, the designation might be read as ironic understatement, since Dante is about to describe the horrific Geryon, part human face, part serpent, part scorpion, the allegorical embodiment of fraud. Nevertheless, Dante applies the term "comedy" to his work as a whole. "The title of the work is, 'Here begins the Comedy of Dante Alighieri, a Florentine by birth but not in character'" he writes in the *Letter to Can Grande* (*Latin Works* 349) . In defining his genre, he appeals the classical conventions that the word "tragedy" derives from "goat song" (*tragos oda*), beginning in tranquility but ending in horror or catastrophe, and that the word comedy derives from "rustic song" (*comos oda*), beginning in adversity, but ending in prosperity. In broad terms the *Commedia* certainly moves from adversity to prosperity as Dante travels from the dark forest to his final vision of God. He also says that tragedy uses an elevated style, while comedy uses "an unstudied and low style" (*Latin Works* 349). By this Dante has in mind the use of the vernacular, Italian instead of Latin. He also seems to have in mind the mixture of styles and levels of diction often associated with the Roman genre of satire (*satura*). Dante's language ranges from the formal to the colloquial, from the sublime to the scatological.

Comedy can also be understood in the way that Dante situates himself in relation to the classical epic tradition. Virgil's *Aeneid* represents the great masterpiece of the Roman epic. Virgil's voice is consistently pitched at a register of high tragic seriousness. Aeneas, the legendary founder of Rome, sac-

rifices personal happiness in the name of duty to the traditions of his father and the future of his son. Classicist Brooks Otis characterizes the *Aeneid* in terms of the tripartite tragedies of love, vocation, and war. Juxtaposed to Virgil's tragic-epic vision of the foundation of Rome within the classical Latin tradition is Ovid's comic-epic vision of the foundation of the empire, the *Metamorphoses*. Here Ovid recounts dozens of stories of transformations in order to trace the overarching transformation of the world from chaos to the apotheosis of the Emperor Augustus. Dante sees Ovid among the "*bella scola*" (*Inferno* 4.90). Even more dramatically, he triumphantly declares that his own description of the thief's transformation into a serpent's silences Ovid (*Inferno* 25.97–102). More important, however, is the way that metamorphosis counterposes tragedy as the moral essence of comedy.

The tragic confronts the crisis and the terrible consequences of two morally defensible positions in conflict with each other, an ethical antinomy. Often the most challenging problems in ethics involve resolving such paradoxes, deciding which rights and duties take precedence when they come into conflict with each other. It is exactly the struggle between "right and right" that makes the tragedy both powerful and disturbing. Were it a simple case of right *versus* wrong, the narrative would reduce from tragedy to melodrama. Then instead of a struggle to resolve the deepest moral conflicts, the narrative would focus on the problems of implementation, not *what* I should do, but *how* I should do. Aeneas has a moral right to seek happiness, but also moral obligations to his father and son. Metamorphosis, on the other hand, opens the possibility of transformation, the possibility of achieving some position beyond the tragic antinomy. Much of Ovid's treatment of metamorphosis is satirical in its mood and intent, directed against the solemnity of Virgil's tragic vision. But there is also a serious dimension to the idea of metamorphosis, and Dante draws out the moral implications.

The *Inferno* is about unchanging fixity, its *hopeless* inhabitants, so trapped by their desires and their egos that they are incapable of change. This is the realm of Dante's great tragic characters (and not surprisingly the characters most often borrowed by later artists): Paulo and Francesco, the doomed lovers (*Inferno* 5); Farinata degli Uberti, the indomitable Ghibelline warlord (*Inferno* 10); Ulysses (Odysseus), the false counselor, the counterpart to Virgil's Aeneas (*Inferno* 26); and Count Ugolino, the betrayer betrayed, eternally gnawing the skull and brains of his enemy, Archbishop Roggieri (*Inferno* 32). By contrast, the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* are about repentance and the possibility of change through the processes of confession, contrition, and satisfaction. Drawn by love, they set aside ambition and ego, opening themselves to a purifying metamorphosis.

Dante himself goes through a series of transformations, symbolized by his reconciliation with Beatrice, which marks a return to the being, but with a profound difference. The theme of metamorphosis can be seen on three levels, one, related to the evolution of Dante's politics; a second, related to the development of his poetic vision; and the third, related to the unfolding of his cognitive and spiritual faculties. In the *Inferno*, Dante meets many political allies and enemies, debating the state of party, city, nation, and the empire. In the *Paradiso*, he speaks to his noble ancestor Cacciaguida, who warns him of his future and the sorrows of exile.

> You are to know the bitter taste
> of others' bread, how salt it is, and know
> how hard a path it is for one who goes
> descending and ascending others' stairs. (*Paradiso* 17. 58–60)

He further admonishes Dante that, in political life, "your honor will / best kept if your party is your self" (*Paradiso* 17.68, 69). Although popes and politicians are praised or condemned throughout the *Paradiso*, Dante's political passions take on a new perspective. At a dramatic moment, Beatrice invites Dante to look back at the earth and see how far he has come, both physically and spiritually. "My eyes returned through all the seven spheres / and saw this globe in such a way that I / smiled at its scrawny image" (*Paradiso* 22.133–135).

As in the *Vita Nuova*, Dante passes by a succession of mentors and authorities (*auctores*) who mark the foundations and stages of his development as a poet. Thus he begins with the classical founders of Italian poetry, the Latin poets Virgil, Ovid, Horace, and Lucan. He also travels briefly with the Roman poet Statius (*Purgatorio* 20–22), who holds a privileged and transitional position as a Christian convert. In each canticle Dante meets representatives of his own artistic ancestry among the great Provençal poets. After the *Purgatorio*, Dante meets no more poets, except briefly with Folco, whose significance relates to the fact that he had become a Cistercian monk and later bishop of Toulouse. Thereafter, as in the *Vita*, Dante emerges as his own poet.

At the most fundamental level, Dante goes through a spiritual metamorphosis. He begins in darkness, lost and terrified in the forest, and ends illuminated by a flash of divine light, moved by divine love. The basic stages are marked by the succession of guides. Virgil as the embodiment of reason can take Dante only to the earthly paradise. Beatrice, as blessedness, is necessary to carry Dante to heaven. Finally, Bernard of Clairvaux, the mystical

interpreter of love, points out the final way. Shortly before Dante reaches the end of the universe and the limit of his cognitive faculties (when his "high fantasy [l'altra fantasia]" fails), he gazes at the eternal light. He is conscious both of the limits of his perception and the limits of his language to describe his experience. Nevertheless he is also cognizant that he himself is undergoing profound transformation.

> What little I recall is to be told,
> from this point on, in words more weak than those
> of one whose infant tongue still bathes at the breast.
> And not because more than one simple semblance
> was in the Living Light at which I gazed –
> for It is always what It was before –
> But through my sight, which as I gazed grew stronger,
> that sole appearance, even as I altered
> seemed to be changing. (*Paradiso* 33.106–114)

In the end, Dante will find himself back where he started, a great circle closed. Dante's end is now his new beginning. Before him will then be the great task of capturing the *mirabile visione*. The world and the divine order remain the same, yet now he sees it from a new perspective. In the words of T. S. Eliot, deeply influenced by Dante,

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time. (239–242)

SUBSEQUENT INFLUENCE

Volumes have been written on Dante's subsequent influence. As mentioned above, many of his (especially infernal) characters have found their way into opera, drama, poetry, fiction, paintings, and film, and the Dantesque (ironically, given the paradisaical goal of Dante's vision) evokes ready associations of gloom, suffering, and torment. Because of the limits of space, it must suffice here to note only a few tendencies.

Even while alive, Dante began to enjoy a reputation as the great poet of the Italian language, despite periodic hostility from the papacy. Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch) made a point of styling himself the heir to that tradition, even claiming that as a child he had been introduced to the poet, who had blessed him. In turn, Petrarch's protegé, Giovanni Boccaccio, author of the

Decameron, wrote the first biography of Dante. Petrarch was especially drawn to the Dante of the *Vita Nuova*, taking the sonnet and the conventions of love to their aesthetic conclusion, establishing the terms of the subsequent Renaissance lyric. The *Commedia* exercised a profound effect on the literary epic in Italy, including Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516) and Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581). In the English-speaking world, scattered references to the *Commedia* can be found in Chaucer, the Pearl Poet, and others, though Dante was primarily known as a political philosopher, the author of *De Monarchia*. There was little interest in the Catholic Dante in Protestant England and Europe after the Reformation, the chief exception being the cosmopolitan John Milton, whose *Paradise Lost* (1667) owes much to the *Commedia*.

Dante's general reception faired poorly during the Enlightenment outside of Italy. On one hand Dante's work seemed to embody an outmoded world view, on the other, the status of the literary epic had begun to wane with the rise of the novel. Voltaire dismissed the *Commedia* as a work of "hidden divinity," relegating it to the "museums of the bizarre" (Voltaire 312). Horace Walpole, the creator of the Gothic novel, famously rejected Dante as "extravagant, absurd, disgusting, in short a Methodist parson in Bedlam" (qtd. in Cooksey 188). The complete *Commedia* was not translated into English until Henry Boyd's 1802 version, and only in 1814 did Henry Francis Cary produce a reasonably accurate translation for the reading public. It was with Romanticism that Dante's reputation began to revive and thrive, a condition that continues to this day. Focusing on the alienated individual in quest of meaning rather than the Catholic philosopher, the Romantics and the Victorians perceived a sympathetic figure in Dante, a man like themselves searching for the unity of art, religion, and science in a modern world in which these seemed at odds with each other. The nineteenth century saw some 40 English translations into print, and in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries Dante's popularity grew to its highest level, with some 50 more translations and numerous references and allusions in such eminent Victorians as Tennyson, Browning, and of course Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and such Modernists as William Butler Yeats, Ezra Pound, and T.S. Eliot. James Joyce's *Ulysses* owes as much to the *Commedia* as to the *Odyssey*. Dante has even found his way into modern popular culture. John Clellon Holmes's beat classic, *Go: A Novel* (1952), explicitly references the *Inferno*, as does Amiri Baraka's (LeRoi Jones's) *The System of Dante's Hell* (1963). Even more explicit are such recent additions as Nick Tosches's *In the Hand of Dante* (2002), Matthew Pearl's *The Dante Club* (2003), Kimberley Burton Heuston's *Dante's Daughter* (2003), sci-fi writer Dan Simmons's short story,

"Vanni Fucci is alive and well and living in Hell," reprinted in his *Prayer to Broken Stones* (1990), and Gary B. Panter's graphic novel, *Jimbo in Purgatory* (2001). After 700 years Dante remains as current as ever.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Aquinas, Thomas. *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*. Ed. Anton C. Pegis. 2 vols. New York: Random House, 1945.

Auerbach, Erich. *Dante: Poet of the Secular World*. Trans. Ralph Manheim. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

———. *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature: Six Essays*. Glaucester: Peter Smith, 1973.

Bemrose, Stephen. *A New Life of Dante*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000.

Capellanus, Andreas. *The Art of Courtly Love*. Trans. John Jay Parry. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.

Cavalcanti, Guido. *The Complete Poems*. Trans. Marc Cirigliano. New York: Italica Press, 1992.

Dante Alighieri. *The Banquet*. Trans. Christopher Ryan. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989.

———. *Dante's Rime*. Trans. Patrick S. Diehl. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

———. *Inferno*. Trans. Allen Mandelbaum. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

———. *The Latin Works of Dante*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1969

———. *Paradiso*. Trans. Allen Mandelbaum. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

———. *Purgatorio*. Trans. Allen Mandelbaum. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

———. *Tutte le opere*. Ed. Luigi Blasucci. Florence: Sansoni Editore, 1965.

———. *Vita Nuova*. Trans. Mark Musa. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973.

Cooksey, Thomas L. "The Central Man of the World: The Victorian Myth of Dante." *Studies in Medievalism IV*. Ed. Leslie J. Workman. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1992. 187–201.

Davies, Brian. *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

Dronke, Peter. *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Eliot, T.S. *Four Quartets*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1971.

Evans, G.R. *Bernard of Clairvaux*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Freccero, John. *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*. Ed. Rachel Jacoff. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Gilson, Etienne. *Dante and Philosophy*. Trans. David Moore. Glaucester: Peter Smith, 1968.

Hollander, Robert. *Dante: A Life in Works*. New Haven: Yale University, 2001.

Jacoff, Rachel, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Knowles, David. *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*. Ed. D.E. Luscombe and C.N.L. Brooke. 2nd ed. London: Longman, 1988.

Lansing, Richard, ed. *The Dante Encyclopedia*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000.

Otis, Brooks. *Virgil: A Study of Civilized Poetry*. Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1995.

Pieper, Josef. *Scholasticism: Personalities and Problems of Medieval Philosophy*. Trans. Richard and Clara Winston. South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine Press, 2001.

———. *The Silence of St. Thomas*. Trans. John Murray and Daniel O'Connor. South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 1999.

Quinones, Ricardo J. *Dante Alighieri*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979.

Voltaire. *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*. Ed. Louis Moland. Vol 18. Paris: Garnier, 1877–1885.

4

Sir Thomas More
Utopia
1516

> Now since you've not fully satisfied by the answers of the wise [*saiges*], take counsel of some fool [*fol*].
>
> —François Rabelais, *Le Triers Livre*

> The peace of the political community [*civitatis ordinata*] is an ordered harmony of authority and obedience between citizens. The peace of the heavenly City [*caelistis civitatis*] lies in a perfectly ordered and harmonious communion of those who find their joy in God and in one another in God. Peace, in its final sense, is the calm that comes of order.
>
> —Saint Augustine, *City of God*

Erasmus of Rotterdam described Sir Thomas More as "a man of all hours [*omnium horarum*]," subsequently the basis for Richard Whittinton's often quoted characterization of More as "a man for all seasons." Both Erasmus and Whittinton allude to More's humor and affability, his wit and playfulness, his desire to be agreeable while observing from a bemused distance. At the same time their words point to More's carefully constructed public persona, a chameleon surface that sometimes leaves us unsure where he stands, underlining the subversive quality of his irony. William Tyndale, a target of More's wrath, called him "that gleering fox" (qtd. in *Utopia and Other Essential Writings* 12). The uncertainty or instability of appearance is a central theme throughout More's life and work. As one of his characters says, "Ye use to look so sadly when ye mean merrily, that many times men doubt whether ye speak in sport, when ye mean good earnest" (qtd. in *Utopia and Other Essential Writings* 16), a characterization often applied to More himself. Similarly, in *Utopia*, he

describes a man who liked to "play the fool [*imitari morionem*], and did it in such a way that you could hardly tell him from the real thing" (*Utopia: Latin* 77). Perhaps taking a hint from Erasmus's *Encomium Moriae*, which puns on More's name and the Greek for folly (*moria*), More's fool leaves us guessing.

This complex interplay of irony and identities, the instability of appearances, is at the heart of More's masterpiece, *Utopia*, whose title plays on the Greek, signifying either "no-place" (*u-topos*) or "happy-place" (*eu-topos*), and is recounted ostensibly by a traveler named Raphael Hythloday, whose name means something like "peddler of nonsense," from the Greek *hythlos*—"nonsense"—and *daiein*—"to distribute." More casts us into a hall of mirrors in which the images of ourselves and the world are reflected and re-reflected, disconcerting our self-perception, provoking frequent double takes, and making us laugh at our distorted features. While More did not invent the concept of utopia (speeches praising ideal cities were a staple of classical rhetoric); he coined the term and established the pattern for all subsequent utopian and dystopian fictions. Because of its playful power to unbalance and destabilize the *status quo*, More's own *Utopia* remains among the best, asking questions and raising issues that remain strikingly current, even after five hundred years.

BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Sir Thomas More's life and literary career fall broadly into three phases. The first phase, 1477 to about 1516, traces his education, early career, and involvement in humanist circles, and includes the composition of *Utopia* and the other great humanist works. The second phase, 1516 to 1532, centers on More's royal service, and includes his attacks on Martin Luther, William Tyndale, and his other polemical books. The third phase, 1532 until his death, relates to his trials and imprisonment. The productions of this phase are devotional in character, and include the so-called Tower works, written by More while confined in the Tower of London.

Thomas More was born in London, February 7, 1477 or 1478, the son of John More, a prosperous lawyer. More's early years saw the turbulent collapse of the Yorkist dynasty in England. He was about six when the twelve-year-old boy king Edward V was imprisoned and presumably murdered. He was about eight when Richard III went to his death at Bosworth Field, leading to the ascent of Henry VII and the institution of the Tudor reign. More received his grammar school education at St. Anthony's School, London, studying Latin composition under John Holt. When twelve, he became a page in the household of John Morton, Lord Chancellor for Henry VII and Archbishop of Canterbury. Morton, who was created cardinal in 1493, was an authority

in canon law and an astute politician who had played a significant role in the overthrow of Richard, providing More an important political education. Under Morton's patronage, More attended Canterbury College, Oxford, from 1492, the year that Columbus reached the new world, to 1494. At Oxford he may first have come under the influence of the leading English humanists, especially William Grocyn (1446?–1519), who taught Greek; Thomas Linacre (1460–1524), who had studied in Florence under Angelo Poliziano at the invitation of Lorenzo de'Medici, and later founded the Royal College of Physicians; and John Colet (1467?–1519). Inspired by Linacre, Colet had traveled to Paris where he met Erasmus, and then to Italy (1493–1496) where he studied philosophy and theology, corresponding with Marcello Ficino and Pico della Mirandola. Returning with the exegetical methods of Italian humanism, he delivered a series of influential lectures on the Epistles of St. Paul, treating 1 Corinthians in moral and historical terms, centered on the person of Paul, rather than the allegorical approach of medieval scholasticism. He inspired and influenced Erasmus, More, and William Tyndale. Later dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, his public lectures and sermons, delivered in English, attracted as many as 20,000 auditors at a time.

While the young More was drawn both to the university life and priestly vocation, he bowed to paternal pressure and returned to London in 1494, reading for law at the Inns of Court. Amid his legal studies, More tested his vocation, living from about 1500 to 1504 with the Carthusian monks at the London Charterhouse and observing their discipline in a lay capacity. At this time he also began the practice of wearing a hair shirt as a part of bodily discipline. During this period, More also became active in humanist circles, meeting Desiderius Erasmus in 1499, who had come to England on Colet's invitation. This was the start of an important friendship. About 33-years-old, Erasmus was himself at the threshold of his career as one of the leading figures in Renaissance letters, and a moderate voice during the Reformation. Also during these years, as part of his scholarly calling, More delivered a series of lectures at Grocyn's church, speaking on St. Augustine's *City of God*. Colet judged that England had many distinguished intellects, but that More was the only true genius.

Acknowledging demands of his bourgeoning legal practice and political career, as well as the call of his senses, More finally turned his back on the priesthood in 1504, marrying Jane Colt. Erasmus quipped in a letter to Ulrich von Hutten, that More, "determined to be a chaste husband rather than a lewd priest" (*Utopia and Other Essential Writings* 290). Alistair Fox speculates that not a little of More's later antipathy to Martin Luther relates to Luther's remaining a priest even after marrying. More and his wife had four children,

Margaret, his favorite (1505), Elizabeth (1506), Cecily (1507), and John (1509). The 23-year-old Jane died in the summer of 1511. Six weeks later, More married Alice Middleton, a well-to-do widow, six years his senior.

More's early writings show the range of his interests and talents. In addition to assorted English poems and Latin epigrams, he composed *A Merry Jest*, an English fabliau, dated around 1503. Working with Erasmus, he prepared Latin translations of some of the Greek dialogues of Lucian (1506), and an English translation of the *Lyfe* [sic] *of John Picus Earle of Mirandulas* (1510). More recognized in the Italian humanist parallels with himself, as a man struggling to reconcile a strong spiritual vocation with an equally strong scholarly avocation. Like More, Pico even "gave alms of his own body," scourging himself (More, *English Poems* 64). Aside from *Utopia*, the most important of More's works to come out of this period is the *History of King Richard III*. Many scholars regard this as the first masterpiece of English historiography. Based on classical models, especially Thucydides with its long set speeches, More's *History* draws on accounts of Richard he gathered at the court of Cardinal Morton, from his own father and others, to create the famous image of Richard as the ranting crook-backed tyrant. This became the basis for the villain of Shakespeare's early history plays. In his characterization of Richard, More is especially struck by the precariousness of appearance, the discrepancy between the public persona and the inner self. "[Richard] was close and secret, a deep dissembler," More writes, "lowly of countenance, arrogant of heart, outwardly companionable where he inwardly hated, not letting [hesitating] to kiss whom he thought to kill" (*Utopia and Other Essential Writings* 171).

More's abilities as a lawyer and orator led him to political office. According to his first biographer, son-in-law William Roper (husband of favorite daughter Margaret), More first entered Parliament in 1504. By 1510 he represented the City of London, and was also appointed to the offices of a city judge and Undersheriff of London. From May to October 1515, he traveled to the Low Countries as part of a royal trade commission. On this trip he established himself fully in the larger circles of European humanism, renewing his ties with Erasmus and forming friendships with Jerome Busleyden and Peter Giles. Giles, city clerk of Antwerp, was a man after More's heart, combining a love of classical learning with a busy practical career. Enjoying his leisure at Antwerp, More began work on what would eventually become Book Two of *Utopia*, which probably found its seed in the conversations between More and Giles.

Cardinal Wolsey, becoming Lord Chancellor to Henry VIII in 1515, recognized More's abilities and invited him to enter royal service. Much

of the debate rehearsed in Book One of *Utopia* about the limited prospects of a humanist as a royal counselor probably reflects More's ambivalence about such a move. Nevertheless, he accepted, serving in various capacities as secretary to Wolsey, official orator for the king, and ambassador on various embassies, including the famous 1530 Field of the Cloth of Gold meeting between Henry and François I of France. As theological and legal advisor, he wrote *Responsio ad Lutherum* (1523), a reply to Martin Luther's attack on Henry VIII's *Defense of the Seven Sacraments*. More's success as a polemicist led to his being licensed in 1528 by Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London, to read and respond to heretical writings, especially the works of William Tyndale, Simon Fish, and early English Protestants. This activity produced seven works, the most important including *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* (1529), *Confrontation of Tyndale's Answer* (1532, 1533), *Apology of Sir Thomas More, Knight* (1533), and *Debellation of Salem and Bizance* (1533). Increasingly More's polemical books are futile struggles as much directed against the tide of change sweeping England with the rise of Protestantism and the Crown's breach with Rome, an expression of helplessness and rage.

The crisis confronting More and England centered on the king's "Great Matter," Henry's desire to divorce his wife, the Spanish Catherine of Aragon. Wolsey had schemed to achieve Henry's will, but was foiled by the complexities of European politics and the Spanish king's influence on the pope. Stalemated, the disgraced Wolsey fell from power, and was replaced by More as Lord Chancellor on October 25, 1529. Wolsey died November 29, 1530, on his way to prison. Unsympathetic to the divorce and the efforts of the so-called "Long" or "Reformation Parliament" (1529–1536), More buried himself in his official duties, hearing some 4,000 cases in the chancery, and continuing his war against heresy and heretics. He was instrumental in the eventual arrest (1535) and execution (1536) of Tyndale in Antwerp. When the clergy submitted to the king, May 15, 1532, thereby severing ties with Rome, More resigned the chancellorship and retired to his home in Chelsea, pleading poor health. Later, responding to the coronation of Henry's new wife, Anne Boleyn, More quipped bitterly that although "he might be devoured, he would never be deflowered" (Roper 230).

Among the books that More published during this period, the *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* retains his wit, though his sarcasm has become bitter. Increasingly his polemical books are more violent in their invective, calling for the burning of heretics, and displaying a thoroughness that approaches obsession. More seems concerned not merely with defeating his opponents, but destroying them word by word. The results are often tedious and uncomfortable to read. Nevertheless, several themes are relevant to understanding

Utopia. In the *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, More offers reserved support for the translation of the Bible into English, noting that its original languages were once vernaculars. Much in the scriptures is accessible as part of spiritual devotion. The danger arises when people without sufficient training in languages, history, and doctrine attempt interpretation or enter into disputation. "[St. Jerome] showeth plainly that they shall have evil proof [fall into error] therein that will reckon themselves to understand it by themselves with a reader. For it is a thing that requireth good help, and long time, and a whole mind given greatly thereto" (*Utopia and Other Essential Writings* 202). Even more dangerous is the way that the Bible may be distorted or even misappropriated. "And there, when the wine were in and the wit out, would they take upon them with foolish words and blasphemy to handle Holy Scripture in more homely manner than a song of Robin Hood" (*Utopia and Other Essential Writings* 203). Languages are complex, and simple word-for-word correspondences between languages are rare. As a result, translation is also interpretation. In his *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, responding to Tyndale's 1531 book *Answer Unto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue* [*Concerning Heresies*], More condemns Tyndale's translation of the New Testament as ideologically slanted, seemingly factoring the institution of the Church out of equation. Thus, for instance, he complains that Tyndale translates *ecclesia* as *congregation* rather than *church*; that he uses *repent* rather than *do penance*, *secret* rather than *sacrament*. (Today about 85 percent of Tyndale's translation survives in the King James version of the Bible.) For More, however, there is a hierarchy related to ability and function. Citing the authority of St. Paul, he declares "God hath by his Holy Spirit so instituted and ordained the Church that he will have some readers, and some hearers, some teachers, and some learners—we do plainly pervert and turn upside down the right order of Christ's Church when the one part meddelth with the other's office" (*Utopia and Other Essential Writings* 202). His comments are also informed by Plato's *Republic*, which attributed injustice to "meddling [*polupragmosúnē*]" by people into realms where they were not competent (Plato, *Republic* 434b, c).

Beneath More's criticism is one of the profound fracture lines of the Reformation, one of the fundamental differences between Catholics and Protestants. How does the Bible receive its authority? For More, echoing St. Augustine and Catholic doctrine, the Bible receives its legitimacy and authority from the Church. It was the Church that represented the mystical body of Christ, the extension and continuity of Christ through time and space. It was church councils that had determined which books were canonical and which were apocryphal; it was the Church that authorized interpretations, determining which were orthodox and which heretical. For Martin

Luther, Tyndale, and the Protestants, the relationship between the Bible and Church is reversed. For them the Gospels are the most authentic embodiment of Christ. It is the Bible that authorizes and legitimizes the Church. What is important for them is the direct relationship between the inner spirit of the individual and the inner spirit of the Biblical text, a one-to-one relationship between man and God without the mediation of an institution. For More the humanist, language is unstable; texts are subject to myriad interpretations, the surface of meaning shifts with context. It is only the collective wisdom of the Church that stabilizers the text and authorizes the interpretation. For Reformers such as Luther and Tyndale, also influenced by humanism, the Church corrupted the word, distorting its meaning with interpretations that served the power interests of the papacy. More compared the Church to Noah's ark, containing both clean and dirty creatures, but affirmed the goodness of the vessel for the salvation of the whole. Luther saw it as the Whore of Babylon, and therefore refocused salvation on the individual and divine grace.

Because of his international reputation, More's assent to Henry's marriage was politically important. Thomas Cromwell, who had risen in Wolsey's service and was now Henry's minister, took the lead in pressuring More, implicating him with treasonable activities. Finally on April 12, 1534, More was summoned to Lambeth Palace to swear to the Act of Succession, which granted the succession of the throne to any children by Henry and Anne, and to the Oath of Supremacy, which declared Henry supreme head of the Church of England. While accepting the succession, he refused to take the oath, though he also refused to give his reasons aside from matters of conscience, thus temporarily parrying a charge of treason. As a commoner, More faced the prospect of being drawn and quartered for treason, an horrific form of execution that involved a combination of castration, hanging, disembowelment, burning, and finally dismemberment. The Carthusian monks, with whom More had once lived at the London Charterhouse, endured such a fate for rejecting the Oath of Supremacy. More probably vents his own anxieties when the character Vincent in *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*, anticipating the brutality of the Turkish sultan, says, "There falleth so continually before the eyes of our heart a fearful imagination of this terrible thing. [We fear] his mighty strength and power; his high malice and hatred; and his incomparable cruelty" (8). More's refusal to take the Oath of Supremacy underlines two themes: his rejection of Henry's usurpation of power over the Church in England, but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, More's unwillingness to dissemble, to publically affirm something he did not believe. Such an act would have put greater value on the world of appearance, betraying the integrity of the inner self.

More and John Fisher, a cardinal and Bishop of Rochester, were committed to the Tower of London on April 17. Then, until July, More was interrogated under increasingly harsh conditions by Cromwell and Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, who later played the leading role in the liturgical transformation of the Church of England, introducing the Bible in English and revising the *Book of Common Prayer* (1552). Finally brought to trial on July 1, More was charged with treason on the perjured evidence of Sir Richard Rich, convicted, and condemned to death, the sentence commuted to simple beheading. He was executed six days later, July 6, 1535. To the end, More preserved his wit. Requiring help onto the scaffold, he told the Lieutenant of the Tower, "I pray you, Master Lieutenant, see me safe up, and for my coming down, let me shift for myself." Thereafter he said that he "died the king's good servant but God's first."

Among More's final works are *A Treatise on the Passion*, probably completed just before his imprisonment, and *De tristitia Christi* and *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, both written while confined in the Tower. The *Treatise* and *De tristitia* meditate on the suffering and doubts of Christ, and reflect More's own anguish. While also a meditation of death and suffering, *A Dialogue of Comfort* is something of a return of the equanimity and wit of the earlier More. The work is an extended fiction in the form of a series of conversations between the young Vincent and his ailing uncle Anthony, from whom he seeks solace. Set in Budapest, Hungary, in 1528, after the defeat of the King of Hungary by the Turks, it seems that Budapest will soon fall to the sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent. On the level of political and autobiographical allegory, Anthony is More himself, while Vincent is his daughter Margaret Roper. The brutal Grand Turk is Henry VIII. The dialogue features many humorous fables and anecdotes, including a number about a shrewish woman, whom many readers identify as More's wife, Alice. Throughout the *Dialogue*, Anthony explains that tribulation is not a punishment, but a divine gift, a medicine that focuses us on prayer and spiritual matters. In the end he observes that the Turk is "but a shadow" (237). We should not concentrate on appearances, on the specific worldly manifestation of the devil, but on the underlying moral and spiritual struggle. Comparing the devil to a ramping lion, perhaps a sly allusion to the heraldic lion on the royal arms, Anthony declares, "Therefore when he roareth out upon us by the threats of mortal men, let us tell him that with our inward eye we see him well enough, and intend to stand and fight with him even hand to hand." Again, we see the theme of the discrepancy between an inward truth and an outward appearance. He adds, "If he [the devil] threaten us that we be too weak, let us tell him that our captain Christ is with us, and that we shall fight

with His strength, that hath vanquished him already" (238). Again, in More's moral code, the mystical body of Christ is the Church, and it is this body alone, rather than the individual, that is able to vanquish evil. At the end of his life, with this vision, More was able to face his own death with humor and peace of mind. But, in a subtle way, the conception of happiness that shapes the *Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation* is already anticipated in *Utopia*.

MORE, ERASMUS, AND HUMANISM

Any appreciation of *Utopia* must set More against the larger context of Renaissance humanism, especially the Christian humanism of Erasmus of Rotterdam. In broad terms, the humanist movement emerges from the breakdown of the medieval world view. In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, humans are seen as a small part of a coherent whole, emanating from God: "I wished to see / the way in which our human effigy suited the circle and found place in it" (*Paradiso* 33.137, 138). We are literally circumscribed, an integral part of the cosmos. By contrast, Pico della Mirandola conceives humans as created outside the chain of being, endowed by God with a freedom that allows us to create our own nature, and to judge divine creation. "We have given to thee, Adam, no fixed seat, no form of thy very own," he imagines God declaring in *On the Dignity of Man*. Laying the groundwork for Descartes' *cogito, ergo sum* and modern philosophy, Pico signals a shift in the center of philosophical discourse from nature as a whole to the individual self and self creation.

In narrow terms, Renaissance humanism represented a scholarly program, focusing on grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy, with special attention to the ancient classics, which were beginning to be recovered. This is opposed to the scholastic focus on logic and natural philosophy. In the satirical *Pantagruel* (1532) by the French humanist François Rabelais (inspired by both Erasmus and More), the giant Pantagruel receives a letter from his father, Gargantua, the king of *Utopia*. Gargantua explains that when he was young, Europe was still in the "dark ages [*Le temps . . . tenebreux*]," suffering from the "disasters of the Goths, who destroyed all worthwhile literature of every sort." To this he adds, "But divine goodness has let me live to see light and dignity return to humanistic studies" (Rabelais 157). Erasmus makes explicit the competing sides in his early *Antibarbarorum liber*, when he indicates his preference for the eloquence and wisdom of the pagans to those thinkers who arrogate to themselves, "barbarous titles and love to be called Albertist, Thomist, Scotist, Occamist, Durandist" (*Erasmus Reader* 63), in other words, the philosophical and theological factions and faculties of the medieval university. One of the central complaints was that the spirit of

philosophy had been lost by medieval scholastics to the abstruse subtleties of logic at the expense of wisdom. In a letter to theologian Maarten van Dorp, More jokes, "the *Parva logicalia* [scholastic treatises on logic, literally *Small Logic*]—as far as I can see, it is so called for the very small amount of logic that it contains" (*Utopia and Other Essential Writings* 143). Hythloday extends the joke when he expresses his ironic incredulity that Utopians "have not discovered even one of those elaborate rules about restrictions, amplification and suppositions which young men here study in the *Parva logicalia*" (*Utopia: Latin* 157). How do we explain changes that mark the rise of humanism?

The cause of this transition from the medieval to the modern world view is hard to pinpoint. In the historical period stretching from about the fourteenth century to the sixteenth, from Petrarch to Descartes, we can point to the convergence of a number of historical and intellectual occurrences in which the old world view was confronted with new perspectives that initiated fundamental dislocations. Among these were developments in the sciences, especially astronomy, including the shift from the geocentric Ptolemaic cosmos to the heliocentric Copernican cosmos. The discovery of the new world confronted Europeans with whole continents and peoples that fell outside the purview of traditional knowledge, forcing many to reassess their position on the globe and their identities as humans. Not surprisingly, More's hero, Raphael Hythloday is himself an explorer, supposedly one of the companions of the real explorer, Amerigo Vespucci. Visiting Utopia has made him view Europe with new critical eyes.

With regard to the development of humanism, the most important influence was discovery and recovery of classical languages and literature. This had profound effects on the practice and production of philosophy, literature, and theology. First, with regard to philosophy, it brought Plato back into the picture to challenge the Aristotelian-Aquinian orthodoxy. The Platonism (and Neoplatonism) of Marcello Ficino in Florence, for instance, with its focus on Eros, introduced a mystical or at least non-rational dimension into philosophy. Second, with regard to literature, the attention to classical eloquence, especially in ancient writers such as Cicero and Seneca encouraged the cultivation of rhetoric and literature. Satirists such as Lucian stimulated a playfulness with texts and language. All of this was in turn reinforced by the invention of the printing press and paper, which served to transmit books and knowledge more quickly and widely, nourishing a bourgeoning reading public outside the clergy. Again, not surprisingly, More was closely linked with this revolution in information technology through his brother-in-law, the English printer, John Rastell. Hythloday cites the importance of printing

and paper to Utopians, and makes positive references to the Aldine Press of the Venetian printer-humanist Aldus Manutius.

With regard to theology, we find the most significant and wide-reaching influence. Those with a knowledge of Greek could read the Greek version of the Bible, the *Septuagint*, against the Latin Vulgate of St. Jerome. The differences were often startling, inviting a reassessment of the authority of the Vulgate as the foundation of Catholic theology, and pointing to a more historically and linguistically grounded interpretation of the Bible. In turn it stimulated the desire to translate the Bible into the vernacular. Inspired by the ground-breaking work of Lorenzo Valla and encouraged by John Colet, Erasmus undertook his most important work, the *Novum Instrumentum*, published in 1516. This was the first printed edition of the Greek New Testament. It was accompanied by a revised Latin version with annotations and extended commentary on the Vulgate. While Erasmus did not intend to bring down the Catholic Church, his efforts had their most profound influence on Reformation thinkers such as Martin Luther, Philip Melanchthon, and William Tyndale, all three humanists.

UTOPIA: PLOT AND FORM

More sent the manuscript for *Utopia* to Erasmus who, with the help of Peter Giles, arranged its publication in Louvain in 1516. Erasmus and Gilles also arranged for a series of dedicatory letters that served to enhance More's reputation and facilitate the wider reception of the book. The third edition, published by Johann Froben of Basel, March 1518, is typically the version on which most modern translations are based. *Utopia* is divided into two parts. According to Erasmus, "[More] wrote the second book at a leisurely pace, and then recognizing the need for it, hastily added the first" (*Utopia and Other Essential Writings* 293). It is not entirely clear what this need was, though the insertion of the first book serves to clarify and make more explicit the immediate practical issues that give urgency to the theoretical concerns of the second.

Utopia begins with More's recounting his 1515 visit to Bruges and Antwerp as part of a royal commission to Flanders. One day, after hearing Mass at Antwerp's famous Notre Dame, he encounters his friend Peter Giles who introduces him to a man identified as Raphael Hythloday, a world traveler. Giles explains that Hythloday is something of a classical scholar with a good knowledge of both Greek and Latin, adding "He studied Greek more than Latin because his main interest is philosophy, and in that field he recognized that the Romans have left us nothing very valuable except certain works of

Seneca and Cicero" (*Utopia: Latin* 45). Hythloday's literary tastes identify him as a fellow humanist, and those of More's readers who understood Greek, could recognize that the name Hythloday signifies, as I have said, something like "peddler of nonsense." More's joke is continued by Hythloday's proposing to tell them about his visit to the island of *Utopia*—"no place," or "happy place," a just community. More quips that monsters and cannibals are commonplace in the world, but happy communities of wise citizens are truly exotic.

Much of this opening echos the famous beginning of Plato's *Republic* in which Polemarchus stops Socrates and Glaucon as they come from the dedication of a temple, inviting them to a dinner that will become the occasion for a lengthy dialogue on the nature of the ideal community. Narratively, however, More follows the example of the Ciceronian dialogue rather than the Platonic. The narrative frame is more about oratory than dramatic tension, more about delivering set speeches than moving a plot to a final resolution. In turn, More the humanist uses the conventions of classical oratory. George M. Logan points out that Book One is very much an exercise in deliberative oratory, in which Hythloday weighs the problems of royal service, appropriate punishment for thieves, and the problems of private property according to the topos of expediency and inexpediency (*honestas* and *utilitas*) (*Utopia: Latin* xxvi).

Book One can be divided into three parts. The first focuses on the introductions of More, Gilles, Hythloday, and a debate over the wisdom of becoming a royal counselor. The second part is a long digression in which Hythloday recounts a visit years earlier to the court of Cardinal Morton. This interlude features a debate over whether thieves should be harshly punished or not, and how the current system of private property creates thieves by impoverishing people. Finally, the third part resumes the debate between More and Hythloday over royal service, introducing Hythloday's central thesis that private property should be abolished, for without an equitable distribution of goods, mortals cannot be happy. The account of the commonwealth of Utopia in Book 2 will attempt to support this thesis by describing a society that has achieved general happiness by the elimination of property.

The central argument of Book One weighs the pros and cons of becoming a royal counselor. Gilles wonders why Hythloday, given his learning and experience, does not enter the service of some king as an advisor. Noting that there is only a syllable's difference between service and servitude (*servias* and *inservias*), Hythloday wonders how he could be more happy outside his current life of contemplative leisure. Since most kings are concerned with power and wealth, he wonders who will take him seriously. Too often counselors

find themselves reduced to flattering the favorites of kings. "Now in a court composed of people who envy everyone else and admire only themselves, if a man should suggest something he has read of in other ages or seen in practice elsewhere, those who hear it act as if their whole reputation for wisdom would be endangered . . . unless they can find fault with the proposals of others" (*Utopia: Latin* 53). Hythloday's characterizations suggest the fate of the philosopher in Plato's Parable of the Cave (*Republic* 516c–517a), or Plato's description of life in the court of a tyrant (*Republic* 578a–580a).

Citing Plato's claim that there will never be a happy commonwealth (*respublicas*) until kings become philosophers, More despairs that there is little hope for human happiness if philosophers refuse to serve royalty. Hythloday replies dryly that the wisdom of philosophers is readily available in printed books, if anyone would care to read them. The real problem is more fundamental, rooted in the evil and corruption in human souls. A ruler who focuses on his own power and wealth at the expense of the commonwealth will breed poverty in his subjects and become increasingly despised, in turn requiring him to be more repressive. "A king has no dignity when he exercises authority over beggars, only when he rules over prosperous and happy subjects" (*Utopia: Latin* 93). Conversely, the wise ruler curbs crime by teaching his subjects to avoid misbehavior rather than punishing it when it happens. Underlying this is a concept of human happiness that is related to material and spiritual contentment rather than the exercise of freedom. In his conversation with Cardinal Morton, Hythloday describes a people called the Polylerites (*polus*, "much" and *leros*, "nonsense"), who "live in a comfortable rather than a glorious manner, more contented than renowned or glorious" (*Utopia: Latin* 71). His account echoes Plato's words, that the function of law and society is not to make one person or group, "outstandingly happy," "but to contrive to spread happiness throughout the city, by bringing the citizens into harmony with each other by persuasion or compulsion" (*Republic* 519e). With regard to freedom, Plato relevantly adds, "the law has not made men of this kind in the city in order to allow each to turn in any direction they wish but to make use of them to bind the city together" (*Republic* 520a).

Hythloday then observes that only open-minded people, not blinded by vanity, greed, or ambition are likely to be persuaded by a philosopher. While academic philosophy (*philosopohia scholastica*) may be pleasant in conversations among friends, it has little influence in the councils of kings. More concedes that this is true with regard to the scholastic philosophy of the universities, but hints that there is another philosophy (*philosophia civilior*), better suited to the role of a citizen. Here he has in mind Erasmian humanism, suggesting that its appeal to rhetoric and literature allows it to adapt

better to circumstances, making it a more effective instrument of persuasion. "[B]y an indirect approach, you must strive and struggle as best you can to handle everything tactfully" (*Utopia: Latin* 97), concluding that given the imperfections of the world, we must try to do the best we can. Putting hope over experience, More may be trying to convince himself that somehow humanism could succeed where earlier philosophers had failed. Plato himself always cherished the unrequited hope that he might make a philosopher-king out of Dionysus and Dion of Syracuse. To More's faith in philosophy, Hythloday responds with the observation that if he tried to cure an insane world, he would soon find himself raving along with everyone else. On an ironic note, given the elaborate maze of fictions and identities in More's text, Hythloday adds that it is not his business to lie, adding that Christ forbids dissembling.

Book Two unfolds according to the conventions of an epideictic or demonstrative speech; that is, Hythloday is concerned with praise and censure, specifically the praise of Utopia (no-place), and by implication, the censure of contemporary society (some-place). After a brief opening description of the geography, the account of Utopia is divided into eight sections under the bland headings: "Of Cities, Especially Amaurot," "Of Officials," "Of Occupations," "Social Relations," "Of the Travels of the Utopians," "Of Slaves," "Of Military Practices," and "Of the Religions of the Utopians." Like the equally nondescript titles of Michel de Montaigne's *Essais* (1580, 1588, 1595)—for instance "On Coaches," "On Some Lines of Virgil," "Repentance"—More's titles camouflage an explosive critique of his world.

The "facts" about the commonwealth of Utopia can be briefly summarized. Though a different shape, it is an island, of the same size as England. There are 54 cities, about the same number as in England and Wales at this time. More uses the Latin *civitas* (community, analogous to the Greek *polis*), rather than the conventional Latin, *urbs* (city), suggesting a parallel with the ancient Greek city-state. The city of Amaurot (playing on the Greek *amauroton,* "to make dark"), at the center of the island and equidistant from the other communities, serves as the capital. Amaurot, divided by the river Anyder (from the Greek *anydros,* "waterless"), its two halves joined by a stone arch bridge, suggests London. The economy of Utopia is based on agriculture in which everyone participates according to his abilities. In addition everyone pursues a craft or trade, such as carpentry, masonry, or woolworking. Crafts and trades that are not directly or indirectly related to the necessaries of survival are banned. Thus there is no manufacture of luxury goods. Because everyone is obliged to work, and no effort is spent on activities or products that do not benefit the community as a whole, a work day of six

hours is sufficient to take care of all needs without anyone's being overburdened. Aside from appropriate intervals for meals and rest, individuals may spend their remaining time at their own discretion, as long as it is not wasted in idleness. Most Utopians spend it in intellectual pursuits, and anticipating Candide, like to cultivate their gardens. By these means the Utopians have satisfied all of their physical wants, while preventing inequality and the rise of an idle class that might be tempted to sow political unrest for the sake of power, or the impoverishment of one group by another in order to get rich, which would create social unrest.

There is no private property in Utopia, and the citizens observe a uniform dress code, everyone wearing simple, well-made garments with no ostentation or distinguishing ornamentation. Houses in the cities are exchanged by lot every ten years, and are constructed with doors that can be entered at anytime by anyone. Nothing is private. Even when Utopians travel, they must go in groups and stay in places that are open to public scrutiny. Meals are taken together in community halls. By eliminating the tokens of social rank and prestige, Utopia attempts to keep under control natural inclinations toward envy, vanity, and pride. The social structure that More describes reflects both the self-sufficient community that Plato portrays in the *Republic*, and the regulated life of the monastery that More experienced among the Carthusians at the London Charterhouse.

For the Utopians, value is related to usefulness. "Human folly," Hythloday explains, "has made [gold and jewels] precious because they are rare" (*Utopia: Latin* 149). Jewels, which can be found on the beach, are dismissed as bobbles useful only for the amusement of children. Voltaire borrowed this motif for his novel *Candide*, when his hero enters the legendary El Dorado. Similarly gold and silver are used only to make chamber pots or chains and shackles for slaves and criminals. In part, More plays with the allegorical morality theme that we are enslaved by our greed. Taking the joke a step further, Hythloday recalls the story of some ambassadors ignorant of the customs of Utopia who thought they would overawe its denizens by coming to court resplendent in cloth-of-gold and adorned with precious gems. In a sort of ironic reversal of the "emperor's-new-suit," the Utopians mistook them for slaves.

The governance of Utopia is republican, every thirty households annually electing an officer known as a syphogrant. Every group of ten syphogrants annually elects a tranibor. The tranibors form a senate which deals with the public business. In turn all of the syphogrants elect a governor. With the exception of the governor, who is elected for life, all other officials are elected annually. The ballots are secret, and heeding Plato's warning to beware anyone for whom rulership is a desire rather than a duty, campaigning

for office disqualifies a person for any office. Hythloday notes, in an observation that probably reflects More's own experiences in Parliament, that when legislation is brought before the senate, debate must be postponed a day, to prevent members from blurting out opinions before they have had a chance to reflect. "They know that some men have such a perverse and preposterous sense of shame that they would rather jeopardize the general welfare than their own reputation by admitting they were short-sighted in the first place" (*Utopia: Latin* 125). Since the laws in Utopia are both few and clear, each person can plead his own case. Turning the joke against himself, More (the lawyer) has Hythloday add that lawyers are excluded entirely.

The household is based on blood relations, centered on the husband. Children usually follow the trades of their parents, but may be adopted by a family with another trade if their aptitudes and interests direct them that way. Women may not marry until age eighteen and men until twenty-two. Premarital sexual relationships are seriously punished, as is adultery, the idea being that if both partners know that there is no sexual recourse outside of marriage, both will be careful in the initial selection of a spouse. As part of the marriage custom, each prospective spouse, both male and female, widow or virgin, is required to be presented naked to the other under appropriate supervision. In support of the reasonableness of this practice Hythloday remarks that no one would buy a colt without looking under the saddle and blanket. More may be enjoying a multilingual pun on the name of his first wife, Jane Colt, as well as alluding to the dangers of putting too much value in physical appearance rather than character. In Utopia divorce is permitted, but only in cases of adultery or "intolerably offensive behavior" (*Utopia: Latin* 191), and either husband or wife may petition, the guilty party thereafter being put into servitude.

Noticing that most nations are constantly breaking their treaties, Utopia abstains from making any. If there is a natural bond between groups, there is no need for a treaty, and if there is not, there is no point in having one. After all, if people violate natural bonds, why would they observe words? "In Europe, of course," Hythloday admits with an ironic wink, "and especially in these regions where the Christian faith and religion prevail, the dignity of treaties is everywhere kept sacred and inviolable" (*Utopia: Latin* 199). In its foreign policy Utopia prefers to rely on cunning rather than force, in Machiavellian terms, the fox rather than the lion. Thus they seek to accomplish their political aims by a combination of political assassination, bribery, stirring up dissension, and creating internal conflicts among their enemies. That failing, they first rely on mercenaries, whom they would prefer to sacrifice rather than their own citizens. Only in the last resort will they take to

the battlefield themselves, though when they do, they fight as ruthlessly as possible on the thought that if they can overwhelm the enemy from the start, the war will be brought to a speedier conclusion with fewer casualties than in a drawn-out campaign. Both men and women engage in military training and fight shoulder to shoulder. That said, in Utopia, there is "nothing so inglorious as the glory won in battle" (*Utopia: Latin* 201). As Machiavelli's *The Prince* owes much to his careful study of the Roman historian Livy, More's political analysis draws on the insights of the Greek historian Thucydides and his account of the Peloponnesian War (as later would the political philosopher Thomas Hobbes), and how Athens managed for many years to avoid defeat at the hands of the militarily superior Spartans.

There are diverse religions in Utopia, though the prominent one involves the worship of a single divinity, "unknown, eternal, infinite, inexplicable, beyond the grasp of the human mind, and diffused throughout the universe, not physically, but in influence" (*Utopia: Latin* 219), known as Mythra. They consider the contemplation of nature an important part of reverence for God. There is a priesthood, and, though it is rare, women are not debarred from becoming priests. Hythloday remarks, "their priests are of extraordinary holiness and therefore very few," a double-edged remark that makes ironic reference to a lack of extraordinary holiness among the large priesthood in Britain. Utopia's priests are allowed to marry, and Hythloday observes, "the wives of the male priests are the very finest women in the whole country," (*Utopia: Latin* 231) also perhaps an ironic comment on the mistresses too often found among the "celibate" priesthood of the Catholic church.

Hythloday mentions that when he and his fellow visitors told the Utopians about Christ, they were enthusiastic, some even converting. Many thought that Christianity was in harmony with their own prevailing beliefs, noting especially Christ's approval of a "communal way of life (*communem suorum victum*)" (*Utopia: Latin* 221). More's point is not to advocate missionary work, but to remind his audience that Christ sanctions a community without private property. In a deeper sense, he raises the Erasmian irony that sometimes the pagan world seems closer to the spirit of Christianity, than does Christian Europe. "For my part," says the interlocutor of Erasmus's dialogue *The Antibarbarians*, "I will allow myself to be called after any pagan so long as he was deeply learned or supremely eloquent; nor shall I go back on this declaration, if only the pagan teaches me more excellent things than a Christian" (*Erasmus Reader* 63). Again what matters is the inner spirit of Christianity, not the external observance of ritual, the moral and ethical substance rather than the letter of the law.

The Utopians believe that God has inspired different people in different ways, and that if only one religion is really true and the others false, the naturalness of its truth will inevitably prevail as self-evident. Therefore they advocate religious tolerance, affirming that no one should suffer for his religion. There are only two exceptions to this spirit of religious toleration. The first involves a religious zeal that breeds intolerance and creates public disorder. Hythloday recounts the story of a convert to Christianity who used to preach with more zeal than discretion, and was therefore exiled. The second exception involves atheists, or, more specifically, those who suppose the soul perishes with the body, or that the universe is governed by chance rather than providence. For Plato and for More, it is belief in an immortal soul subject to the judgement of a just God or universe that is the final guarantor of justice in this world. Why, as Glaucon asks in his *Parable of the Ring of Gyges* (*Republic* 359d-360c), do we not do what we can get away with? What backs up my oath? We may lie to each other, we may present a convincing outer appearance and thereby achieve worldly success. It is only belief in an inner self that will be held accountable to an omniscient judge, whether God or nature, that is the check on dissembling and dishonesty.

Both of these exceptions to religious tolerance in Utopia give us insight into what often seems the paradoxical character of More's zeal against heretics, and shows us a thematic consistency between *Utopia* and his later work. For More, the problem with Luther and Tyndale was not merely religious; their efforts also created real social disorder by seemingly undercutting the religious foundations of society. It also helps us to understand More's absolute resolve not to take the Oath of Supremacy. From More's point of view, to do so would not merely have been to have lied, but to have disavowed the moral foundation of the world. No one could trust anyone, community would crumble, and we would be reduced to chaos or tyranny, the "happy place" becoming "no place."

UTOPIA: PHILOSOPHICAL THEMES

As should be evident from the summary of the customs and institutions of Utopia, More has a wide range of philosophical preoccupations, especially those revolving around the concerns of Erasmian humanism. The unifying philosophical theme, however, relates to happiness, the *eu-topia* of *Utopia*. Any philosopher trying to explain the nature of the ideal commonwealth must first address the basic question about the nature of happiness in general, and then how the commonwealth functions to produce this happiness in all of its members. This is central to Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Politics*, and Augustine's *City of God*, all important to More's *Utopia*.

Much of More's conception of happiness is inspired by the Christian humanism Erasmus describes in his *Moriae encomium* (*Praise of Folly*), dedicated to More, and the widely popular *Enchiridion militis christiani* (*Handbook of the Christian Soldier*). In these books he tries to negotiate a synthesis of Christianity with the classical views of Epicurianism, which equated happiness with pleasure or the absence of pain, and Stoicism, which equated happiness with reason and virtue, understood in terms of a harmony with nature. Stultitia (Folly) describes the Stoic ideal as "a kind of marble statue of a man, devoid of sense of any sort of human feelings" (*Praise* 106). Who, she wonders, would elect such a rigorous and unfeeling man to office, "still less would any woman want or endure that sort of husband, or host that guest, or servant a master with a character like his" (107). By implication Erasmus wonders, if God were such a rational being, what hope for salvation could imperfect humans expect? If Christianity is different from Stoicism, it is in its "foolishness," its non-rationality, the image of God in a humble form, the child, the lily, the mustard-seed, the sparrow. "Christ too, though he is the wisdom of the Father," says Stultitia, "was made something of a fool himself in order to help the folly of mankind … just as he was made sin so that he could redeem sinners" (198, 199). While Christianity is not rational in the sense that it can be derived from first principles, the rational person, believe Erasmus and More, can see its reasonableness. For both More and Erasmus the pagans contained great wisdom, but Christianity completes and corrects them, elevating the Epicurean nature of pleasure, and introducing a joyfulness to the rigors of Stoicism. It is this view that informs the ethics of Utopia.

Tucked away under the nondescript heading, "On Travel," Hythloday offers an extended account of the Utopian view of happiness (*felicitas*) and ethics, the philosophical heart of the book. For the Utopians, pleasure (*voluptas*) is an important part of happiness. At the same time they consider religion an important part of the discussion. "Without these religious principles," says Hythloday, making an Erasmian move, "they think that reason by itself is weak and defective in its efforts to investigate true happiness" (*Utopia: Latin* 161). To Hythloday it seems ironic (perhaps disingenuously so) that the Utopian religion which is serious and strict (*gravis et servera*) should produce an ethics centered on pleasure and joy. Nevertheless, he says that their ethics are predicated on three religious principles: first, that the soul of man is immortal; second, that by God's beneficence we are born for happiness; and third, that in the afterlife, virtue is rewarded and sins are punished. These religious principles, which we have already touched upon in the context of religious tolerance, entail that happiness involves harmony with the nature

we are endowed with, and that it prescribes a joyous life. Nature, here largely means *human* nature as distinct from our relationship with the natural world. If we are naturally born for happiness and the pursuit of pleasure, it is a reasonable implication that sacrificing immediate personal gratification for the benefit of others is beneficial for our long-term pleasure, both as a product of a harmonious society and in the form of a divine reward of virtue. As the final lynchpin he adds, "as religion easily persuades a well-disposed mind to believe, God will requite the loss of a brief and transitory pleasure here with immense and everlasting joy in heaven" (*Utopia: Latin* 167).

Much of the political and social content of Utopia is informed by these principles, from the equality of labor and the communal ownership of property, to the spurning of empty pleasures such as fine clothes, ceremonial titles, and the accumulation of wealth for its own sake. It also points to the focus on the cultivation of virtue and on nurturing the pleasures of the mind. For Hythloday, the aesthetic contemplation of the universe is unique to humans, and, indeed, the Utopians consider the contemplation of nature as a part of divine worship. Ultimately, pleasure in the deepest sense is a calm and harmonious state that differs from the Epicurean notion of pleasure as the mere absence of pain. It is an orderly communion with one's body, one's community, and one's God.

SUBSEQUENT INFLUENCE

Despite the efforts of Tudor propagandists, More's person and character have always enjoyed a high reputation. William Roper's biography of his father-in-law lays the groundwork for the image of More as a courageous and saintly martyr, a process culminating in More's beatification in 1886, and his canonization as a Roman Catholic saint May 19, 1935. In an irony that would surely have amused him, given his comments on both, More has been designated the patron saint of lawyers and politicians. Many modern biographies, such as that of R.W. Chambers, have tended to continue to idealize his life and character. On the other hand, more recent studies, such as that of Richard Marius, have attempted to paint a fuller picture of More, accounting for the darker aspects of his life, his ambitions, his self-promotion, and especially his zealous persecution of heretics. The idealized More has inspired a number of works of literature, including the Elizabethan play *Sir Thomas More*, Robert Southey's *Colloquies on Society* (1829), and most notably Robert Bolt's 1960 play, *A Man for All Seasons*, subsequently made into an Oscar-winning film (1966). This perception of More is probably the most prominent. Not surprisingly, novelist Walker Percy explores the search for

goodness in a postmodern world in novels such as *Love in the Ruins* (1971) and *The Thanatos Syndrome* (1987), featuring a hero named Dr. Tom More. On the other hand, poet Geoffrey Hill suggests the paradoxes of More's personality when he writes in his 1998 poem *The Triumph of Love*, "Morus / enacted extreme measures, though not / overmuch" (CXV. 21–23).

Utopia has remained provocative since its publication, stimulating many diverse interpretations. François Rabelais signals his indebtedness to More by making the giants Gargantua and Pantagruel rulers of Utopia, and the Englishman Thaumaste, who engages the trickster Panurge in a debate in sign language, may represent a satirical portrait of More. Early critics of *Utopia* complained that it seemed to celebrate a pagan world. Early Marxist critics, most notably Karl Kautsky, saw in Utopia the foreshadowing of modern socialism and communism. The seminal work of R.W. Chambers, articulating a widely held interpretation, argues that *Utopia* represents the ideal society created entirely by reason, an earthly paradise that underlines the failure of Christian Europe to live up to its ideals. Critics such as Edward L. Surtz find this reading too narrow, arguing that it does not take into full account the richness of More's Christian humanism. Recent readers, such as Alistair Fox, focus on the allusiveness of Utopia, its resistance to any a simple interpretation. What cannot be questioned, however, is that the realm of literature, every later utopian and dystopian vision from that of Francis Bacon to that of Aldous Huxley and beyond, owes More a debt.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Ackroyd, Peter. *The Life of Thomas More*. New York: Anchor Books, 1999.

Duffy, Eamon. *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

Erasmus of Rotterdam. *The Erasmus Reader*. Ed. Erika Rummel. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990.

———. *Praise of Folly* and *Letter to Martin Dorp*, 1515. Trans. Betty Radice. London: Penguin Books, 1971.

Fortier, Mardelle L. and Robert F. Fortier. *The Utopian Thought of St. Thomas More and its Development in Literature*. Edwin Mellen Press, 1992.

Fox, Alistair. *Thomas More: History and Providence*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982.

———. *Utopia: An Elusive Vision*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-fashioning from More to Shakespeare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Hexter, J.H. *More's Utopia*. Reprint. Greenwood Publishers, 1976.

Hill, Geoffrey. *The Triumph of Love*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

Jardine, Lisa. *Erasmus, Man of Letters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Kinney, Arthur F. *Humanist Poetics: Thought, Rhetoric, and Fiction in Sixteenth-Century England*. Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986.

Kraye, Jill, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Kristeller, Paul Oskar. *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanistic Strains*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961.

Marius, Richard. *Thomas More: A Biography*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.

Martz, Louis L. *Thomas More: The Search for the Inner Man*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Mirandola, Pico Della. *On the Dignity of Man, On Being and the One, Heptaplus*. Trans. Charles Glenn Wallis, Paul J.W. Miller, and Douglas Carmichael. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1965.

More, Thomas. *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*. Ed. Leland Miles. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965.

———. *English Poems, Life of Pico, The Last Things*. Ed. Anthony S.G. Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers, and Clarence H. Miller. Vol. 1 of *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

———. *The Last Letters of Thomas More*. Ed. Alvaro De Silva. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdman, 2001.

———. *Utopia and Other Essential Writings*. Ed. James J. Greene and John P. Dolan. New York: Meridian Classics-Penguin Books, 1984.

———. *Utopia: Latin Text and English Translation*. Ed. George M. Logan, Robert M. Adams, and Clarence H. Miller. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Plato. *Plato's Republic*. Trans. G.M.A. Grube. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1974.

Roper, William. *The Life of Sir Thomas More*. In *Two Early Tudor Lives*. Ed. Richard S. Sylvester and Davis P. Harding. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962.

Rummel, Erika, ed. *The Erasmus Reader*. Toronto: University Press of Toronto Press, 1990.

Surtz, Edward. *The Praise of Pleasure: Philosophy, Education, and Communism in More's Utopia*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957.

———. *The Praise of Wisdom: A Commentary on the Religious and Moral Problems and Backgrounds of St. Thomas More's Utopia*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1957.

Wegner, Phillip E. *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Whittington, Robert. *The Vulgaria of John Stanbridge and the Vulgaria of Robert Whittinton*. Ed. Beatrice White. Early English Text Society. Vol. 187. London: Kegan Paul, Trubner & Co., 1932.

5

Voltaire
Candide
1759

> [S]he came to a prim little villa with a very amateurish garden which was being cultivated by a wizened old gentleman whose eyes were so striking that his face seemed all eyes, his nose so remarkable that his face seemed all nose, and his mouth so expressive of a comically malicious relish that his face seemed all mouth until the black girl combined these three incompatibles by deciding that his face was all intelligence.
>
> —George Bernard Shaw

Voltaire thought of himself first and foremost as a poet, and believed that his fame rested upon his verse tragedies, such as *Oedipe*, *Mahomet*, or *Mérope*, his epic *La Henriade*, or the mock-heroic *La Pucelle*. The tale (*conte*) was a literary genre that he dismissed as false, frequently using the word in disparagement, especially when applied to philosophical systems, theological doctrine, or political and economic theories. Ironically, Voltaire's most enduring achievement are his philosophical tales (*contes philosophiques*). From about 1715 to 1775, he produced some 26, many of which, including *Micromégas*, *Zadig*, *L'Ingénu*, and most notably *Candide*, remain popular. *Candide, or Optimism* is the greatest of Voltaire's *contes*, exemplifying the complex spirit of the Enlightenment. On one hand it gleefully punctures authority, whether social, political, religious, or philosophical, inviting its heroes (and readers) to think for themselves. On the other, it recognizes the limits of human reason and enterprise, undercutting human arrogance and pretension to grandeur. As a Turkish dervish asks Candide, "[w]hen his

highness sends a ship to Egypt, does he worry whether the mice on board are comfortable or not?" (*Candide* 73). In place of various false tales and ideologies that too often are the source of our misery, Voltaire offers a tolerant and skeptical realism.

Voltaire stands among Denis Diderot and Jean-Jacques Rousseau as one of the towering French *philosophes* of the eighteenth century. R. G. Saisselin aptly describes the *philosophes* as the "fighting wing of the Enlightenment elite" (qtd. in Yolton 395). They were public intellectuals, their fields of battle the salons of Paris and the general reading public. While centered in France, and including among their number such notables as Montesquieu, Condillac, Helvétius, d'Holbach, La Mettrie, D'Alembert, and Mme. d'Épinay, their spirit was international, embracing the Scotsman David Hume, the Neapolitan Abbé Galiani, the Milanese Cesare Beccaria, the Americans Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, and the Germans Friderich Melchior Grimm, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, and Moses Mendelssohn (the prototype for Lessing's Nathan the Wise). Among their political supporters (at least in spirit, if not always in practice or pocketbook), Frederick the Great of Prussia, Catherine the Great of Russia, and Mme. de Pompadour, long-time mistress of Louis XV of France.

VOLTAIRE AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Writing in 1784, within 5 years of the French Revolution and in many regards at the end of the Enlightenment, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant offers a definition in his "Was is Aufklärung? [What is Enlightenment?]": "Enlightenment is man's leaving his self-caused immaturity," he declares. Explaining, he adds, "Immaturity is the incapacity to use one's intelligence without the guidance of another. Such immaturity is self-caused if it is not caused by lack of intelligence, but by lack of determination and courage to use one's intelligence without being guided by another. *Sapere Aude!* [Dare to be wise!]" (Kant 132). Two themes emerge, a rejection of authority and, in its place, a challenge to think for one's self. This included not only challenging political and religious authority as it related to the power of the state and the Church, the unquestioned privilege of tradition and social hierarchy, but more broadly a questioning of systems in general, whether they be related to science, philosophy, law, medicine, or theology. Instead of authority, whether in the form of royal or papal pronouncements, revelation, the Bible, or even rational systems, they proposed an appeal to reason supported by empirical observations. "The Enlightenment," says historian Peter Gay, "was not an Age of Reason but a Revolt against Rationalism"

(Gay 27). Indeed, for many *philosophes* the most dangerous and persistent enemy was what Voltaire termed the "spirit of system [*l'esprit du système*]." He considered Plato more a poet than a philosopher, "an eloquent moralist and bad metaphysician" (Gay 29). Leibniz, Voltaire told Condorcet, was a great man, especially with regard to mathematics, but also "a bit of a charlatan." Descartes' system was "an ingenious novel [*un roman ingénieux*], at best seeming probable to the ignorant" (*Philosophical Letters* 64), and Malebranche's development of Cartesian doctrine, "sublime hallucinations" (*Philosophical Letters* 53). Each case illustrated the dangers of a mind detached from the grounding of empirical data. It was not Montaigne, Locke, Bayle, Spinoza or the other great skeptics who caused discord and social upheaval, Voltaire notes, but the dogmatic theologians, "who having first had the ambition of being leaders of their sect, have soon afterward desired to be heads of parties" (*Philosophical Letters* 58, 59).

By the time Voltaire entered the public arena around 1718, the dominant themes of the Enlightenment were already well established. Growing out of the rise of science in the wake of Galileo, Bacon, and Descartes, as well as a general exhaustion from the bloody sectarian strife caused by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the spirit of Enlightenment called into question the traditional authority of philosophy, theology, and science, and by extension law and medicine. Descartes' repudiation of the scholastic curriculum, his rejection of Aristotelian science (and by extension the science of Thomas Aquinas), and his the call to start again from the foundations in order to make progress in the sciences set the tone and terms for debate. We must think for ourselves and reject anything that is not "clear and distinct." Voltaire himself acknowledged the importance of Descartes. His response was, however, nuanced. Comparing Descartes to Locke in his *Philosophical Letters*, Voltaire writes, "Our Descartes, born to bring to light the errors of antiquity and to put his own in their place, being led astray by that spirit of system which blinds the greatest of men, imagined he had demonstrated that soul is the same thing as thought, just as matter, according to him, is the same as extension" (53).

Historian Jonathan Israel distinguishes two wings to the Enlightenment. The moderate wing, including Newton and Locke in England, Montesquieu in France, and Wolff in Germany, sought to synthesize reason with faith. Appealing to verifiable empirical evidence, they tried to ground religion in science, thereby conquering ignorance and superstition. Ethically, they advocated a spirit of toleration and the importance of education. The radical wing, including many of the later *philosophes*, tended to be atheistic or deistic, denying miracles and the notion of a divinely ordained hierarchy. They often evoked the work of the Dutch Jewish philosopher Baruch de Spinoza

(1632–1677), especially his *Tractatus Theologico-Polititus* (1670) and the posthumously published *Ethics* (1677). Anticipating modern biblical criticism, Spinoza had advocated religious toleration and freedom of thought, based on a historical reading of the Bible. The *Ethics*, developed out of a rigorous geometrical method of proof, equates God and existent nature ("*deus sive natura*"). This led many in the Enlightenment to consider him a radical materialist. (Later the Romantics would reverse this identity and read him as a pantheist.) Though increasingly anti-clerical, Voltaire was largely of the moderate wing, famously writing in his poem "Trois imposseurs," "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him [*Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer*]" (Voltaire, *Oeuvres* 10.405).Once, upon witnessing a glorious sunrise, he is reported to have raised his hat and declared, "Oh mighty God, I believe!" To this, however, he quickly added, "As to Monsieur the Son and Madame his mother, that is another matter!" (qtd. Durant 750).

To understand Voltaire's relation to the Enlightenment, two thinkers are worth briefly considering, Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), and Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646–1716). Bayle was born to a Protestant family in France, converted to Catholicism and then reverted to Protestantism. He saw himself in the skeptical tradition of Montaigne, rejecting fanaticism. He remained Christian throughout his life, but advocated religious toleration for Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and even atheists. His most influential work, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697, 1702), an inspiration for Voltaire's own *Philosophical Dictionary*, offers historical examinations of religious and philosophical figures, including Arminius, David, Eve, Mahomet, Rosarius, and Spinoza. Among his central themes are an attack on Calvinist orthodoxy, a call for the separation of religion and morality, a discussion of the limits of human reason, and a critical examination of the systems of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz. While these great rationalists supposed that the acquisition of knowledge advanced in a causal, linear fashion, one step inevitably leading to another, Bayle held that knowledge was provisional, acquired through a process of incremental revision. The *Dictionnaire* thus became an important source book for later skeptics, influencing many, including Hume and Gibbon. In his poem, "Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne," Voltaire finds consolation only in Bayle.

> What do I learn from Bayle, to doubt alone?
> Bayle, great and wise, all systems overthrows,
> Then his own tenets labors to oppose. (*Portable Voltaire* 567)

For both Bayle and Voltaire, the point is not doubt for its own sake, but a rejection of incomprehensible dogmas. Skepticism is not nihilism, but a

withholding of assent when there is a lack of evidence, an honest confession of "I don't know," in the face of uncertainty.

Philosopher, mathematician, scientist, lawyer, librarian, and diplomat, Leibniz was one of the towering thinkers of the seventeenth century. Along with Newton, he was the co-discoverer of differential calculus. Leibniz developed his mature philosophy in a series of books and papers, especially *The Discourse on Metaphysics* (1685), *The New System* (1695), the *Theodicy* (1710), the *Monadology* (1713), and the *Nouveaux Essais* (1701–1709), a running commentary on Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. His philosophy grew out of his desire to reconcile science and religion. To explain the physical concept of force, the capacity to cause change, which is the basis of time, space, and mass, Leibniz argued that infinitesimal units of force comprised the basic substance (or being) of the universe. He concludes that reality is composed of an infinite number of independent substances, or monads, each potentially an alternative universe, a sort of spherical mirror reflecting the other monads from its own perspective, each monad acting to realize its own potential. The world as we know it is the resulting unity, the pattern emerging from the competing forces (like vector addition in algebra and calculus). Thus, from the myriad activities of infinite possible universes emerges a single optimum pattern. The interaction of forces that produces the optimum pattern is what Leibniz terms "sufficient reason,"and given the particular sufficient reason, no other reality is possible. This is the "best of all possible worlds" that Voltaire satirizes in *Candide*.

BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Voltaire's life was marked by turbulence, controversy, and brilliance. He was born François-Marie Arouet in Paris, November 21, 1694, in the twilight of the Sun King, Louis XIV. Voltaire's father was a lawyer and official in the Chambre-des Comptes (Office of the Auditor). From 1703 to 1711, Voltaire studied at the Jesuit college of Louis-le-Grand, awakening and nurturing his literary gifts. After a brief stint as a secretary to the French ambassador to Holland, he began legal studies in 1714, but soon found himself in trouble with his father and the authorities for his inflammatory writing. He was exiled from Paris in 1716, and imprisoned in the Bastille from March 17, 1717, to April 11, 1718. In June, he began calling himself Voltaire, completing his play *Oedipe*, first performed November 1718. His version of the story of Oedipus draws on both Sophocles and Corneille and centers on the theme of religious superstition. The play was Voltaire's first literary triumph, making him an overnight success, and establishing his reputation. For the

rest of his life, he produced a continuous stream of plays, poems, histories, tales, polemical writings, and letters. Only a few can be mentioned given the scope of this book. In 1723 he published his verse epic, *La Ligue*, later retitled *La Henriade*. The ten-book poem, written in spirit of Virgil's *Aeneid*, focuses on Henry of Navarre, who converted to Catholicism, becoming Henry IV of France (Henri le Grand) with the famous quip that Paris was worth a mass. Much of Voltaire's epic is a polemic against religious fanaticism, though his account of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre remains powerful.

1723 saw three of Voltaire's plays performed as part of the wedding celebration for Louis XV. In 1726 he quarreled with the Chevalier de Rohan, culminating in his being beaten by the Chevalier's servants. Despite his fame, Voltaire found no legal redress, and was himself imprisoned again in the Bastille when he threatened to challenge Rohan to a duel. Soon released, he went into exile in England from 1726 to 1728. During his stay in England he met the great British satirists, poet Alexander Pope, the playwright John Gay, and the essayist Jonathan Swift. He also met the philosopher and statesman Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke. A deist, Bolingbroke developed a philosophy of optimism that impressed Voltaire. Later Pope summarized Bolingbroke's position in his poem, *An Essay on Man*. Arguing a sort of natural theology that "Whatever is, is RIGHT" (1.291), Pope declared, "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; / The proper study of mankind is Man" (2.1, 2). The most important work to emerge from the visit to England was Voltaire's *Letters on England* (1733), also known as the *Lettres philosophiques*. Here he described English institutions and religious toleration, with special admiration for the Quakers. He also wrote extensively on English letters and philosophy.

Probably the most enduring influence of the English sojourn was Voltaire's introduction to the philosophies of John Locke and Sir Isaac Newton. Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) offered an explanation of human knowledge that, unlike that of Descartes, did not fall back on the notion of innate ideas. An empiricist, Locke argued that the mind is like a blank piece of paper (the *tabula rasa* or blank slate in Aristotelian terms) written on by sense experience. In the early philosophical tale *Micromégas*, composed around 1738 and published in 1751, Voltaire's hero receives a book of philosophy written by a giant from the star Sirius, which turns out to be nothing but blank pages. Newton's *Philosophiae Naturalis Principias Mathematica* (1687), one of the monuments in the history of science, offered a comprehensive description of the universe, based on observation and without appeal to metaphysical first causes. As Voltaire later wrote in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Newton* (1739),

> Only quacks boast of universal medicines; and he would be a quack in philosophy, who should refer everything without proof to the same cause: the same force of mind, which enabled Newton to discover the power of attraction [gravity], made him confess that that power was far from being the sole agent of nature. (117)

In other words, Newton exemplified the Enlightenment spirit of Pierre Bayle.

Voltaire was finally allowed to return to Paris in 1729, thereafter making a fortune by stock speculation. He continued producing plays and began work on his *Histoire de Charles XII*, published in 1732, and *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, eventually appearing in 1751. During this period he also entered into two profound relationships. The first was with Emilie, Marquiese du Châtelet, whom he met around 1733, the second with Frederick II of Prussia, who began a correspondence in 1736, initiating a long, if at times difficult, friendship. From 1733 until her death from childbirth on September 10, 1749, Mme. du Châtelet and Voltaire enjoyed a deeply personal and intellectual partnership. Much of their shared passion centered on the sciences, carrying out studies at the Château de Cirey, Mme. du Châtelet the better mathematician. When the 24-year-old Frederick began his correspondence with Voltaire, he was still crown prince of Prussia (he assumed the throne in 1740). A passionate Francophile, he preferred French to German, and saw himself an enlightened monarch. In 1740, Voltaire helped to publish Frederick's *Anti-Machiavel*, a political treatise arguing that the ruler is the first servant of the people. At loose ends after the death of Mme. du Châtelet, Voltaire accepted Frederick's invitation to move to Berlin in 1750. The relationship quickly soured, and Voltaire was caught up in financial schemes and court intrigues, pillorying another of Frederick's *philosophes*, Pierre Maupertuis, president of the Berlin Academy of Sciences, in his *Diatribe du docteur Akakia* (1752). Fleeing Berlin in 1753, Voltaire and his niece, Mme. Denis, were detained in Frankfurt for a month by Frederick's agents. Subsequently, Voltaire would allude to Frederick's homosexuality, joking about "Potsdamites" (a conflation of Potsdam, Frederick's capital, and sodomite).

By 1755, unwelcome in both Berlin and Paris, Voltaire purchased Les Délices, an estate on the outskirts of Geneva, his first home of his own (and today the Institut et Musée Voltaire). In that year he published *La Pucelle*, a ribald mock-heroic treatment of Joan of Arc, noted, says George Bernard Shaw, for its "extravagant indecorum." On November 1, 1755 (All Saints Day), a deadly earthquake devastated Lisbon, Portugal. This terrible natural disaster set into sharp relief for Voltaire the relationship between natural evils and moral evil, challenging the optimistic view that "whatever is, is

RIGHT." In response he composed "Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne." The following year witnessed the start of the Seven Years War, pitting Prussia against France. Finally in 1757, Voltaire became entangled in controversy over the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and D'Alembert, to which he had contributed a number of articles. The article "Geneva" composed by the editor D'Alembert, but influenced by Voltaire, declared that there was religious tolerance in Geneva because most of the Calvinist pastors were essentially deists, a statement putting Voltaire and his friends among the clergy in an awkward position. It was amid these conditions of controversy that Voltaire began work on *Candide* around 1757, publishing it in 1759 to immediate and continued success.

In 1759, Voltaire bought a château and park near the village of Ferney. Now the "patriarch of Ferney," he became a magnet for the leading men and women of letters, hosting visits from James Boswell, Adam Smith, and Edward Gibbon. Here too, Voltaire wrote his *Dictionnaire philosophique*, appearing in 1764, and carried out various campaigns, most notably that to restore the good name of Jean Calas, wrongly executed in 1762. In the last two months of his life, Voltaire returned to Paris in triumph, where he was feted and crowned with laurels at the Comédie Française during a performance of his last play, *Irène*. He died in Paris May 30, 1778, though arranged that his body be smuggled out of town for fear that the clergy would prevent its burial. During the French Revolution, Voltaire's body was returned to Paris where it was interred with great honor and ceremony in the Panthéon of Paris, where it still rests, near that of Rousseau.

CANDIDE: PLOT DEVELOPMENT

The text of *Candide* begins with the narrative fiction that it is translated from a German manuscript ostensibly found in the pocket of a certain Doctor Ralph upon his death at the Battle of Minden, August 1, 1759, a Prussian victory over the French during the Seven Years War. (The significance of the narrator Dr. Ralph is a point of debate, though it may allude to the character Ralpho, from Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* [1663, 1664, 1678], a long satirical poem patterned on *Don Quixote*, and much admired by Voltaire.) The narrative itself unfolds along a sort of three part dialectic, tracing the growth of Candide's mind, as he moves first from a position of naive optimism to an equally naive cynicism, finally emerging in a mature skeptical realism. Opening on a note reminiscent of a fairy tale, *Candide* begins with the narrator telling us that in Westphalia, in the castle of the Baron

of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh, there lived a young man, who "combined an honest mind with a great simplicity of heart," for which reason, the narrator speculates, he is named Candide. He is under the care of the baron, and may be the illegitimate son of the baron's sister. The young Candide is in love with the baron's nubile daughter, Mademoiselle Cunégonde. Affirming the spirit of the fairy tale (ironically) Doctor Pangloss, the tutor of the baron's son has taught Candide that this is the "best of all possible worlds [*ce meilleur des monde possibles*]," and correspondingly that the baron's castle is the most beautiful, and that the 350-pound baroness is the best of all possible baronesses. Pangloss, Voltaire's satire on the philosophical system-building of the philosophers Leibniz and Wolff, is a professor of "La métaphysico-théologo-cosmo-lonigologie." The name Thunder-Ten-Tronckh suggests a Frenchman's perception of what German sounds like. Westphalia is a real place, at the time a province of lower Rhineland near Holland. For Voltaire it was vast and empty, a fact that underlines the foolishness of the snobbery and pretensions of the baron and his family, who claim a pedigree stretching back over "seventy-one quarterings," several thousand years. With a straight face, the narrator relates that "[t]he Baron was one of the most mighty lords of Westphalia, for his castle had a door and a window. His great hall was even hung with a tapestry" (*Candide* 1).

One day Mademoiselle Cunégonde observes Pangloss in the underbrush, "giving a lesson in experimental physics" to the lady's maid Paquette. Playing on this euphemism and parodying the language of Leibnizian metaphysics, the narrator adds, "as Mademoiselle Cunégonde had a natural bent for the sciences, she watched breathlessly the repeated experiments which were going on; she saw clearly the doctor's sufficient reason, observed both cause and effect, and returned to the house in a distracted and pensive frame of mind, yearning for knowledge" (2). When she attempts a similar experiment with the pliant and innocent Candide, they are discovered and Candide is ejected from "the earthly paradise." Thus expelled from his Eden, Candide begins years of wanderings and misadventures in search of happiness.

The cause of Candide's many misfortunes, and the targets of Voltaire's satire include the brutality of war, religious hypocrisy, intolerance, sectarianism, and colonialism, each in turn informed by greed, lust, violence, and foolishness. Almost immediately he is dragooned into the army of the Bulgars (the Prussians in Voltaire's political allegory) who are at war with the Abares (the French). Trained in the manual of arms, repeatedly flogged, and witness to a horrific battle, Candide eventually deserts, "climbing over ruins and stumbling over twitching torsos" (5). Candide next makes his way to Holland, where he is first spurned by a Christian who had been preaching

the virtues of charity, next has a chamber pot emptied over his head, and is then finally befriended by Jacques, a good Anabaptist who owns a Dutch Persian-rugs factory.

One day Candide encounters a wretched beggar who turns out to be none other than Doctor Pangloss! The doctor explains that the castle of Thunder-Ten-Tronckh had been destroyed by the Bulgars and the baron and his family killed. Pangloss himself had received from Paquette a syphilitic inflection with a pedigree almost as venerable as that of the baron's family. Pangloss is cured through the good offices of Jacques with "only the loss of an eye and an ear" (8). (A lifelong hypochondriac, Voltaire never missed an opportunity to satirize physicians.) Despite his hardships Pangloss continues to maintain that this is the best of worlds. Jacques, being a good Anabaptist, rejects his optimism, but takes Pangloss on as a bookkeeper, and together all three sail to Lisbon on a business trip. As it turns out, it is none other than November 1, 1755, and they approach the harbor in time to experience the terrible tempest and the fatal earthquake of Lisbon. Jacques drowns, and Pangloss prevents Candide from trying to rescue his benefactor by logically demonstrating to him that the bay of Lisbon had been formed to drown the poor Anabaptist, an ironic death given his sectarian beliefs.

Amid the devastation of Lisbon, Pangloss and Candide are arrested and condemned to be sacrificed at an auto-da-fé as a preventative against future earthquakes. Pangloss is hanged, and Candide flogged yet again, this time to musical accompaniment. "If this is the best of all possible words," he muses to himself, "what are the others like?" (12). Anticipating a central theme, however, he adds that his own misfortune was not as bad as that which had befallen the dear Pangloss, the good Jacques, and the beloved Mademoiselle Cunégonde. At this point Candide is approached by an old woman (*la vieille*) who leads him to none other than Mademoiselle Cunégonde. After much ecstatic fainting at this unexpected reunion, she unfolds her story, explaining that although the rest of her family had been butchered by the Bulgars, she herself had became the mistress of a "handsome" Bulgar captain, initiating a series of exchanges that brought her in Lisbon, where she was currently the joint mistress of Don Issachar, a Jewish money lender, and the Grand Inquisitor. It is evident from her tone that Mademoiselle Cunégonde remains enthusiastic about "experimental physics." This sentimental interlude is suddenly interrupted with the unexpected appearance of Don Issachar, who attacks the couple with a dagger. Acting on reflex, Candide runs him through with his sword. At this point they are interrupted by the unexpected appearance of the Grand Inquisitor, who is similarly dispatched. "How is it that you, who were born so gentle," asks Mademoiselle Cunégonde, "could kill a

Jew and a prelate in two minutes?" Candide replies, "when a man is in love, jealous, and just whipped by the Inquisition, he is no longer himself" (17). Recognizing the peril of their situation, Candide, Mademoiselle Cunégonde, and the old woman flee Lisbon for Cadiz where they take ship for Buenos Aires, a move from the Old World to the New. This interlude gives Voltaire an opportunity to cast light on the themes of utopia and European colonialism.

On the voyage, the old woman unfolds her story. She explains that she is none other than the daughter of Pope Urban X (historically there have only been eight Pope Urbans), that her beauty rivaled the Venus de Medici, and that she was engaged to a handsome prince. "[A]ll Italy composed sonnets in my honor of which not one was passable" (19). Here her troubles began. Her fiancé was poisoned by his mistress; she and her mother were captured and raped by Moroccan pirates. After plagues, earthquakes and further misfortune, she is sold into slavery, finding herself in the possession of a Turkish officer during the Russian siege of Azov. To fend off starvation, the besieged Turkish defenders first ate the eunuchs, then the buttocks of the women. After the city falls, the old woman survives as a chambermaid, eventually working herself across Europe to Lisbon. "I grew old in misery and shame, having only half a *derrière* and remembering always that I was the daughter of a Pope." To this she adds, "A hundred times I wanted to kill myself, but always I loved life more" (23). The old woman's words, like Candide's earlier, underline a central theme in Voltaire's ethics. Experience teaches that humans seem to have a natural instinct to live, allowing us to endure misery and persevere, even when there is no apparent point to life. Paradoxically, everyone thinks his own suffering is worse than everyone else's, yet few consider their suffering so bad that they would willingly end their lives.

The New World proves no utopian escape from the Old. First the viceroy takes a fancy to Mademoiselle Cunégonde, then the authorities from Portugal arrive, seeking Candide for the murder of the Grand Inquisitor. Accompanied by a multilingual multi-racial servant named Cacambo, also a happy mixture of good nature and common sense, Candide flees to Paraguay. In the eighteenth century, Paraguay was a colony governed by the Jesuit missions (the Reductions). In his *Essai sur les moeurs*, Voltaire described this religious Arcadia as repressive, and Candide's experiences concur. (The 1986 Roland Joffé movie, *The Mission*, offers a different take on the Reductions as bastions of Enlightenment and tolerance until suppressed by the Portugese.) Here Voltaire again satirizes the conventions of the *conte* when it turns out that the reverend father commander of the Jesuits is none other than the young Baron Thunder-Ten-Tronckh, brother of Mademoiselle Cunégonde. He also had somehow survived the slaughter of the Bulgars, and through

a series of (implied) homosexual relationships, become a priest and risen in the Jesuit order. Their tearful reconciliation is shattered when Candide tells the baron of his desire to marry Mademoiselle Cunégonde. The baron berates Candide's presumption and slaps him. Candide responds by running the baron through with his sword. Voltaire's portrait of the baron as a homosexual Jesuit is a satirical amalgam, alluding both to the Prussian arrogance of Frederick the Great and to the ingratitude of Jesuit Abbé Desfontaines, who had betrayed him in his *La Voltairomanie*, even though Voltaire had come to Desfontaines' aid in 1725 when the latter had been incarcerated for sodomy. Sizing up the danger, Cacambo and Candide disguise themselves as Jesuits and ride off into the wilderness towards Peru.

The next episodes develop the theme of utopia most explicitly. After various adventures in the "state of nature," they are caught by cannibals who are delighted at the prospect of roasting Jesuits. Trying to translate through Cacambo, Candide argues that Christian ethics forbade cannibalism. Instead Cacambo tells the cannibals that "the law of nature teaches us to kill our neighbor, and that's how men behave the whole world over. Though we Europeans don't exercise our right to eat our neighbors, the reason is simply that we find it easy to get a good meal elsewhere" (32). They are finally released when Cacambo convinces them that he and Candide are not really Jesuits. Here Voltaire plays with the philosophical concept of the state of nature, central to seventeenth and eighteenth century political thought, imagining the human condition outside the restraints of civil society. Do laws and human rights derive from nature, or are they constructed by society? British philosopher Thomas Hobbes likened it to a state of war, famously describing the natural human condition as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." Society, for Hobbes, is a means of protection from each other. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, on the other hand, saw humanity as fundamentally good, corrupted by the distortions produced by artificial systems that impede our natural instincts. Voltaire takes a more skeptical approach, echoing the views of Michel de Montaigne's essays, "On the Cannibals," and "On Coaches." Human nature remains universal, adapting itself to its circumstances. There is little fundamental difference between cannibals and Europeans, Montaigne concludes, aside from the fact that Europeans wear breeches.

Their journey next brings them to the Eldorado, the legendary land of gold sought by the conquistadores. They discover that the land is indeed covered with gold and precious gems, but also discover that the citizens of Eldorado are indifferent to or even contemptuous of the "yellow mud." Borrowing from Thomas More's *Utopia*, Voltaire imagines that gold and jewels are dismissed as merely suitable for children's toys. The citizens are well fed and educated,

pursuing with enthusiasm the study of science and mathematics, much like Voltaire at Mme. du Châtelet's château de Cirey. There are no law courts or prisons, and no priests, except in the sense that everyone is a priest giving thanks to the goodness of God. When Candide asks an old man about religion in Eldorado, he replies, "Can there be two religions? . . . I suppose our religion is the same as everyone's, we worship God from morning to evening" (36). The old man's ingenuousness, underlines Voltaire's sad irony about the rest of the world.

Despite having actually found the real earthly paradise, the polar opposite of the estate of Baron Thunder-Ten-Tronckh, Candide still longs for Mademoiselle Cunégonde. This time he willingly chooses to leave Eden for the sake of his Eve. With a train of one hundred giant sheep (probably Voltaire's notion of the llama) packed with gold and jewels, Candide and Cacambo continue their journey to Surinam in order to find a ship for Europe. On the way they encounter a negro slave who had been mutilated and pinioned to the ground by his master, a Dutch sugar planter. "This," the wretched slave explains, "is the price of the sugar you eat in Europe" (40). His words paraphrase those of Helvétius, who wrote in 1758 that "not a barrel of sugar arrives in Europe which is not stained with human blood" (qtd. in Mason 42). This is the final straw for Candide, who finally renounces his Panglossian optimism. Once in Surinam, Cacambo is sent off to Buenos Aires to find Mademoiselle Cunégonde and then to rendezvous with Candide in Venice. The latter then sets sail for the Old World with a new companion and mentor, Martin, a Manichean Dutchman. An absolute and dogmatic pessimist, Martin is the polar opposite of Pangloss, seeing an active force of evil in the world. While ultimately Candide (and Voltaire) reject the extreme cynicism of Martin's position for something more realistic, he offers an important corrective that allows Voltaire to sermonize on a number of political and social ills.

Candide's stay in Paris is the longest chapter and somewhat breaks the brisk pace of the narrative. Voltaire uses it as an occasion to satirize various aspects of Parisian society. Because he is now rich, he finds himself surrounded by "intimate friends" he did not know he had, and doctors he did not call. "[A]s a result of medicines and bleeding, Candide's illness became serious" (*Candide* 47). He also finds himself invited to various elegant salons, where he is seduced by beautiful ladies, and cheated at cards. The optimistic Candide is always surprised, the cynical Martin, never. For Voltaire (the playwright), however, the main target is the theater and the state of literature. Attending a play, Candide is moved to tears, only to be informed by a wit that the acting was bad and the play worse. He is impressed that some

five or six thousand plays were written each year. Martin is impressed that as many as fifteen or sixteen were any good. Voltaire's position on art is most fully advocated by a dinner guest described as "a man of learning and taste [*un homme savant et de goût*]," who argues that too many tragedies fail because they try to be like novels. A good tragedy must aspire to naturalness in language and action, coming from a real understanding of the human heart. "[O]ne must know the language perfectly, speak it purely, and maintain a continual harmony without sacrificing sense to mere sound" (50). The man of learning and taste could well be Voltaire himself.

Finally fed up with Paris, Candide and Martin set sail for Venice, on the way encountering the execution of the English admiral, John Byng. The case of Admiral Byng had been one of Voltaire's many causes, and he had tried unsuccessfully to prevent the execution. When the incredulous Candide observes that the French admiral seemed as guilty of the same technicalities as the English, he is informed that "it is useful from time to time to kill one admiral in order to encourage the others" (55). In Venice, Candide is distressed not to find Cacambo. The cynical Martin is not surprised at all. They do encounter Paquette, the baroness's former lady's maid, who is now working as a prostitute. She also has a lover, Brother Giroflée, a young Theatine monk. Both are in love, but both miserable. During the Venetian interlude, Candide and Martin visit the Venetian nobleman, Lord Pococurante; like the encounter with the man of learning and taste, this provides an opportunity for Voltaire to expound his views more explicitly.

The sixty-year-old Pococurante lives in fabulous luxury. His palazzo is surrounded by large gardens, adorned with beautiful statues, and hosts a fine art gallery and well-stocked library. Despite this he is bored with everything, except an occasional tryst with his two pretty serving girls, but admits that they are also starting to bore him. The encounter with Pococurante points out two themes, elaborating on the visit to Eldorado and the exchange with the Parisian man of learning and taste. On one hand Pococurante has created a sort of earthly paradise. He has no wants and can enjoy any material or cultural amenity that money can buy, yet he also is unhappy. By contrast, the citizens of Eldorado, who also enjoy great prosperity, are portrayed as truly happy. The difference is that they focus their attention on the pursuit of scientific knowledge while Pococurante seeks amusement.

Underlying this contrast, Voltaire reiterates the Aristotelean doctrine of happiness. In the *Nichomachean Ethics* Aristotle argues that happiness (*eudaimonia*) is the "highest realizable good" (1095a). Do we pursue happiness for some goal or purpose other than itself, or for its own sake? Aristotle deduces that if it is the highest good, then it represents an end in itself, and

so has no other purpose than itself. He argues that two activities satisfy his criteria, amusement and contemplation, concluding that it is absurd to suppose people would willingly endure the pains and hardships of life simply in order to enjoy some amusement. He concludes that happiness is related to contemplation, the most godlike of activities, by which we struggle to go beyond ourselves by trying to understand the world. In pursuing material comfort and amusement, Pococurante has merely cultivated the animal side of human nature, and while he has found a surfeit of pleasure, he has not achieved happiness. By contrast, the citizens of Eldorado are active in the contemplation of nature. As such, they are continually discovering and creating, while Pococurante is merely the connoisseur of other people's creativity, simply repeating the same things over and over. The position is aptly summarized when Cacambo remarks to Candide, on their entry into Eldorado, "If we don't find anything pleasant, at least we may find something new" (33).

Pococurante's views on art and high culture also echo those of Voltaire. Like the man of learning and taste, Pococurante is dismissive of art that substitutes virtuosity or effect for nature. Speaking of painting, he declares, "I like a picture only when I can see in it a touch of nature itself." Speaking of music, he notes, "[m]usic today is only the art of performing difficult pieces, and what is merely difficult cannot please for long" (60). For similar reasons, he is equally dismissive of most classical and modern literature. For Pococurante, the authority enjoyed by any of these cultural icons is based more on the opinion of other authorities than any self-evident merit. We admire them because we are told that we ought to admire them, supposedly a mark of our sophistication or cultural accomplishment. Too often, our culture is a display of vanity and pretension. "Fools admire everything in a well-known author," he says. "I read only for my own pleasure; I like only what is in my style" (61). For Candide, who had been trained never to think or judge for himself, this revelation is a moment of profound enlightenment.

The precariousness of political power is illustrated several days later, when Candide is dining in a hotel. Also dining are six strangers who had come to Venice for the carnival. They turn out to be Achmet III, former Sultan of Turkey; Ivan VI, dethroned Czar of Russia; Charles Edward of England (the so-called Young Pretender, Bonnie Prince Charlie); Augustus III, a King of Poland, deposed by Frederick the Great; Stanislas Leczinski, abdicated King of Poland (an actual friend and correspondent of Voltaire's); and finally Theodore, former King of Corsica. Such a convergence is historically impossible, but history is not Voltaire's point here. Each ruler had once enjoyed the authority of political power, and each had been overthrown. Candide, as

a private citizen, has more freedom and means of action. Also present in this dining room is Sultan Achmet's slave, who turns out to be none other than Cacambo! His apearance is an important counter force on Martin's cynicism, for we learn that Cacambo had tried to keep faith with Candide. Telling his story, Cacambo explains how he had bought Mademoiselle Cunégonde from the viceroy in Buenos Aires, and then how they had been attacked by pirates and sold into slavery. Mademoiselle Cunégonde and the old woman are now slaves, washing dishes in the household of a Transylvanian prince living in Constantinople.

Liberated by Candide, the faithful Cacambo arranges passage for themselves, Martin, Paquette, and Giroflée on a galley headed for Constantinople. The final goal of the novel, however, is Candide's own liberation. Among the galley slaves they discover none other than Doctor Pangloss and the young Baron Thunder-Ten-Tronckh. Each had managed to survive his supposed demise, each had suffered further hardships, and each had been sentenced to the galleys for sexual indiscretions, Pangloss with a Turkish girl, and the baron with a Turkish boy. Candide buys their liberty and they join the growing band. Arriving finally in Constantinople Candide liberates Mademoiselle Cunégonde and the old woman. After so many years and hardships, however, reality does not live up to the long-cherished idea. Satirizing the romantic convention, Voltaire writes, "[t]he tender lover Candide, seeing his lovely Mademoiselle Cunégonde with her skin weathered, her eyes bloodshot, her breasts fallen, her cheeks seamed, her arms red and scaly, recoiled three steps in horror, and then advanced only out of politeness" (71). When the baron still persists in objecting to someone of Candide's class marrying his sister, the absurdity of the situation is more than Candide can stand. "You absolute idiot" he explodes, "I rescued you from the galleys, I paid your ransom, I paid your sister's; she was washing dishes, she is ugly, I am good enough to make her my wife, and you still presume to oppose it! If I followed my impulses, I would kill you all over again" (71). At long last Candide liberates himself from the vestiges of the old order, and dares to be wise.

In the end, Candide decides to marry Cunégonde more to spite the baron than from any desire. The baron is returned to the galleys and then Rome, providing the "double pleasure of snaring a Jesuit and punishing the pride of a German baron" (72). The rest of the band set up a household together on the outskirts of Constantinople. One day they visit a Turkish farmer who seems prosperous and happy. Supposing that he must own enormous lands, they are surprised when the Turk replies, "I have only twenty acres. . . . I cultivate them with my children, and the work keeps us from three great evils, boredom, vice, and want [*l'ennui, le vice, et le besoin*]" (74). So inspired,

the group sets up its own little farm. The men work the fields, Paquette embroiders, the old woman does laundry, and Cunégonde, though "remarkably ugly," is an excellent pastry cook. And whenever there are any doubts, Candide reminds them, "we must cultivate our garden [*il faut cultiver notre jardin*]" (75). Having begun with expulsion from a symbolic garden of Eden, the *conte* closes with the creation of a new garden, the creation of a real (if provisional) earthly paradise.

CANDIDE AND THE CONVENTIONS OF THE TALE

Voltaire was widely read, and his work plays with and against assorted conventions of the tale, subverting the genre to foreground his thematic targets. The *conte* or tale was a popular literary genre in the eighteenth century, written in prose rather than verse, and manifest in a variety of types, including the allegory, the Italian *novella*, the picaresque novel, the apologue (moral fables such as those of Aesop), the exemplary tale, the oriental tale, the extraordinary voyage, the chivalric romance, the novel of education. Often the types overlapped. Extraordinary voyages are also occasions for didacticism and exotic perspectives. The basic plot of *Candide* follows that of the extraordinary voyage. This type of tale looks back to ancient works such as Lucian's satirical *True Histories*, which inspired works such as Thomas More's *Utopia*, Cyrano de Bergerac's *Voyage dans la lune* (1657), and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). Voltaire admired and drew on all four. The oriental tale, with prototypes in the *Arabian Nights*, and contemporary works as Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, play on the perceived exoticism of the Middle East. The clash between cultural perspectives allows the author to look at European culture from a foreign perspective, bringing out irony by making the everyday appear strange. Elements of this directly occur when Candide and company find themselves in Turkey. In a deeper sense, however, Candide's complete innocence makes him an exotic stranger in his own world.

Since much of *Candide* is about its hero's education, the novel of education (the *bildungsroman*) is particularly important. François Fénelon's *Télémaque* (1699) was one of the most popular novels in eighteenth century France, setting the pattern. This book purports to fill in the gaps in Homer's *Odyssey*, relating the adventures of Odysseus's son Telemachus as he searches for his father. Integral to the conventions of this literary type, he is guided by the sage Mentor (Athena in disguise), who teaches him about morality, politics, and religion. Another novel of education of special importance is the philosophical novel *El Criticón* (1651, 1653) by the Spanish Jesuit Baltasar Gracián, much admired by Voltaire (and later Nietzsche and Borges). Its

lengthy dialogues between the wise realist Critilo and his naive charge Andrenio, strongly resemble the exchanges between Martin and Candide.

The Italian *novella* featured stories ranging from the mixture of chivalry and scandalous love found in Boccaccio's *Decameron* to the frankly erotic *Dialogos de cortesanas* of Pietro Aretino. Madame de La Fayette's *Princesse de Clèves* (1678), which many consider the first psychologically realistic novel, is one of the finest French novels derived from this type. Closely related to the *novella* is the Spanish picaresque novel, featuring the adventures of lowlife scoundrels and tricksters, the *picaro*. Among the most famous of these is *La Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), itself an important source for Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. All of these look back to the Roman *Satyricon* of Petronius, about the sexual misadventures of the sponging Encoplius, Ascyltus, and Giton in their quest for a free dinner. The misadventures of Mademoiselle Cunégonde and the old woman owe much to the *novella*, and Cacambo to the *picero*.

Candide's name, like that of most of the characters, carries both comical and allegorical significance. Candide plays on the English "candid" in its eighteenth century usage, implying honesty, and the Latin "candidus," meaning "white" or "pure." The name of Mademoiselle Cunégonde, suggests either the medieval Germanic saint Cunegunde, or an off-color amalgam of *cune* or *conne* ("bitch") and *gonde* ("cunt"), indicative of her active sexuality. Doctor Pangloss's name is constructed from Greek, signifying "all tongue," underlining the fact that his systems are empty words. The name Cacambo plays on the Spanish *caca*, a child's expression for excrement, or *caco*, signifying a "pickpocket" or "coward." The name of Paquette, the lady's maid who infects Pangloss, may pun variously on *pâquerette* ("daisy") and the English "pox," slang for syphilis. The name of her lover, Brother Giroflée derives from *giroflée* ("gillyflower"). The name of the Venetian nobleman Pococurante means "small care" in Italian. Finally, the passing reference to the King of the Bulgars (*le roi des Bulgares*) puns on the French *bougre* (a derogatory term for homosexual, related to the British expression *bugger*, which derives ironically from the adjective Bulgarian through a process of semantic narrowing). The Bulgars represent the Prussians, thus "King of the Buggers," another sly reference to Frederick the Great, one of Voltaire's many inside jokes.

PHILOSOPHICAL THEMES

Amid the myriad philosophical references, inside jokes, and allusions, three prominent philosophical themes emerge. The first relates to utopia and the realistic limits of human happiness, the second relates to questioning

authority and learning to judge for oneself, and the third to the provisional nature of life. *Candide* deploys a succession of communities, real and imaginary, from the Edenic Westphalia, the states of Holland, the New World, the Jesuit Reductions, Eldorado, the Republic of Venice, to the Turkish farm. Each is posited as a ideal community, a utopian "happy place," but an ideal inevitably subverted by a reality delivered with deadpan matter-of-factness. Each is really just a false tale, a philosophical fantasy. All of this underlines the fact that utopia, or the happy place, is not a location, but a state of mind. The dreary backwater of Baron Thunder-Ten-Tronckh's castle was the best of all possible worlds for Candide because he knew no better and because he was content with his life. The Turkish farmer is content with his lot because the satisfaction of his needs prevents him from being bored. Pococurante lives in real luxury, but is nevertheless bored because he prefers to amuse himself rather than stretch his mind; the Eldoradians have their needs satisfied, but then use their surplus of time to contemplate nature and are therefore happy. Underlying all of this is the persistence of human nature, paradoxically the one fundamental constant, our restlessness. For Voltaire, once our needs for survival are addressed, the best way to satisfy the mind is to keep busy, and best of all to pursue something new. The old woman summarizes the situation,

> I should like to know which is worse, being raped a hundred times by negro pirates, having a buttock cut off, running the gauntlet in the Bulgar army, being flogged and hanged in an auto-da-fé, being dissected and rowing in the galleys—experiencing, in a word, all the miseries through which we have passed—or else just sitting here and doing nothing? (72, 73)

Anticipating the Romanticism of a Goethe and the modern worldview, Voltaire sees life as open-ended, humans driven by a curiosity, or at least a restless impulse to assuage boredom. In his *Pensées*, philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal remarked "I have often said that the sole cause of man's unhappiness is that he does not know how to stay quietly in his room." Voltaire would have agreed with this diagnosis, if not Pascal's implication. What makes us human is the willingness and the courage to leave the room, a theme and metaphor that existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre picks up later in his 1944 play *No Exit*.

Closely related to the drive of curiosity is the willingness to question authority, to assume the Enlightenment spirit of skepticism, to judge for ourselves. The trajectory of Candide's education involves learning how to question his authorities, and ultimately learning how to trust his own

judgement. The succession of his mentors traces a sort of dialectical pattern in which his wisdom comes from a process that both cancels and preserves: he first experiences the absolute optimism of Dr. Pangloss. This is then corrected by the absolute pessimism of Martin. Both dispositions are necessary states of mind, for without optimism we would find it be hard to go forward, to face the risks of something new. Yet without pessimism, we would find ourselves the constant victims of experience. In the end Candide is left with a realistic view, neither the absolute certainty of Pangloss's optimism nor the absolute certainty of Martin's pessimism, but the skeptical position of "I don't know."

Several readers complain that the conclusion of *Candide* leaves us hanging. We do not know whether the farm will thrive or fail. We do not know if there will be yet another remarkable reunion or unexpected disaster. Perhaps members of the little band will become bored and strike out on yet another adventure. Such a conclusion is consistent with life and Voltaire's concept of realism. He rejects the artificial closure of the traditional tale or romance in which we are told that the heroes live happily ever after. Life and reality offer no such assurances. Whether in Paris or Potsdam, Cirey or Les Délices, Voltaire learned that life in the happy place is always provisional and precarious, always subject to the unexpected earthquake. Voltaire might well have appreciated the title to the closing chapter to Samuel Johnson's novel *The History of Rasselas, Price of Abyssinia*, published the same year as *Candide* and dealing with many of the same themes: "The Conclusion, in Which Nothing Is Concluded." Such an ending is closer to reality, to life as we actually experience it.

SUBSEQUENT INFLUENCE

By the end of its first year in publication (1759) *Candide* had gone through 17 editions, some 20,000 copies in print, in eighteenth century terms, a major achievement, and this despite the immediate condemnation of its "depravation" (Mason, *Candide* 14). It has remained widely in print ever since, drawing readers attracted to its crackling wit and gleeful subversiveness. The Marquis de Sade's novel *Justine* and George Bernard Shaw's play *Candida* and novella *The Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God* are direct parodies of *Candide*, and Leonard Bernstein turned it into a successful musical. Goethe considered Voltaire the greatest writer of all times, and Flaubert claimed to have read *Candide* 100 times. Later satirists as diverse as Mark Twain and Lytton Strachey took inspiration from it, as did the early economist Adam Smith, who alludes to Pococurante it in *The Wealth of Nations*. Finally,

perhaps the enduring power of *Candide* rests in Voltaire's power to capture and articulate the human condition in a way that we still recognize. Writing in 1922 in the wake of the First World War, the novelist Aldous Huxley, himself skeptical of the utopian spirit of the modern world, observes, "the world in which we live is recognizably the world of Candide, Cunégonde, of Martin and the Old Woman. . . . The only difference is that the horrors crowd rather more thickly on the world of 1922 than they did on Candide's world" (Huxley 20, 21). In our age of competing ideologies, each a narrative tale claiming absolute authority, Huxley's assessment remains valid.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Aristotle. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941.

Besterman, Theodore. *Voltaire*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1969.

Cassirer, Ernst. *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. Trans. Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951.

Durant, Will and Ariel. *The Age of Voltaire*. Vol. 9 of *The Story of Civilization*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 1965.

Gay, Peter. *Voltaire's Politics: The Poet as Realist*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

Henry, Patrick. "Sacred and profane gardens in *Candide*." *Studies of Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 176 (1979): 133–152.

Huxley, Aldous. *On the Margin: Notes and Essays*. New York: George H. Doran Co., 1923.

Israel, Jonathan I. *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Kant, Immanuel. *The Philosophy of Kant: Immanuel Kant's Moral and Political Writings*. Ed. Carl J. Friedrich. New York: Modern Library–Random House, 1977.

Mason, Haydn. *Candide: Optimism Demolished*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992.

———. *Voltaire: A Biography*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.

McGhee, Dorothy Madeleine. *Voltarian Narrative Devices as Considered in the Author's Contes Philosophiques*. 1933. New York: Russell and Russell, 1973.

Mitford, Nancy. *Voltaire in Love*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957.

Pascal, Blaise. *Pensées*. Trans. A. J. Krailsheimer. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966.

Pearson, Roger. *Fables of Reason: A Study of Voltaire's "Contes philosophique."* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

Pope, Alexander. *The Poems of Alexander Pope*. Ed. John Butt. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963.

Shaw, George Bernard. *The Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God*. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1933.

Sherman, Carol. *Reading Voltaire's Contes: A Semiotics of Philosophical Narration*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

Voltaire. *Candide, or Optimism*. Trans. Robert M. Adams. 2nd.ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 1991.

———. *The Elements of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy*. Trans. John Hanna. London: Cass, 1967.

———. *La Henriade*. Ed. Danièle Thomas. Oloron-Sante-Marie: Monhelios, 2002.

———. *Lettres philosophiques*. Ed. Frédéric Deloffre. Paris: Gallimard, 1986.

———. *Mémoires pour servir à la vie de M. De Voltaire, écrits par lui-même*. Ed. Jacqueline Hellegouarch. Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1998.

———. *Oeuvres Complètes de Voltaire*. Ed. Louis Moland. Vol. 10. Paris: Granier, 1877–1885.

———. *The Philosophical Dictionary*. Trans. Peter Gay. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962.

———. *The Philosophical Dictionary*. Trans. Theodore Besterman. London: Penguin Books, 1972.

———. *Philosophical Letters*. Trans. Ernest Dilworth. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961.

———. *The Portable Voltaire*. Ed. Ben Ray Redman. New York: Viking Press, 1958.

———. *Romans et Contes*. Paris: Gallimard, 1972.

Wade, Ira O. *Voltaire and* Candide*: A Study in the Fusion of History, Art, and Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959.

Yolton, John W., ed. *The Blackwell Companion to the Enlightenment*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991.

6

Goethe
Faust, Part 1
1832

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
Is my destroyer.
And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose
My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.

—Dylan Thomas

Gray, dear young fellow, is all theorizing, And green, life's golden tree.

—Goethe

The quip by French Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé that a poem is abandoned, not completed, could readily be applied to Goethe's *Faust*. Goethe worked on parts of his masterpiece for over sixty years. Even then, he was not fully satisfied. In a letter to his friend Wilhelm von Humboldt, he spoke of the difficulties of completing his poetic drama: "For more than sixty years the conception of *Faust* has lain here before my mind with the clearness of youth, though the sequence with less fullness. I have let the idea go quietly along with me through life and have only worked out the scenes that interested me most from time to time." To this he added, "It was difficult to do through conscious effort and strength of personality something that really should have been the spontaneous work of active nature" (Hamlin 431). Finally, in the same letter, he despaired of finding a contemporary audience that would comprehend his "serious jest."

There is some irony in Goethe's remarks about his audience. As a work of theater, *Faust* belongs very much to the eighteenth century. Its tableaux and long allegorical pageants assume the leisurely pace of an evening's entertain-

ment in an aristocratic court theater, which is the case with regard to the play's original genesis. Despite such an anachronism, Goethe's vision looks to the future, creating in the figure of Faust the myth of modern man, embodying the Western consciousness in all of its contradictions. Thus in his 1947 poem, "The Progress of Faust," Karl Shapiro compares him to the modern scientist, "appearing on the sixth to pose / In an American desert at war's end / Where, at his back, a dome of atoms rose" (98). Even more disturbing is Paul Celan's use of Margarete, Faust's beloved and Goethe's embodiment of the German people, in his *Todesfuge* (Death Fugue):

> der schreibt wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland dein goldenes Harr Margarete
>
> Dien aschenes Harr Sulamith wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng
>
> [he writes when dusk falls to Germany your golden hair Margarete your ashen hair Shulamith we dig a grave in the breeze there one lies unconfined]. (Celan 62, 63)

Faust is a divided soul, restless and alienated, at one moment exultant, aspiring to the heights of achievement, at the next melancholy, chafing against the limits of knowledge. He is the expression of energy and activity, always wishing to do good, yet often doing much harm, blinded by his vanity and narcissism. Faust is the revolutionary, confronting the status quo. He is the modern scientist, pursuing his curiosity no matter where it might lead. He is the existentialist, creating his own meaning. Not surprisingly, then, Goethe's *Faust* has resonated with modern readers and artists ever since it first appeared. The list of poems, plays, novels, paintings, operas, other musical composition, and movies that respond to Goethe's play is vast and growing. Part 1 of *Faust* is the most complete and accessible to the modern reader and also the most suggestive with regard to philosophical literature. Therefore, aside from several brief references to Part 2, this chapter will focus on Part 1.

BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) is to German literature what Dante is to Italian, Cervantes to Spanish, and Shakespeare to English: He established a literary language and reputation that equate him with the national culture, yet his work goes beyond national and historical boundaries. An authentic genius in an age of geniuses, Goethe was a poet, playwright, novelist, painter, scientist, philosopher, lawyer, and diplomat. Various editions

of his collected works add up to over 130 volumes. Born in Frankfurt, his long life stretched from the Enlightenment through Romanticism. Voltaire's *Candide* and Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas* appeared in 1759 when he was ten. At the end of his life he was corresponding with Byron and Sir Walter Scott. From a distance he witnessed the American and French Revolutions, and closer to hand the Napoleonic Wars and their aftermath. Among his contemporaries were Mozart and Beethoven, Blake and Wordsworth, Kant and Hegel, Berlioz and Stendhal.

After a happy childhood, the young Goethe traveled to Leipzig (1765) and then Strasbourg (1770, 1771). Here he met and came under the influence of the clergyman and philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) and his theories on the evolutionary nature of history and culture, which held that these unfold according to an internal organic logic. Like Vico, Herder was also in search of the relationship between language and historical consciousness, leading him to explore folk songs as a form of expression closer to the inner logic of the national character. In this he stood in opposition to the prevailing Enlightenment theories of history as something uniform, crossing political and ethnic boundaries. Under Herder's influence, Goethe began the philosophical study of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, who provided him with the notion that all reality was simply different attributes of one being. At this time he also commenced a lifelong interest in natural science, culminating in his *Theory of Color* (1810) and his extensive work on plant metamorphosis. Goethe was the first person to use the term morphology in relation to comparative biology. Also under Herder's influence, Goethe became active in the *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) movement, a forerunner of Romanticism, which aspired to create a more authentic German literature, consistent with its linguistic and cultural roots. They opposed a literary culture dominated by the classicism of the French Enlightenment, which had rejected German indigenous culture. The influential Prussian court of Frederick the Great, as with courts of many of the German principalities and dukedoms, preferred the French language to German. Among the most notable accomplishments of the *Sturm und Drang* are Friedrich von Schiller's plays, such as *The Robbers* (1781) and *Don Carlos* (1787). These works exercised profound influence on German and Russian Romanticism, and later on Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, and inspired composers such as Beethoven. As part of this literary rebellion, Goethe produced his plays *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773) and later *Egmont* (finally published in 1788)—for which Beethoven composed incidental music. Both are quasi-historical dramas about the struggle for freedom. He also published *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), a novel

of letters about a sensitive young man and his unrequited love for a young woman named Lotte; the novel culminated in his suicide. Inspired by the novels of sentiment of Richardson and Sterne, *Werther* was an instant success, catapulting the young Goethe into international fame. Striking a sympathetic nerve, the novel supposedly caused a wave of suicides as well as a series of literary imitations, including later Ugo Foscolo's *Le Ultime Lettere di Jacopo Ortis* (1802), and laid the groundwork for a host of Byronic heroes. Its fame also brought Goethe an invitation from Charles Augustus, Duke of Saxe-Weimar. Goethe accepted, spending, with the exception of an interlude in Italy (1786–1788), the rest of his life based at Weimar, in the service of the Duke.

During the so-called First Weimar Period (1776–1786), Goethe completed a number of poems while serving as the chief minister of state. Chafing at the demands of his office, as well as at the demands of emotional problems and the sense of being in an aesthetic dead-end, he found himself unable to complete any larger project. In a pattern followed by a number of northern European artists and writers, Goethe visited Italy, "wo die Zitrone blühn, / Im dunkeln Laub die Gold-Orangen glühn [where the lemon flowers, in the dark leaves the golden orange glows]." The warmer and more unrestrained atmosphere proved a tonic, reviving his creative and sexual spirits. At this time he completed *Egmont*, sketched plans for a number of other projects, and began a cycle of earthy erotic lyrics called the *Roman Elegies* (1795), following the classical models of Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid. Returning to Weimar, Goethe married, entering into what is called either the Second Weimar Period, or Weimar Classicism. Joining with Schiller, he championed a Classical Humanism in opposition to the Romanticism centered at the university town of Jena, the circle of August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel, their wives Caroline and Dorothea, Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis), and the philosophers Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich von Schelling. Goethe replaced his earlier *Sturm und Drang* stance for what he took to be the more spontaneous spirit of pagan antiquity. Over the next 34 years he produced a series of important plays, novels, and poems, including *Tasso* (1790), *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1787), the novel *Wilhelm Meister's Years of Apprenticeship* (1795, 1796), followed by its sequel, *Wilhelm Meister's Years of Wandering* (1821), and *Elective Affinities* (1809), the *Westöstlicher Divan* (1819) (*West-Eastern Divan*—a long cycle of poems imitating the Persian lyrics of Hafiz), and his autobiographical *Italian Journey* (*Italienische Reise*) (1816) and *Poetry and Truth* (1811–1833). In the last period of his life, Goethe became increasingly famous, assuming the mantle of an international celebrity.

THE *FAUST* TRADITION

While tales of both black and white magic stretch back to the Middle Ages and even antiquity (consider for instance the figure of Simon the Magus), the Faust tradition begins around 1480 with the historical figure of Georg Faust, a friend of the Christian Humanist and Protestant Reformer, Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560). This Faust had a reputation as an astronomer / astrologer and something of a confidence man or trickster. A number of tales grew up around him, including his supposed ability to fly through the air, his pact with the devil, his ability to summon the spirits of antiquity, and his performance of magic before the Holy Roman Emperor. These tales were collected in various Latin and German manuscripts, and first printed in Frankfurt in 1587 by the publisher Johann Spiess, thereafter known as the *Spiess Faustbuch*. From these origins, the Faust legends followed two lines of transmission and development, the chapbook tradition and the dramatic tradition. Aimed at a rising general readership, the chapbook or *Volksbuch* typically consisted of cheaply produced broadsheets that took advantage of the development of printing and featured ballads or other popular materials. In the dramatic tradition, Faust stories became the staple of numerous popular plays. These retained a strong element of the medieval morality play. The Faust stories also found popular expression in pantomimes and puppet-plays much in the spirit of Punch and Judy. Here the character Wagner, Faust's assistant, develops more fully into a comic counterpart to his master. In 1592 an English translation of the *Faustbuch* appeared under the title, *The Historie of the damnable life, and deserued death of Doctor Iohn Faustus*. This is the probable source for Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (the A text published 1604 and the B text 1606). In 1759, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing published his *Szene aus Faust* (*Scenes from Faust*). It was probably through Lessing and the puppet-play tradition that Goethe was first led to the Faust story.

Goethe discovered the Faust legend early in his *Sturm und Drang* period, while searching for material in the folk literature. It is difficult to reconstruct with precision the genesis of the work over a sixty year period of composition and revision; nevertheless, scholars divide the development of *Faust* into six major stages. The first, dating around 1772–1775, is the so-called *Urfaust*, the original or source-Faust. Partly inspired by folk songs, partly by Shakespeare, and partly by the rise of the "Bourgeois Tragedy," Goethe developed the story of Faust around the tragedy of Gretchen. For this he adapted and incorporated a number of folk songs, including Mephistopheles' "Song of the Flea," as well as Gretchen's "Ballad of the King of Thule," and

the "Spinning Song." The second stage dates from Goethe's stay in Rome, preparing the *Faust: A Fragment* (1788–1790), which appeared in an edition of his collected works. In addition to revising extant materials, he composed the "Witch's Kitchen" scene (lines 2337–2677) and the "Forest / Cavern" scene (lines 3217–3373). Back in Weimar, Goethe returned to the play, working on the "Dedication," "Prelude," and "Prologue in Heaven," as well as the "Prison" scene (lines 4405–4612), and the "Walpurgis Night" scene, incorporating the "Walpurgis Night's Dream," which was originally meant for another work altogether. These revisions and additions culminated in the third stage. At Schiller's encouragement, Goethe published *Faust*, Part 1 (1808). In the fourth stage Goethe turned to Part 2, preparing a draft of the *Helena* episodes, and the "Classical-Romantic Phantasmagoria," among others. In 1828, he published Act I of Part 2. In the sixth stage, Goethe incorporated more scenes along with the "Classical Walpurgis Night," begun around 1830. He sent the final version to the publishers in July 1831; it was published posthumously in 1832.

FAUST, PART 1: PLOT DEVELOPMENT

The broad plot of the Faust legend tells the story of a man who sells his soul to Mephistopheles, the devil, for the sake of knowledge and power. In the course of the narrative or play, he engages in a series of adventures, often of a low comic sort. He also typically calls up the soul of Helen of Troy. In Marlowe's version, this results in the famous "face that launched a thousand ships" speech. Asking for a kiss, Faustus comments,

> Her lips suck forth my soul, see where it flies
> Come Helen, come give me my soul again
> Here will I dwell, for heaven be in these lips,
> And all is dross that is not Helena! (12.82–86)

Marlowe probably puns on Helen's name. Helen's kiss is the hell's mouth of the medieval morality play, through which the devil will extract Faustus's soul. Like his mythic contemporary Don Juan (or Mozart's Don Giovanni), Faust is conventionally dragged to hell at the end of the story. Goethe follows this broad arc from despair and demonic pact to the death of Faust, but alters it in a number of ways. First, he tones down the comic dimensions of Faust, making him more a somber tragic figure in the spirit of Hamlet. The role of trickster shifts to Mephistopheles. Second, he invents the character of Gretchen, incorporating her tragedy into the center of the play. He also

expands the story of Helen of Troy, shifting her to the center of Part 2. Most significantly, Goethe saves Faust from final damnation, much to the chagrin of the hard-working Mephistopheles. Tying the various elements together, this salvation is achieved through the intervention of Gretchen, a bit like Dante's Beatrice, and the spirit of the "Eternal Feminine" (*Das Ewig-Weibliche*).

While Part 2 is divided into five acts according to the conventions of classical tragedy, Part 1 unfolds as one action divided into 24 scenes, and ostensibly takes place over a period of approximately thirteen months—from the night before Easter morning to a few days after Walpurgis Night (the night before May 1) the following year. The action of the play opens with a "Prologue in Heaven," in which the Lord (Der Herr) God, and Mephistopheles, the devil, wager over the soul of Faust. The play then begins with Faust alone in his study, late at night. Despairing over the limits of his knowledge, he turns to magic, successfully evoking the Spirit of the Earth (*Geist der Erde*). This exchange is interrupted by Faust's pedantic assistant, Wagner, who supposes his master is conjugating Greek instead of conjuring spirits. Alone again, Faust this time contemplates suicide, and is stopped only by the sound of Easter bells and the singing of a chorus. The scene shifts to Easter morning and the peasants and townspeople celebrating the day. Faust walks among the people with Wagner. The people praise the medical skills of Faust and his father, but later Faust confesses to Wagner that they probably killed more patients than they cured, that their efforts were worse than the plague. He despairs to Wagner that he is divided, that two souls inhabit his breast, one clinging to the world of the senses and the other soaring to the heavens. As they return to Faust's rooms, they notice that they are followed by a black poodle.

Alone again in his study, except for the poodle, Faust decides to resume the project of translating the Bible. Turning to the opening line of the Gospel of John, "In the beginning was the Word," Faust decides that "word" does not adequately capture the original Greek, "logos." He tries first "thought [*der Sinn*]," then "power [*die Kraft*]," then finally settles on "In the beginning was the Act [*die Tat*]!" The poodle barks excitedly throughout this exercise, goes through a series of transformations, and finally turns into Mephistopheles. After some introductions, Mephistopheles leaves, returning later dressed as a Spanish cavalier with scarlet suit, silk brocading, and a cock-feather perched on a beret, his conventional guise, perhaps an allusion to Don Juan (Don Giovanni). In Marlowe and other early versions he is typically attired as a Franciscan monk, a little Protestant joke. Mephistopheles now offers Faust the famous bargain. Traditionally this is an exchange of his soul for

25 years of the devil's service. Goethe's *Faust*, however, significantly alters the terms:

> Should ever I take ease upon a bed of leisure,
> May that same moment mark my end!
> When first by flattery you lull me
> Into a smug complacency,
> When with indulgence you can gull me,
> Let that day be the last for me!
> This is my wager! (1692–1698)

In short, Faust will lose his soul the moment he is ever satisfied with life, if he were ever to wish to linger over some moment (*Augenblicke*), "Tarry a while! You are so fair! [*Verweile doch! Du bist so schön*]" (1700). The contract signed and sealed in blood, Faust packs.

The next three scenes offer comic relief. First there is a satirical exchange between Mephistopheles disguised as Faust and a student seeking advice. Tragedy is now repeated as farce, as Mephistopheles's Faust paints a satirical portrait of the medieval curriculum that Faust had disparaged in the opening of the play. The scene then shifts to Auerbach's tavern, where Mephistopheles entertains Faust and the assembled drinkers with a bawdy song and various feats of magic, including tapping a table for wine. Finally they proceed to a witch's kitchen where, after some magic hocus pocus that the humorless Faust derides as "preposterous low-grade mime," he is given a potion to make him appear younger.

The play now shifts to the tragedy of Gretchen. Passing a young woman on the street, Faust falls instantly in love, dispatching Mephistopheles to help win her heart. The young woman, named Margarete (Gretchen or Gretel in the diminutive forms), is innocent and inexperienced, and disturbed by these attentions. Mephistopheles surreptitiously gives her a box of jewels. Frightened, she shows her priest, who appropriates them. Mephistopheles next seeks to gain her favor through Marthe, a gossipy neighbor who strongly resembles the nurse in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. While the naive Gretchen senses something wrong with Mephistopheles, she succumbs to Faust's courting. In the middle of this action, Goethe inserts a scene, "Forest and Cave" (3217–3373) in which Faust goes off alone to commune with nature and celebrate the Spirit of the Earth for giving him the power to love Gretchen. "You lead me to the cavern refuge, show / My own self to me, and of my own breast / The secret deep-laid miracles unfold." This ecstasy is tempered, however, when he thinks of Mephistopheles and his insolent

negation. "Thus reel I from desire to fulfillment / And in fulfillment languish for desire."

Predictably Gretchen becomes pregnant. Before she can tell Faust, however, crisis breaks. First, to facilitate her clandestine meeting, she gives her mother a sleeping potion (which turns out to be an overdose). Outside her window, Faust and Mephistopheles are confronted by her brother, Valentine, a hot-tempered young solder who had gotten wind of the relationship. The confrontation culminates in a duel in which Valentine is killed by Faust. Dying in the street, Valentine curses his sister before the community. Pregnant, seemingly abandoned by Faust, and guilty over her complicity in the death of her brother and (as we learn later) the death of her mother, Gretchen is consumed by grief and the sense that she is damned, shattering her sanity. She subsequently gives birth. Scorned by society, she wanders about in desperation until the child is drowned under suspicious circumstances.

Meanwhile, Mephistopheles takes Faust to the Brocken, the highest point in the Harz Mountains, and the site of the annual black sabbath known as Walpurgis Night. The scene is a virtuoso exercise for Goethe, part carnival topsy turvy, part social satire. In the midst of the orgy, Faust sees an image of a young woman who resembles Gretchen with a red strand around her neck, giving him the premonition that something is wrong. Goethe closes the scene with the "Walpurgis Night's Dream, or the Golden Wedding of Oberon and Titania," a set piece inspired by Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Faust learns that since his killing of Valentine and flight from the town, Gretchen has been condemned to death, and is in prison awaiting execution. Faust and Mephistopheles hurry to the prison to rescue her. To his shock, Faust learns that like *Hamlet*'s Ophelia, Gretchen has gone mad, and refuses to leave her prison cell. In a sort of raving flashback, she relives the child's drowning.

> Quick, Run!
> Save your little one.
> . . .
> Snatch it, for God's sake,
> It hasn't sunk,
> Is kicking still!
> Save it, save! (4551–4562)

Part 1 closes with Mephistopheles dragging Faust away to avoid their detection and capture, declaring that "she is condemned!" A voice from

above, however, replies that she is "Redeemed! [*Ist gerichtet!*]" (4612). The end of the scene echoes conclusions of both the traditional Faust legend and the Don Giovanni story, with the hero dragged away by the devil. Goethe's treatment differs fundamentally, however, in that Faust is not taken to Hell, but to a further quarter century of adventures presented in Part 2, culminating in his salvation, Gretchen playing a crucial role in that redemption.

PHILOSOPHICAL THEMES

Philosophically and thematically, *Faust*, Part 1 falls into two parts. The first is a metaphysical comedy in which Goethe explores the limits of the Enlightenment vision of science and knowledge, and the nature of being. The second is the tragedy of Gretchen, which lays out the ethical dimensions of his vision.

Goethe's *Faust* begins first with a "Dedication," in which the author evokes the "wavering apparitions" of lost loves and friends. This is followed by a "Prelude," featuring a director, a dramatic poet, and a merry person, a reminder that there are three realities in a play, the poetic vision of the artist, the creative interpretation of the director, and the aesthetic response of the audience, each often in conflict with the other. Next Goethe provides a "Prologue in Heaven," a blend of Job and Milton, in which the archangels Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael are interrupted by the devil Mephistopheles, while they are celebrating the cosmos and the creativity of the Lord. Mephistopheles, ever the spirit of negation, contradicts the celebrations by pointing out that humankind is as bestial as ever, despite the gift of reason. The Lord counters with the example of Dr. Faust, to which the devil observes, aptly summarizing the Faustian paradox,

> He claims the most resplendent stars from heaven,
> And from the earth each pleasure's highest zest,
> Yet near or far, he finds no haven
> Of solace for his deeply troubled breast. (304–307)

Echoing the wager between God and Satan from the book of Job, the Lord accepts Mephistopheles' boast, permitting him to tempt Faust. The effect of the "Dedication," "Prelude," and "Prologue" is to create a series of enveloping narrative frames that decenter the authorial voice of the play. Who is the creator? The Lord, the actor, the director, the audience, the author, or the characters themselves? From the beginning, the play raises the problem of authority and the source of meaning.

Closely related to this is the ethical-moral problem of the nature of evil, especially embodied in the figure of Mephistopheles. Here, ironically, God works through the moral agency of Mephistopheles. He says to the devil,

> Of all the spirits of negation
> The rogue has been least onerous to my mind
> Man all too easily grows lax and mellow,
> He soon elects repose at any price;
> And so I like to pair him with a fellow
> To play the deuce, to stir, and to entice. (337–343)

In a sense the demonic Lord of the Flies is like the Socratic gadfly that arouses a good, but sluggish horse (Plato's *Apology* 30e). Mephistopheles himself makes a similar point when he introduces himself to Faust as "Part of the force which would / Do ever evil, and does ever good" (1335, 1336). Underlying this is the Augustinian struggle to resolve the problem of evil. If God is the creator of the universe, the unitary source of everything, how are we to understand the apparent presence of evil? The presence of evil as a separate, autonomous force as envisioned by the Manicheians contradicts the notion of the single divine one. But if God is the source of everything, how do we reconcile the creation of evil with a good and perfect being? Saint Augustine had attempted to solve the problem in psychological terms, arguing that evil was the result of false desires and a false understanding of the world. Goethe concurs with this, but complicates the picture.

The play proper opens with the melancholy Faust alone, enclosed in his study, enveloped in a dark, heavy, claustrophobic atmosphere. In a long monologue he surveys his many intellectual and academic accomplishments, finding them empty.

> I have pursued, alas, philosophy,
> Jurisprudence, and medicine,
> And, help me God, theology,
> With fervent zeal through thick and thin.
> And here, poor fool, I stand once more,
> No wiser than I was before. (354–358)

This scene is a convention in Faust plays from Marlowe onward. The tone, however, is that of book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible, which finds all human accomplishments insubstantial vanity, "*ganz eitel* [entirely idle]" in Luther's translation. Faust's litany lists the traditional faculties of the medieval university, circumscribing the limits of human knowledge. But Faust's litany

also echoes the complaints of French philosopher René Descartes, in the first chapter of his *Discours de la méthode*, in which he describes the failure of the traditional curriculum to satisfy his skepticism and provide trustworthy knowledge of the world, and therefore the need to think for himself rather than appeal to some authority. Many philosophers take Descartes as the first modern philosopher, and the *Discours* as the first expressions of the modern consciousness in its quest for a method to ascertain scientific knowledge against an ambiguous and problematic sense perception. Thus Faust's opening lament signals his divided nature. On one side he is Qoheleth of Ecclesiastes, despairing at his limits; on the other side he is the Cartesian philosopher, searching for something new. What is the nature of these limits and what is the chance of salvation?

Throughout Part 1, the scenes alternate between interior to exterior settings, establishing a recurrent motif that relates to Faust's condition and his double nature. Enclosure in its various manifestations signifies his material side, his melancholy and despair. We first see him in his heavy gothic chambers, weighed down with the burden of futile knowledge and confined possibilities. His books and instruments are like so many bricks in a wall that separate him from the truth that he seeks. They are an artificial structure that constrains, marking the finite limits of his world. By contrast, when he is out in nature, as during the Easter morning walk, the "forest and cave" scene, or the episode in Gretchen's garden, he is ecstatic, his spirits soaring at the seemingly unlimited possibilities. At least three things enclose and constrain Faust, causing his melancholy. One simply pertains to his age and the limits of his body; he sees his true self enclosed and weighed down by a deteriorating body. Philosophically more interesting, however, are the limits imposed on him by the state of human knowledge, and more fundamentally the limits of language, perception, and cognition. Interiors, and especially Faust's closed study correspond to Plato's cave. Physically and symbolically, his study delimits human knowledge and potential.

> Woe! Stuck with this dungeon yet?
> Curse this dank frowsty cabinet,
> Where even Heaven's dear ray can pass
> But murkily through tinted glass!
> Entombed within this book-lined tower,
> Which dust envelops, worms devour,
> . . .
> Stuffed tightly with ancestral junk –
> This is your world! Call this a world! (398–409)

Tradition and established knowledge shape what he understands about the world, but at the same time cover over what falls outside their parameters. Later, looking at his scientific instruments, he bemoans the failure of science and scientific method to arrive at any understanding,

> [N]ever
> Will Nature be defrauded of her veil,
> What to your spirit she reveals not, that you fail
> To torture out of her with screw or lever. (672–675)

The allusion to the Baconian metaphor of the scientist "torturing" the secrets out of nature underlines Faust's sense of the futility of the Enlightenment project. Wordsworth makes a similar point when he writes, "We murder to dissect" (*Tables Turned* 28).

Language itself is perhaps the ultimate instrument, and equally problematic. Early in his opening monologue Faust declares that he must quit his "verbiage-mongering [*Worten kramen*]" (385). In translating the Bible, Faust rejects the "word." Later the play offers a farcical treatment of the Scholastic debate over Nominalism, the philosophical doctrine that our words have no necessary link to reality. Mephistopheles tells the student,

> [F]or just where concept's lacking
> A word in time supplies the remedy
> Words are good things to be debated,
> With words are systems generated,
> In words belief is safely vested,
> From words no jot or tittle can be wrested. (1995–2000)

Anticipating much analytical and postmodern philosophy, Mephistopheles describes how language can create the illusion of meaning, while being devoid of any real link to the world.

Faust is given a hint of meaning during his encounter with the Spirit of the Earth. Looking at a sign of the Macrocosm in one of his books of magic, Faust feels his spirits lightened. "Am I a god?" (439), he asks himself expansively, a remark that echos Mephistopheles' ironic deprecation of humankind as "Earth's little god" (281). Faust next turns to a page showing the Spirit of the Earth (*Geist der Erde*):

> You, Spirit of the Earth, are nigher,
> I sense my powers rising higher,
> Already with new wine I am aglow,

I feel emboldened now to venture forth,
To bear the bliss, the sorrow of this earth. (461–465)

Magically evoking the spirit, Faust is terrified when he is successful, and the spirit appears before him in a flame. Part of Goethe's inspiration for this scene derives from a 1652 etching and drypoint by Rembrandt, titled "Faust in his Study, Watching a Magic Disc," showing a magical circle appearing to the philosopher in his study. Using the theatrical tools of the day, Goethe visualized an image projected on a scrim by a magic lantern. With this in mind he prepared a drawing of a head and torso, based on the statue of the Zeus of Otricoli, which he had seen in the Vatican Museum. Beardless, but with long hair, the figure also resembles Apollo, giving his Spirit of the Earth a classical, pagan aspect, anticipating Nietzsche's conception of the world in terms of the Dionysian and Apollonian. Chiding Faust for his fear, the Spirit calls him "superman [*Übermenschen*]" (489). (This is the origin of Friedrich Nietzsche's doctrine of the overman.) The Spirit describes itself in term of a perpetual process of weaving, also an inspiration for Thomas Carlyle's "Philosophy of Clothes" in his *Sartor Resartus*.

Up, down, I wave,
Waft to and fro
Birth and grave,
An endless flow,
A changeful plating,
Fiery begetting
Thus at Time's scurrying loom I weave and warp,
I weave the Godhead's living garment. (502–509)

In this metaphor of the continual weaving of the "living garment" of the Godhead, Goethe tries to articulate a view of the cosmos that reconciles the notion of a Heraclitian flux with a Spinozan sense of the unity of God and nature (*deus sive natura*—God, that is nature), giving a fluid, organic quality to Spinoza's crystalline geometry. In Spinoza, God is the one necessary being, immanent in the world and in nature. Individual things in the realm of appearance are simply modes of God. Thus everything is part of a single unity, one substance. Inspired by his work in plant morphology and the historical sense that he got from Herder, Goethe wants to add to this vision the notion of growth and metamorphosis. Thus in an analogous fashion the plant is a single thing, but unfolds through a series of stages. The meaning of the plant is not in any specific goal or telos, but in the act of change. In the same fashion humanity grows, driven on one hand by the spirit of negativity,

and drawn on the other hand by the spirit of life or life force embodied in the Eternal Feminine (*das Ewig-Weibliche*).

Goethe introduces the concept of the Eternal Feminine at the end of Part 2. Faust's soul has been rescued at the last minute from Mephistopheles and his minions, and is carried past arrays of holy anchorites and angelic choirs where it is presented by the Penitent One (Gretchen) to the Mater Gloriosa and the Chorus Mysticus. The scene is strongly reminiscent of Dante's final vision of the Mystic Rose at the end of the *Paradiso*. Dante imagines love as the force that moves the cosmos: "the love that moves the sun and the other stars [*l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*] (*Paradiso* 33, 145). (The love of God, the penitant's love of God's love, and God's love move everything towards God.) Goethe offers an organic vision of this cosmos. In the closing lines of Part 2, the Chorus Mysticus declares,

> All in transition
> Is but reflection;
> What is deficient
> Here becomes action;
> Human discernment
> Here is passed by;
> Woman Eternal
> Draw us on high. (12104–12111)

The force of love or the life force motivates the growth and metamorphosis of the earth. Rather than positing the divine as an external goal, some transcendent logos, he sees it as an internal imperative. The dynamic character of the world is embodied not in the figures of the Father or Son, but in the Holy Virgin, Mother, Queen, Goddess (*Jungfrau, Mutter, Königin, Göttin*), pulled together in the figure of the Eternal Feminine. She represents the dynamic character of the world, a fertility or potentiality rather than an external goal. She is the divine action (*die Tat*—grammatically a feminine noun) rather than the divine word.

Faust's attempt to translate the word *logos* in the Gospel of John summarizes and reiterates his and western philosophy's struggle to resolve the problem of meaning, at the same time hinting at a possible solution. He begins with *logos* as *word* or *thought* (die Sinn) with its Platonic implications of something immutable, eternal, and transcendent. This, however, seems inaccessible, a fundamental separation between the idea and the world. He next turns to the Enlightenment critique of knowledge and scientific method developed by Bacon and Descartes. Evoking the Baconian doctrine

that knowledge is power, the notion that our understanding of nature correlates to our ability to use and manipulate nature, Faust next equates the *logos* with *power* (*die Kraft*). This, however, introduces further limits. Instead of asking what something means, I can only speak of what I can do with it. Knowledge now shifts to the limits of the subjectivity of the individual. Thus, far from solving the problem between idea and world, I have replaced it with the separation of subject and object. Contemporary to Goethe, this problem finds its fullest expression in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). Our knowledge of the pure reality, the "thing-in-itself," Kant contends, is always inaccessible. What I know is always filtered through and constructed by the categories of the mind, the means and instrumentality of knowing. Without the conscious subject, I cannot perceive and know the world, but such a consciousness sets up a subject-object dichotomy between me as the subjective center of conscious and the world as the separate object of that consciousness, a move that alienates the subject from the world, limiting any spontaneous relationship. The very means by which I know the world, whether language, sense perception, or consciousness itself, prevents me from getting at it. In this preoccupation, Goethe places himself at the center of European and British Romanticism. In the fifth "Walk" of the *Reveries of the Solitary Wanderer* (1776–1778), Rousseau imagines himself coming close to a mystical union with nature, only to be prevented by his awareness of himself being conscious of being conscious. Wordsworth speaks of the gap between the spontaneity of the child before the "Shades of the prison-house begin to close" (Wordsworth 461) around the maturing adult. For Rousseau, Wordsworth, and Goethe's Faust, we can know only the world through the self, but at the same time it is the same self-awareness that alienates us from the world, an unbridgeable subject-object dichotomy.

Faust anticipates a solution when he finally decides to translate *logos* with the word *act* (*die Tat*). By equating being with doing or creating, he proposes to eliminate the transcendence between the idea and world, or subject and object. Meaning is not dependent on the mystical apprehension of an idea or the discovery of some telos separate from the self, but on the perpetual act of becoming. At the moment of insight, however, Faust is distracted by Mephistopheles, just as he was distracted from the Spirit of the Earth by the untimely interruption by Wagner. The real meaning begins to emerge when the play shifts focus to the tragedy of Gretchen.

The tragedy of Gretchen is Goethe's most significant addition to and innovation of the traditional material. His immediate inspiration was the account of the execution of Susanna Margarethe Brandt in Frankfurt for infanticide in 1772. Goethe also drew on the fashionable eighteenth-century

genre / theme known as the "bourgeois tragedy." Inspired by works such as Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, Beaumarchais's *Marriage of Figaro*, and Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, the bourgeois tragedy centered on the seduction and destruction of innocent middle-class girls by upper-class, aristocratic men. These works were themselves a political statement about the rising prominence of the middle-class, and were part of an Enlightenment rejection of Aristotelian and neo-classical aesthetics, which posited that the aristocracy was the appropriate subject matter for epic and tragedy; thus seeing an Oedipus, an Antigone, or a Hamlet as tragic heroes, while the middle and lower classes were appropriate for comedy, thus Moliere's "bourgeois gentleman," Monsieur Jourdan, or Shakespeare's "rude mechanicals."

Goethe is influenced by the German Romantic search for its authentic ethnic identity, its folk roots or the German *Volk*. As such, Gretchen is portrayed not only as an innocent, but a member of the Volk, as marked by her spontaneity and feelings. As with the peasants in Wordsworth, she is closer to her feelings and the rhythms of nature, less alienated. Part of this is signified by her singing of folk songs such as that about king of Thule and the "Spinning Song," indicating that she is less jaded by an artificial culture, closer to the bone of the volk. In the spirit of Rousseau she is a natural being marked by her meekness, modesty, and intuitive apprehension of things, sensing that there is something wrong with Faust's companion. "That man [Mephistopheles]" she tells Faust, "is hateful to me in my inmost heart" (3473). Trying to explain herself, she adds, "he cannot love a single soul" (3490), a key to the nature of evil. Like Ophelia, Gretchen is more sinned against than sinning, and thus remains innocent despite the accusations of her brother, and the circumstances of her pregnancy and accidental infanticide. For this reason the voice from above declares her innocence after Faust is dragged away. As a character she shows little development, at least before her insanity. Her function in the play is more philosophical, as an unmediated natural being and an expression of the Eternal Feminine. As such, she is more the object of Faust's love and salvation than a full being in her own right. For this reason, though Goethe considered the tragedy of Gretchen his artistic triumph, his version of her character attracts little interest. Perhaps also for this reason, Gretchen and the romance between her and Faust has often become a favorite locus for later writers and artists responding to Goethe.

SUBSEQUENT VERSIONS OF THE FAUST TRADITION

Even from its early stages, Goethe's *Faust* has stirred comment and provoked artistic interpretations and replies. Since its publication, the response

has been huge. This includes not only subsequent plays, novels, and poems, but a large and rich body of work in music, the visual arts and, in the twentieth century, film. Given the limits of space here, it is possible to touch only on a few select high points.

Almost immediately Goethe's work attracted the interest of composers and musicians. Not surprisingly some of the earliest interpretations are musical. Franz Schubert set a number of the songs to music, the earliest being Gretchen's spinning song, *Gretchen am Spinnrade* (1814). Also of note are the *Szene aus Goethe Faust* (1814), the *Erlkönig* (1815), and *Der König in Thule* (1816). Other later noteworthy versions of the *Goethe Lieder* come from Robert Schumann and Hugo Wolf. These short lyrical explorations look toward larger compositions such as Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 8 in E flat (1906, 1910), which juxtaposes a ninth century Latin hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, with the final scene of *Faust*, Part 2. This in turn looked toward Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* which sets to music lyrics by the Tang dynasty poets Li Po, Mong Jen, and Wang Sei while subtly alluding to the Spirit of the Earth.

The tragedy of Faust and Gretchen has found its most enthusiastic treatments in opera. The first is Louis Spohr's opera *Faust*, first composed around 1813, performed in 1816, and substantially revised in 1852. Inspired, but intimidated by Goethe, Spohr drew on other versions of the Faust tradition. Carl Maria von Weber also approaches the Faust tradition tangentially. His 1821 opera *Der Freischütz* (*The Marksman*) is one of the masterpieces of German Romanticism, establishing the importance of German opera and breaking the monopoly of Italian opera. Perhaps ironically, two of the most popular and influential early interpreters of Goethe's *Faust* are French, Hector Berlioz and Charles Gounod. Reading Gérard Nerval's 1827 French translation of Part 1, Berlioz was stimulated to set a series of eight scenes to music, which he expanded into *La Damnation de Faust* (1846). Charles Gounod's *Faust* was first performed in 1859. Centering on the romance of the Faust-Gretchen story, it remains one of the most popular operas of all time, as well as, for many, the first entry into Goethe's *Faust*.

Three more modern operatic readings of Faust are worth briefly citing: those of Arrigo Boito's *Mefistofele* (1860, 1867, 1875, and 1881), which play on both Part 1 and Part 2, Ferruccio Busoni's *Doktor Faust* (1925), and Alfred Schnittke's postmodernist *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* (1995).

Goethe's Faust has stimulated a diverse and significant body of responses in European and American literature. In part this relates to the profound power of the myth of Faust to resonate with the definitive themes of the modern condition and its power to articulate a modern mythos. It also responds to

gaps or ambiguities in Goethe's treatment that call for elaboration and reinterpretation. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these include such direct responses as Heinrich Heine's *Doktor Faustus: Eine Tanzballade* (1851): Ivan Turgenev's novella *Faust* (1856): Louisa May Alcott's allegorical romance *A Modern Mephistopheles* (1877), conflating the Faustian with the Byronic; Alfred Jarry's proto-Dadaist, proto-Surrealist *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician: A Neo-Scientific Novel*; Klaus Mann's novel *Mephisto* (1936); Paul Valéry's verse play *Mon Faust Lust* (1946); and Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* (1947), its hero the composer Adrian Leverkühn, a composite of Faust, Nietzsche, and Wagner.

In turn, works as richly diverse as Hermann Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870), Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879, 1880), Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray* (1891), George Bernard Shaw's play *Man and Superman* (1903), Thomas Mann's *A Death in Venice* (1912), Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* (written during the Stalin era and only first published in 1966), and even Beat writer Jack Kerouac's *Doctor Sax: Faust Part Three* (1959), draw significantly on Goethe and the Faustian theme. Also of note is a feminist revision from the (former) East German writer Irmtraud Morgner's 1974 novel, *The Life and Adventures of Trobadora Beatrice as Chronicled by Her Minstrel Laura: A Novel in Thirteen Books and Seven Intermezzos*, sometimes described as "socialist magical realism."

Any survey of later influence of *Faust* should not ignore film. From its early development in the twentieth century, filmmakers have been drawn to the Faust material. These efforts can be classified as filmed performances, adaptations of Faust themes, and interpretations of Goethe's play and characters. In the first category we might put Peter Gorski's *Faust* (1960), which features Gustaf Gründgens in the role of Mephistopheles. Wearing heavy white makeup, he is part clown, part death's head. One of the German theater's great interpreters of Mephistopheles, Gründgens was also the prototype for the hero of Klaus Mann's *Mephisto*. In this category we might also include Neville Coghill's version of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1967) with Richard Burton playing Faust. In the realm of adaptation, films that draw on one or more themes, typically involving a combination of the Faustian bargain and redemption through a Gretchen figure, the list is long and varied. Briefly we might include William Dieterle's *The Devil and Daniel Webster* (1941), Vincente Minnelli's *Cabin in the Sky* (1943), George Abbott and Stanley Donen's *Damn Yankees* (1958), Peter Ustinov's *Hammersmith Is Out* (1972), Alan Parker's *Angel Heart* (1987), Charles Burnett's *To Sleep with Anger* (1990), Idiko Enyedi's *Magic Hunter* (1994), and Terry Hackford's

Devil's Advocate (1997). Also of note in this category are Ingamar Bergman's *Djavulens Oga* (*The Devil's Eye*) (1960), a philosophical bedroom farce that mediates the Faustian bargain through a Kiekegaardian Don Juan, and Stanley Donen's *Bedazzled* (1967) with Peter Cook and Dudley Moore, a Marlovian version, organized around the Seven Deadly Sins.

Let us conclude by looking briefly at three imaginative and innovative film interpretations of Goethe's *Faust*. The range of their focus reminds us of the power of the Faust myth to speak to the modern world. F.W. Murnau's *Faust* (1926) is a masterpiece of German Expressionism, playing on light and dark shadows and disorienting perspectives akin to those in *Doctor Caligari*. Focusing more on Faust's sense of failure as a physician than on his restlessness, Murnau's Faust turns to black magic during the plague. Murnau's interpretation of the play warns of the dangers opened by political and cultural chaos after the First World War. French director René Clair's *La beauté Du Diable* (*Beauty and the Devil*) (1949) has a different take. In an interesting twist on the plot, Clair's elderly Faust exchanges bodies with a handsome young Mephistopheles. In the spirit of Goethe, Faust is finally saved by the love of a beautiful gypsy girl. Finally, Czech animator Jan Svankmajer offers a surrealist-postmodernist interpretation in his *Faust* (1994), a mixture of live-action, stop-motion, and claymation animation.

In the end, it is testimony to Goethe's power that he should crystalize the modern condition and its discontents so fully in the figures of Faust, Mephistopheles, and Margarete. After over 250 years they continue a permanent and provocative challenge, ever goading us onward.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Boyle, Nicholas. *Goethe: Faust Part One*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

———. *The Poetry of Desire (1749–1790)*. Vol. 1 of *Goethe: The Poet and the Age*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

———. *Revolution and Renunciation (1790–1803)*. Vol. 2 of *Goethe: The Poet and the Age*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000.

Butler, E.M. *The Fortunes of Faust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Celan, Paul. *Poems of Paul Celan*. Trans. Michael Hamburger. New York: Persea Books, 1995.

Dante. *Paradiso*. Trans. Allen Mandelbaum. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Druxes, Helga. *The Feminization of Dr. Faustus: Female Identity Quests from Stendhal to Morgner*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Faust: A Tragedy*. Trans. Walter Arndt. New York: W.W. Norton, 1976.

———. *Faust: Eine Tragodie*. Munich: Wilhelm Goldmann, n.d.

Hamlin, Cyrus, ed. Faust: A Tragedy, *by Goethe*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1976.

Hatfield, Henry. *Goethe: A Critical Introduction*. New York: New Directions, 1963.

Jantz, Harold. *The Form of Faust: The Work of Art and Its Intrinsic Structures*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

Lukács, Georg. *Goethe and His Age*. Trans. Robert Anchor. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1969.

Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Faust the Theologian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Plato. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*. Eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.

Santayana, George. *Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante, Goethe*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938.

Shapiro, Karl. *Collected Poems: 1940–1978*. New York: Random House, 1978.

Thomas, Dylan. *The Poems of Dylan Thomas*. Ed. Daniel Jones. New York: New Directions, 1971.

Watanabe-O'Kelly, Helen, ed. *Cambridge History of German Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Watt, Ian. *Myths of Modern Individualism: Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Wordsworth, William. *Poetical Works*. Ed. Thomas Hutchinson, Rev. Ernst de Selincourt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.

7

Kierkegaard
Either/Or
1843

> I want to ask you about this party at Agathon's, when Socrates and Alcibiades and the rest of them were at dinner there. What were all these speeches they were making about Love?…But before you begin, tell me, were you there yourself?
>
> —Plato, *Symposium*

> Don Giovanni a cenar teco
> M'invitiasti e son venuto!
> [Don Giovanni, you invited me to dinner / And I have come]
>
> —Mozart, *Don Giovanni*

The title of Søren Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* (*Enten-Eller)* signifies the idea of choice, but also the refusal to choose, an ironic and indifferent shrug of "whatever." Judge Wilhelm, one of the interlocutors of *Either/Or,* berates the aesthete A: "You have your great joy 'comforting' people when they turn to you in crucial situations; you listen to their expositions and then say: Yes, now I see it all perfectly; there are two possible situations—one can do either this or that. My honest opinion and my friendly advice is that: Do it or do not do it—you will regret both" (*Either/Or* 2. 159). To this imagined witticism of A's, Wilhelm replies, "But the person who mocks others mocks himself, and it is not meaningless but a rather profound mockery of yourself, a tragic proof of how flabby your soul is, that your view of life is concentrated in one single sentence: 'I say simply Either/Or'" (2.159). For Wilhelm, A's posture as a latter-day Qoheleth finding all things vanity signifies not sophistication, but naiveté, not a life lived to the fullest, but the avoidance of life. "Your

occupation consists in preserving your hiding place, and you are successful, for your mask is the most puzzling of all; in other words, you are a nonentity and are something only in relation to others" (2.159). Wilhelm underlines the unacknowledged irony in A's ironic indifference.

Published in 1843, *Either/Or* is Kierkegaard's first major salvo against the smug complacency of both bourgeois society and the Romantics who supposed they stood above it with a critical air of ironic detachment. Each side has failed to come to grips with the implications of its position. Both the aesthetic life, devoted to sensation, and the ethical life, devoted to duty and social obligations, turn the individual and individual meaning into something relative, radically contingent on the external, and, by implication, ultimately empty: Take away the external relations, and self-identity disintegrates, rendering life meaningless. For Kierkegaard there is a third possibility to be found in an authentic religious life that takes its meaning from the relationship of the root self, the finite individual to the infinite, unchanging God, a shift from irony to paradox. *Authentic* is the key word. Kierkegaard is critical of much that passes for Christianity, and his later writings explore in depth the real meaning and implications of serious faith. In this he becomes one of the first existentialists, confronting the silence of pure existence.

PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT

To understand Kierkegaard's position, it is important to put him into his philosophical context, especially with regard to the German philosophers Kant and Hegel. At the end of the eighteenth century, philosophy confronted a crisis. Rationalists such as Spinoza and Leibniz constructed elaborate systems, which, while logically consistent and mathematically elegant, had no grounding in the lived world of experience. By contrast, the Scottish philosopher David Hume had demonstrated that knowledge based on sense experience could at best lead only to probability, never certainty. Awakened from his "dogmatic slumbers" by Hume, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) proposed to establish the possibility of "*a priori* synthetic knowledge," that is factual knowledge of the world independent of the limitations of sense experience. The key to this he termed his "Copernican revolution." For the ancient astronomer Ptolemy, the cosmos was geocentric, that is, the sun moved around the earth. For Copernicus, on the other hand, the cosmos was heliocentric, the earth moving around the sun. Strictly on the level of pure experience, the level of empirical sense data, the phenomenon that Copernicus experienced was the same as that experienced by Ptolemy. What was different was not the phenomena, but the prior understanding that the

mind brought to the phenomenon in order to interpret what it thought it was perceiving. Kant concludes that for there to be sense experience, the basis of empirical science, two elements must be present beforehand, the mind with its categories of reason, and the world itself (the thing-in-itself) as it exists prior to and independent of the interpretation of the mind. "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* 93). For Kant, transcendental knowledge is concerned not so much with the objects of experience as with the mode of knowledge, how the mind translates the thing-in-itself*.

Kant's analysis has both metaphysical and ethical implications that are relevant to Kierkegaard. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant argues that if we know how the mind works, we may analyze the content of our subjective experience in order to make transcendental deductions which allow us to judge the objectivity of our knowledge. While this allows us to solve some philosophical problems, it renders certain ultimate truths inaccessible. We may never have a direct knowledge of the thing-in-itself because we can never know anything outside the mediation of our minds. The claustrophobic yearnings of Goethe's Faust relates to this sense of inaccessibility. Kierkegaard himself noted, "[t]he Faustian element appears now as despair over the inability to comprehend the whole development in an all-embracing total vision" (*Papers* 80). From a theological perspective, any knowledge of God or ultimate things is beyond human comprehension. I cannot prove the existence of God either from direct experience or rational proof, though Kant does argue that God is necessary to "complete" morality, to guarantee the inherent justice and meaningfulness of the world. Kierkegaard complained in his journal, "the philosophers tend to give with one hand and take away with the other. . . . Kant, who, although he taught us something about the categories' approximation to what is really true (*noumena*), took it all back by making the approximation *infinite*" (*Papers* 82). All of this underlines, for Kierkegaard, the premise that religious faith is a radical leap into an abyss of uncertainty (a metaphor that he borrows from Gotthold Ephraim Lessing). There are no reassuring guarantees, and we should not live our lives complacently as though there were.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), Kant explored the foundations of ethics and morality. Just as our empirical science presupposes a relationship between the thing-in-itself and the categories of mind, so the moral sciences

(manifest in our legal, political, and moral institutions) presuppose a relation between the good-in-itself and the moral principle, which he terms the categorical imperative. For Kant, acts performed from duty (by which he means acts performed for their own sake) as opposed to acts performed out of some desire, inclination or interest, are more clearly expressions of the good-in-itself and therefore morally good. The reason for this is that an act performed out of duty seems to indicate a free will more unambiguously than the others. For if I am acting out of interest, desire, or benefit, my behavior is to some degree determined, and therefore less an expression of free will. To the degree that I am a puppet controlled by biological urges or physical forces, I am not a moral agent. For Kant the full measure of my humanity, my inherent worth or dignity, is related to my being a moral agent, acting out of duty. "Two things move the mind with ever increasing admiration and awe," writes Kant, alluding to Psalm 19 at the end of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, "the starry heavens above and the moral law within." Kierkegaard might concur with much of this, but would probably add the thoughts of Blaise Pascal, "[T]he eternal silence of these infinite spaces fills me with dread" (95).

Initially the German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) seemed to offer Kierkegaard a resolution for the separation between the thing-in-itself and what we are capable of experiencing and knowing, providing a philosophical foundation for religion. A Lutheran pastor as well as a philosopher, Hegel developed a system in which the world historical mind or spirit (*Geist*) unfolds from a state of unconsciousness to absolute consciousness. "True reality is merely this process of reinstating self-identity, of reflecting into its own self in and from its other, and is not an original and primal unity as such, not an immediate unity as such," he declares in the "Preface" to *The Phenomenology of Mind*. Continuing, he adds in terms that reflect his underlying religious teleology, "It is the process of its own becoming, the circle which presupposes its end as its purpose, and has its end for its beginning; it becomes concrete and actual only by being carried out, and by the end it involves" (Hegel, *Phenomenology* 80, 81).

Central to Hegel's system is the relation of human freedom to self-consciousness. An animal may be conscious of things, but it does not apparently have the capacity to reflect on its being conscious of itself; specifically it is not aware of "bad consciousness," the awareness that the world is not the way it appears. My self-identity, the "who I am," is relative to the sum of the content of my consciousness. As I reflect, however, I become aware of discrepancies and inconsistencies within this tissue of relations. In Hegel's terms, I become "estranged" or "alienated" from existence, producing what the Romantics and Kierkegaard described as a sense of homelessness. Eventually

the reflective consciousness establishes a new and fuller self-identity, incorporating the old, but reconceptualizing it. Hegel called this dialectical process of cancelling, preserving, and raising, *Aufhebung* (abrogation); his contemporary Friedrich von Schelling coined the formula of thesis-antithesis-synthesis.

To rescue his system from the solipsism of radical subjectivity, Hegel conceived the process in world-historical terms. History is the unfolding of the successive moments in the self-consciousness of the world-historical spirit, working through the medium of the collective consciousness, as it moves from unconsciousness to absolute consciousness. Insofar as we share similar ideas that we actualize in our inventions, arts, and institutions, the subjective idea has become an objective concrete actuality. Our collective identity (as a nation or people), the objects and consciousness that form our historical moment become the subject for the next stage in the dialectical development, a process that will conclude only with absolute consciousness, the complete identity of subject and object. Since the consciousness of subject and object is complete, there is no longer the possibility of the alienation that causes change. We have reached the end of history. On a deeper level, Hegel saw this progression of world-historical moments in eschatological terms, culminating in the actualization of God in existence.

Kierkegaard concurred with much of Hegel's sense of history, especially in the tragic confrontation of conflicting worldviews. "For the people contemporaneous with the Reformation Catholicism was the given actuality, and yet it was an actuality which no longer had validity as such," he wrote in *The Concept of Irony*. "Hence one actuality here collided with another, and herein lies the deeply tragic aspect of world history" (277). Ethically and morally an individual's actions might be world-historically justified, having perceived the inherent contradictions of the moment he or she lives in, yet lack authority because the old actually remains the basis of authority. This articulates Kierkegaard's own sense of himself in his world. It also anticipates his later view that there are three stages of life, the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious.

At the same time, Kierkegaard was deeply disturbed by the implications of Hegel's system, finally concluding that religion and philosophy cannot be reconciled. "Doubt is conquered not by the system but by faith," he wrote in his journal. "If the system is to set doubt at rest, it is by standing higher than both faith and doubt, but in that case doubt must first and foremost be conquered by faith, for a leap over a middle link is not possible" (*Papers* 166). Hegel had supposed that he showed how God exists and is actualized through the mediation of the collective consciousness of individuals. Kierkegaard and many of the so-called "Left Hegelians" quickly realized, in Marx's famous

remark, that Hegel could be turned on his head. Instead of God or the *Geist* acting through the agency of human consciousness to create the world, it is man or even the material (or economic) forces of the world, that create God. Thus thinkers such as Ludwig Feuerbach conceived God as the collective expression of human wishful thinking. Humans perceive themselves as limited and weak, and so project the image of their opposite, an eternal, omniscient, and omnipotent being onto the world.

Even more important from Kierkegaard's perspective, Hegel's system externalized the self by focusing self-identity on the shifting relationship of external objects and transcendental ideals, the self defined in terms of the "other." In this, the notion of an interior self is evacuated of any content, dissipated among myriad relative relationships. Henrik Ibsen explores a similar theme in his play *Peer Gynt*. (Critic Brian Johnston makes the compelling case that Ibsen's last 12 plays deliberately echo the stages of historical consciousness that Hegel outlines in *The Phenomenology*.) Comparing himself to an onion, Peer finds "nothing" at the center when he peels away the layers. For Kierkegaard, on the other hand, each of us has a radical interiority. In other words, I am aware of myself, not so much as some essential being, but that I am conscious of the irreducible fact that I exist, an existence that is most evident to me when I confront my finiteness against the eternal. For Kierkegaard, the problem with Hegel lay precisely in the move to unify the subject and object, to dissolve the difference with the absolute other. The essence of Christianity, Kierkegaard argues, is in the unresolvable paradoxical relationship between the inward existence of the finite self juxtaposed against the infinite and eternal God. "Philosophy's concept is mediation," Kierkegaard wrote, "Christianity's the paradox" (*Papers* 138). By contrast, philosophical speculation which seeks the self in an ideal, or in relation to other objects, evades existence. "When Socrates believed that there was a God," says Johannes Climacus, the narrator of Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, "he held fast to the objective uncertainty with the whole passion of his inwardness, and it is precisely in this contradiction and in this risk, that faith is rooted" (188).

Kierkegaard locates much of the moral crisis of the modern world in the flight from confronting the existence of the inward self. This informs both his extended response to philosophy, especially Hegelian philosophy, and later his controversies with the State Church of Denmark. Hegel had supposed that our culture and institutions were the concrete manifestations of our higher selves, the mark of our civilization and moral enlightenment. This, however, raises a problem. If we identify our selves and our values with the exterior, we run the risk of assuming that we are morally superior because we are culturally

and technologically sophisticated. For Kierkegaard, paradoxically, the more we praise our external achievements, the more we dehumanize ourselves. Am I civilized just because I live in a world that prizes art and literature? Am I a good Christian simply because I observe certain rituals or happen to be born in a country in which Christianity is the state religion? (This was in fact the institutional assumption in Kierkegaard's Denmark.) Put another way, how could the land that nurtured Goethe and Beethoven create Auschwitz? None of us should feel complacent; no civilization is innocent. Kierkegaard did not have to address the modern horrors of the holocaust or the atomic bomb, but would have understood the cause, as did later Kierkegaardians such as Theodor Adorno, Hannah Arendt, and Jacques Derrida. It is in the complacent assumption that we are morally good, that we are authentic human beings because we are successful or because we are culturally and technologically advanced that we are at the greatest risk of dehumanizing ourselves or others. Albert Einstein made a similar point when he remarked, "The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our mode of thinking, and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophes" (qtd. in Lapp 54). Rather than face the lonely anguish of the individual, we flee our authentic existence, seeking meaning and identity outside ourselves or filling our empty minds with chatter and diversion. We confuse the surface for the interior, the props of civilization for the real meaning of life. It is in this diagnosis of the modern human condition that Kierkegaard has exercised such a profound influence in theology, literature, and philosophy.

BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard was born in Copenhagen, May 5, 1813, the youngest child of Michael Pedersen Kierkegaard and Ane (Anne) Sørendatter Lund. Ane had been the maid of Michael's first wife. The first of their seven children was born five months after their marriage. Of these only two, Søren and his older brother Peter, outlived their father, who later became a bishop in the Lutheran Church, the State Church of Denmark. Michael came from a peasant background, and lived in servitude in his youth. Thereafter he became a successful businessman and the beneficiary of a wealthy uncle. Søren's relationship with his father was profound and complex, marked by a mixture of love and fear, closeness and unease. A devout Lutheran, the elder Kierkegaard demanded "absolute obedience," and at the same time possessed a vivid imagination, and liked to argue German philosophy with friends. Kierkegaard recalled his father taking him on imaginary journeys around the sitting room. Michael's deep religious devotion, however, was marked by an

abiding sense of melancholy and gloom, related ostensibly to a sense of guilt that he had visited a curse upon the family for having damned God when left alone cold and hungry to tend sheep as a boy. In the highly autobiographical *Quidam Diary* from *Stages on Life's Way*, Kierkegaard recounts, "And the father believed that he was responsible for his son's depression, and the son believed that it was he who caused the father sorrow—but never a word was exchanged about this" (*Stages* 200).

From an early age, Kierkegaard showed a quick and fertile intelligence. Physically, he was frail, and like his near contemporary, the Italian poet and philosopher, Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837), suffered from a curvature of the spine. To compensate, the young Kierkegaard developed a sharp satirical wit, and cultivated the fashion of a dandy. After regular schooling, he entered the University of Copenhagen in 1830 with the intention of reading for a degree in theology, but became increasingly interested in philosophy and literature. By 1835 he lived the life of an aesthete and *flâneur*, observing the world around him with detachment and irony, frequenting the cafés and theaters more than the lecture halls. His outward frivolity masked a sense of emptiness and despair. "I too have combined the tragic with the comic," he wrote in his journal. "I make witticisms, people laugh—I cry" (*Papers* 89). The dour Christianity of his father seemed untenable, yet as with other young men and women of the age alienated by bourgeois complacency, restlessness led to feelings of profound *ennui*. Writing in his journal, Kierkegaard noted, "Why I really cannot say I definitely enjoy *nature* is that I can't get it into my mind *what* in nature I enjoy" (*Papers* 9). Casting about for an "idea" in which to rest and build some foundation of belief, he turned to modern philosophy, especially that of Hegel. On its surface, Hegel's philosophy spoke of transcending alienation and discovering the absolute. The object of philosophical knowledge, Hegel wrote in his *Logic*, was to divest the objective world of its "strangeness" that we might "find ourselves at home in it; which means no more than to trace the objective world back to the notion—to our innermost self" (qtd. in Gardiner 30). In retrospect, Kierkegaard concluded that while Hegel's system was elegant, it offered nothing for nourishing a better life. He cited with approval Georg Lichtenberg's aphorism about Hegel: "It is about like reading out of a cookbook to a man who is hungry" (qtd. in Lowrie 115). This sentiment was shared by many later thinkers from Schopenhauer to Nietzsche.

The death of Kierkegaard's father in 1839, at the age of 81, marked a change of course for the 26 year old. He recorded in his journal, "I regard his death as the last sacrifice his love made for me, because he has not died *from* me but died *for* me, so that something might still come of me" (*Papers* 98).

Infused with a sense of purpose, he turned from philosophy toward the goal of recovering and purifying the true spirit of Christianity. With this in mind, he decided to seek a life of respectability. Towards this end, he returned to his studies. In 1840, he published his first book, *Papers of One Still Living*, a study critical of the novels of Hans Christian Andersen. Finally completing his degree in 1840, he commenced work on a master's thesis (the equivalent of an American doctorate), part of the requirement for a degree in divinity. At this time he also announced his engagement to Regine Olsen, the daughter of an influential civil servant. In 1841 he defended his thesis, *The Concept of Irony, with Constant Reference to Socrates*.

The Concept of Irony signaled many of Kierkegaard's subsequent themes. For him the figure of Socrates, and Socratic irony, replaced the figure of Faust as the true modern ideal. In turn, his conception of irony, which he later develops more fully in terms of paradox and humor, replaces the relativism prominent in the modern condition. Irony, he wrote, is "a healthiness insofar as it rescues the soul from the snares of relativity," but "a sickness insofar as it is unable to tolerate the absolute except in the form of nothingness" (113, 114). Following Hegel, Kierkegaard sees a double movement in history. The historical nature of consciousness that forms what we take to be our actuality means that on one hand the new actuality comes forth, while on the other, the old is displaced. The "prophetic individual" intimates the future, envisages the new that will come forth. The "authentic tragic hero" fights for the new against the old actuality. The hero's calling, however, is more to assert the new than to destroy the old. This points to a third type of individual, the "ironic subject." For the ironic subject the old actuality has lost all validity, though the individual has no intimation of the new. Irony negates, and is necessary to make way for the new, but establishing nothing (277, 278); it opens the way for objective validity by the absolute negation of actuality. Kierkegaard distinguishes, however, two kinds of irony. One kind of ironist, exemplified by the Romantics—especially Fichte, Tieck, and Schlegel ("the prodigal sons of speculation"), "becomes intoxicated as it were by the infinity of possibles" (279), negating for the sake of negating. It posits a relativism in which everything is equally valid, and therefore equally meaningless, unaware of the irony of its own position. The true ironist, exemplified by Socrates, while totally rejecting the actuality of his world, does not reject actuality altogether. In this the true ironist opens the way for a new actuality, even though he does not know what it was.

In a deeper sense, irony, says Kierkegaard is a "mastered moment," an irony that ironizes itself or the claim that irony finds rest only in nothingness. Looking at the irony of Shakespeare and Goethe, he writes, "Irony is not

present at some particular point in the poem but omnipresent in it, so that the visible irony in the poem is in turn ironically mastered. Thus irony renders both the poem and the poet free" (336). In mastering the moment, we are taught to "actualize actuality," to appreciate that it is "a history wherein consciousness successively outlives itself" (341). By this process we realize that an assumption that there is no meaning, only nothingness, is itself a claim of certitude that is subject to irony, thus pointing to the possibility of some ultimate validity. The end of this process, for Kierkegaard, is found in humor rather than irony, though irony points the way. "Humour contains a much deeper scepticism than irony, for here it is not finitude but sinfulness that everything turns upon" (341). At the same time, humor is also more positive than irony, for where irony looks at contradictions in our concepts, humor finds its repose in the paradoxical figure of Christ, making man into God-Man.

The Concept of Irony signaled Kierkegaard's rejection of the life of the aesthete, but he found the alternative life of middle-class respectability equally problematic. The anticipated demands of marriage and a public career as a Lutheran pastor in the State Church were at odds with his sense of religious vocation. After an agonizing process, he broke off the engagement with Regine, trying to soften the blow by convincing her that he was a scoundrel and thus she was well rid of him. Even late in his life, he looked back on the aborted marriage with a mixture of regret and defiance. Once the break with Regine was final, Kierkegaard traveled to Berlin, ostensibly to attend the lectures of the philosopher Friderich von Schelling (1775–1854) on the philosophy of Revelation. (These lectures were also attended by the young Karl Marx.) Initially Schelling had been a friend of Hegel's, but later broke with him, developing his own system of transcendental idealism in opposition to Hegel's. Kierkegaard had hoped that Schelling's philosophy would resolve his problems with Hegel, but soon became disenchanted, returning to Copenhagen in March 1842. Of greater significance, he had begun work on his first major work, *Either/Or* (*Enten-Eller*), having completed Part Two (*Or*), while still in Berlin. Once home, he completed Part One (*Either*), with the "editor's preface" being the last part composed. The entire work was published February 20, 1843. An immediate success, *Either/Or* inaugurated the feverish production of some thirty-five books in addition to newspaper articles, letters, and 8,000 pages of journals (*Nachlass*), over the next fourteen years.

Kierkegaard's prolific output is often divided by scholars into two phases: the so-called aesthetic works (running from 1838 to 1846) and the explicitly Christian writings (running from 1846 until his sudden death in

October 1855). The division between these centers on the *Corsair* affair. The aesthetic works, including *Either/Or* (1843), *Repetition* (1843), *Fear and Trembling* (1843), *Philosophical Fragments* (1844), *The Concept of Dread* (also sometimes translated *The Concept of Anxiety* [*Angst*]) (1844). *Stages on Life's Way* (1845), and *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), are evocative rather than expository, and can be read as works of literature in the narrow sense. Kierkegaard draws on the inspiration of Socrates and Plato, creating a series of pseudonymous authors. As with the narrators in Robert Browning's dramatic monologues, each speaker's unintentional revelations about himself are as important as what he says. Some of these narrators, such as Victor Eremita (Victor the Hermit, or Victorious Hermit) of *Either/Or*, Johannes de Silentio (Silent John) of *Fear and Trembling*, or Johannes Climacus (John the Climber—Climacus was a seventh-century Syrian monk, author of the *Scala* [*Climax*] *Paradisi—Stairway to Heaven*) of the *Philosophical Fragments* and *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript,* and Hilarius Bookbinder of *Stages on Life's Way*, are problematic personalities. Others, such as Anti-Climacus, of the later *The Sickness Unto Death* and *Practice in Christianity*, are idealizations. None should be equated directly with Kierkegaard himself. "My pseudonymity or polynymity has not had a casual ground in my *person*," he writes at the end of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, "but it has an *essential* ground in the characters of the *production*" (551). In this play with authorial identity and textual parody, these aesthetic works look back to the literary games of Erasmus, Thomas More, the Northern Humanists, and ultimately back to Plato. The aesthetic books also stand in form and theme with a body of similarly nineteenth-century productions, including Giacomo Leopardi's *Le Operette Morali* (1824), Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1833–1834), and later Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–1892), the figure of Goethe, a common denominator. During the course of the aesthetic period, Kierkegaard also published a body of 18 *Edifying Discourses* under his own name.

Kierkegaard had supposed that *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript* would be the end of his literary output, and that he might even reconsider entering the priesthood. Shortly before it appeared, a critical review of *Stages on Life's Way* by the aesthete P. L. Møller provoked Kierkegaard to respond. The fourth part of *Stages* contains what the pseudonymous editor, Frater Taciturnus (Silent Brother), titles the *Quidam's Diary* (Latin for *someone*), which contains a disguised if painfully close autobiographical account of Kierkegaard's relationship with Regine. Møller, himself a debauchee and often thought to be the model of Johannes of *The Seducer's Diary*, pilloried the book's morality. He was also an editor of a scurrilous satirical magazine

known as the *Corsair*, but kept the fact quiet, nourishing the hope of a university chair. Stung by this hypocrisy, Kierkegaard replied by exposing Møller's affiliation with the *Corsair*. This in turn precipitated a series of humiliating personal attacks by the magazine, so severe that Kierkegaard found even his physical deformity publicly ridiculed by children in the street. Concluding that the prospect of a public life as a priest was no longer viable, he returned to his writing with greater force and acerbity, publishing some thirty more books and pamphlets! Of note are *A Literary Review* (1846), containing the important *The Present Age*; *Christian Discourse* (1848); *The Sickness Unto Death* (1849); and *Practice in Christianity* (also translated *Training* [*Indøvelse*] *in Christianity*) (1850). Most of these later works appeared under his own name.

After a brief period of relative quiet, the last part of Kierkegaard's life was again embroiled in controversy. In 1854, the death of Bishop Jacob P. Mynster, primate of the State Church of Denmark brought forth eulogies that he had been a "witness to the truth." In sharp contrast, Kierkegaard thought that Mynster exemplified what was wrong with the modern church, that instead of witnessing the truth, he had offered a comfortable, complacent, hypocritical, worldly Christianity that served the interests of a successful status quo. Kierkegaard began a furious attack on the State Church, first in newspaper articles, then in a series of broadsides titled *The Instant* (*Øieblikket*). These polemical writings were later collected under the title, *Attack Upon "Christendom."* In the midst of this new struggle, he collapsed in the street on October 2, 1855. Taken to a hospital, Kierkegaard died November 11. He was 42 years old. In a final irony that he might have appreciated, Kierkegaard's funeral was held at the Frue Kirke, in Copenhagen, the Bishop's cathedral, an attempt by the clergy to appropriate the moral high ground. The result was a near riot led by Kierkegaard's nephew.

PLOT AND THEMES

Either/Or can be read as a philosophical novel, reflecting the thematic and formal influence of several works. Its overarching shape owes something to Goethe's novels, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*) (1795–1796), and its sequel, *Wilhelm Meister's Travels, or the Renunciants* (*Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre order Die Entsagenden*) (1829). The first of these traces the growth of its young hero as he pursues his romantic yearnings to be an artist and his obsession with the figure of Hamlet. The second examines the now mature Wilhelm as he chooses to

take his place as a responsible member of society. Together the Wilhelm Meister novels anticipate the division of *Either/Or* between the aesthete A of Part One, himself a melancholy Dane, and the suggestively named Judge Wilhelm of Part Two. On a deeper level, the diversity of mood unified in the figure of Wilhelm Meister suggests the underlying unity of the various "authors" of *Either/Or*. At the same time, the allusion to *Wilhelm Meister* is ironic. While Goethe's novel is the archetypal *bildungsroman*, tracing the growth and development of its hero, *Either/Or* is in Joakim Garff's characterization an "anti-bildungsroman," showing the disintegration of the self (Garff 359). In another ironic inversion, *Judge* Wilhelm is akin to the "*accuser*" or "*adversary*" (Satan) in the book of Job. Amid the inverted values of the modern world, the modern Satan or Mephistopheles tests human faithlessness, tempts us to the ways of righteousness rather than of pleasure or at least expedience.

Either/Or unfolds in an elaborate textual game. As the title indicates, it is divided into two parts. Part One is composed of a collection of seven essays or writings by a young aesthete, identified by the "editor" as A. This is followed by an extract from the diary and letters of another aesthete, identified as Johannes the Seducer, and titled, "The Seducer's Diary [*Forførerens Dagbog*]." Part Two contains two letters addressed to A by an older, married friend, identified as B, and within the body of the text as Judge Wilhelm. To complete the symmetry, these are followed by a sermon or prayer written by someone identified as a country pastor from Jutland. All of these sundry papers are held together in a narrative frame, ostensibly edited by the pseudonymous Victor Eremita. (All of these characters later reappear with others in *Stages on Life's Way*, the penultimate of Kierkegaard's aesthetic writings.) In a garrulous prologue, Victor explains how he found these papers hidden in the secret drawer of a writing desk that he purchased in some shop. A's papers comprise an assortment of essays and orations delivered to various audiences, and are broadly concerned with the aesthetics of music and literature. A wishes to aestheticize life, to make his life a work of art, and seek pure experience. "The Seducer's Diary" documents the efforts of Johannes to seduce a young woman identified as Cordelia. Although supposedly authored by someone other than A, the diary offers up the case study of a man who sees actions as an elaborately calculated performance in which he is author, actor, and audience. B's letters, on the other hand, are directed to A, responding to his values by showing their apparent contradiction, and positing the virtues of marriage and the ethical. The final sermon / prayer, "The Edifying that Lies in the Thought that Against God We are Always in the Wrong," points to the religious beyond the ethical.

Part One *(Either)*

Part One of *Either/Or* owes much to Plato's *Symposium* in both form and theme. One of the masterpieces of philosophical literature, the *Symposium* recounts a drinking party in which Socrates and seven others make speeches celebrating Eros. Plato frames the account of the party and its speeches in an elaborately constructed narrative frame of pseudonymous authors. The *Symposium* consists of seven speeches, each conceiving the nature of love and its role in the discovery and transmission of wisdom. In a double movement, each of the speeches rejects the previous one and then builds on it in a sort of dialectical movement, culminating in Socrates' recounting of a discourse on love that he learned from a wise woman named Diatima. The party is then interrupted by the drunken Alcibiades, who tells a long story about his unsuccessful attempt to seduce Socrates. In what becomes a famous and influential metaphor, he compares Socrates to a silenus, a statue of the satyr king, which opens to reveal the image of a god (like Socrates, something ugly on the outside, but beautiful and wholesome on the inside). In an analogous fashion, the papers of A consist of seven discourses on aspects of love and despair, followed by the diary of Johannes the Seducer. Until the arrival of Judge Wilhelm's letters, however, A and Johannes have yet to encounter their statue.

The first of the writings in Part One is titled *Diapsalmata,* and consists of a series of brilliant aphorisms capturing the spirit of the aesthete, a mixture of ironic wit and despair: "What is a poet?" the author writes. "An unhappy person who conceals profound anguish in his heart but whose lips are so formed that as sighs and cries pass over them they sound like beautiful music" (*Either/Or* 1.19). A romantic ironist, he negates everything, and can find rest and affirmation in nothing. On one hand he seeks a life of pure pleasure and unmediated experience, but finds only boredom because he is unwilling to commit himself to anything. The second, and most important of A's essays is called "The Immediate Erotic Stages Or the Musical Erotic." Here he offers an extended aesthetic theory which describes music as the purest, most direct and immediate form of art, pure sensation because while the plastic arts, such as painting or sculpture exist in space, music exists only in time. To freeze music in a moment of time results in silence. Further, as later expressionist theories of art contend, music of all the arts is most about itself, is the least concerned with the representation of something else, or in Hegelian terms most closely approximates the unity of subject and object. Focusing on the operas of Mozart, A distinguishes three stages of erotic sensation. The first is figured in the young page Cherubino from *Figaro,* who represents the first

awakening of erotic desire, but, because there is no object of love, it is an undifferentiated dream of love. The second finds expression in Papageno from the *Magic Flute*. Here desire has an object, but no fulfilment. There is a conscious separation (or Hegelian alienation) between lover and beloved, between subject and object. The third stage is represented by Don Giovanni (Don Juan) from *Don Giovanni*. He is the seducer, the pure sensualist, moving from love object to love object, obsessed with repeating the sensual experience over and over. A contrasts love from the soul (psychical love) with the sensuous. "Psychical love moves precisely in the rich variety of the individual life, where the nuances are the really significant. Sensuous love, however, can toss everything together. For it, the essential is completely abstract familiarity and at most the more sensuous difference" (*Either/Or* 1.95). In an ironic turn, A conceives the practice of Don Giovanni in terms analogous to those of the Hegelian dialectic, which abstracts the concrete particularity of the world, erasing the difference as the subject is unified with the object. As the ultimate irony, the "mastered moment," Don Giovanni's perpetual motion in time is checked by the statue of the Commendatore, the literal embodiment of concrete particularity. A also sees in Don Giovanni / Don Juan a connection with the figure of Faust. "Don Juan . . . is the expression for the demonic qualified as the sensuous; Faust is the expression for the demonic qualified as the spiritual that the Christian spirit excludes" (1.90).

The next three essays, "The Tragic in Ancient Drama Reflected in the Tragic in Modern Drama," "Silhouettes" (also translated "Shadowgraphs"), and "The Unhappiest Person," are described as papers delivered before the *Symparanekromenoi*, a literary society whose name means "the fellowship of buried lives." Each looks at the nature of tragedy in modern drama. A plays with Hegel's conception that classical Greek tragedy was about substantial ethical forces. The hero's guilt is largely about the effects of fate; it is not so much about blame in an ethical sense, but rather about *feeling* sorrow over the consequences of the guilt. As such it is more aesthetic than ethical, more about the experience of sensations. Thus the case of Antigone is about the sorrow of a life cut off by the crimes of the father. A, however, proposes a different view of Antigone. Suppose she had known her father's guilty secret, but had been afraid to ask him about it, or was even uncertain as to whether he knew the secret himself. Instead of sorrow, she feels *anxiety* born of her uncertainty. "But one thing she [Antigone] does not know, whether or not her father knew it himself. Here is the modern element: it is the restlessness in her sorrow, it is the amphiboly [ambiguity] in her pain" (*Either/Or* 1.161). For A the essence of modern tragedy is about the pain of anxiety, a sense of shared guilt. Where classical tragedy is about the need of making public the

suffering, the reflexive pain of modern tragedy is private, a solidarity with her father that alienates her from the public. A conceives Antigone as the "bride of sorrow." In words that echo Kierkegaard's relationship with Regine Olsen, A sees two collisions in Antigone's tragedy: "[the first] collision is actually between her love for her father and for herself and whether her own love is not too great a sacrifice. The second colliding force is her sympathetic love for her beloved" (1.163).

"Shadowgraphs" looks at three potential brides of sorrow from literature, Marie Beaumarchais from Goethe's *Clavigo*, Elvira from Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (based on the libretto of Lorenzo Da Ponte), and Margarete from Goethe's *Faust*. Each represents a variation of the unrest of reflexive grief. Deserted by her betrothed, Marie wonders why, but can find no solution. Her grief and uncertainty give birth to a jealousy that covers her sorrow. Elvira is betrayed by the faithless Don Giovanni and wants revenge; she must love him in order to nourish her hate. "I have an image of Elvira," A writes. "She is in distress at sea; her destruction is imminent, but it does not concern her; she is not aware of it; she is perplexed about what she should save" (*Either/Or* 1.204) Margarete, by contrast, having felt gratitude, responds to his abandonment with a perplexity that leads to a mood of desolation. The next paper, "The Unhappiest One," is a whimsical and ironic piece, playing on Hegel's concept of "unhappy consciousness." A imagines a contest for a grave plot reserved for the repose of the "unhappiest one." Most people consider themselves the unhappiest, but most are in reality happy in their misery. Even Antigone is brushed aside. The winner is "the person who is always absent from himself, never present to himself" (1.222). He is the one who knows he does not believe, and though he would like to believe, cannot. He denies the radical existence of his self by his perpetual reflexiveness, in the dialectical process that dissolves the self in its unity with the object. In other words, the unhappiest person is the one who is unable to commit, who responds to the choice "either-or" with "whatever." A closes his address with an apostrophe to his fellow *Symparanekromenoi*: "The night is over; the day is beginning its unflagging activity again, never, so it seems, tired of repeating itself forever and ever" (1.230).

The last two essays before "The Seducer's Diary," pick up and underline the theme of restlessness and motion. "The First Love" reviews a performance of Eugène Scribe's *Les Premières Amours ou Les Souvenirs d'enfance*, a romantic farce about false appearances, shifting identities, and first love. In the end, the action of the play dissolves into an infinite regression of aimless jest, wit, and irony, leaving nothing. "The immediately actual situation is the unreal situation; behind it appears a new situation that is no less awry,

and so on" (1.277). In this realm of ironic play there is no final rest. "Crop Rotation" satirizes the modern struggle against boredom through motion. Echoing Pascal's injunction that the root of man's unhappiness is the inability to sit quietly in his room (*Pensées* 136), A declares that boredom, rather than idleness, is the root of all evil (1.286), goading us to an indefatigable activity that shuts us out of the realm of the spirit. We suppose that we could find happiness if we changed our job or location, changed our soil, so to speak—thus the title. "One is weary of living in the country and moves to the city; one is weary of one's native land and goes abroad; one is *europamüde* [weary of Europe] and goes to America etc.; one indulges in the fanatical hope of an endless journey from star to star" (1.291). For A, the final irony is that our motion, literal or reflexive, reduces our humanity, evacuating the spiritual and leaving only the animal pacing back and forth in its cage. The final irony for A is that though he recognizes his situation, he cannot get out of it; he is incapable of mastering the moment, of affirming a choice.

The most famous section of *Either/Or*, "The Seducer's Diary," pulls together and dramatizes the themes of the earlier essays. The name of Johannes the Seducer suggests the figure of Mozart's Don Giovanni / Don Juan (Johannes in German or Danish). Like his namesake, he is the logical culmination of the aesthetic life, an absolute sensualist, devoting his life to the art of seduction. In the preface to the diary, A says of Johannes, "conscience takes shape in him merely as a higher consciousness that manifests itself as a restlessness that does not indict him even in the profounder sense but keeps him awake, allows him no rest in his sterile restlessness" (1.309). Combining a mixture of letters and diary entries, Johannes chronicles his seduction of Cordelia. He first recounts engaging her attention and interests, insinuating his way into the family as a casual acquaintance, slowly winning her trust and friendship. By careful manipulation he gets her to break off an engagement with a pedestrian young man named Edward. By carefully modulated degrees, he increases the tone of his passion until she becomes devoted to him. When he finally achieves his complete psychological possession of Cordelia, he breaks off the relationship, responding to her unopened and returned letters with silence. "As soon as a girl has devoted herself completely, the whole thing is finished" (1.435), later observing "I did love her, but from now on she can no longer occupy my soul" (1. 445). With possession, the goal is achieved and the thrill of the hunt dissipates. Yet ironically, he is anxious at the thought that she might retreat from him, that she might assert her own independence as an autonomous being. He imagines Pygmalion's beloved changed back to stone. "Light have I made her, light as a thought, and should then this thought of mine not belong to me! It would be enough to despair over"

(1.438). Suddenly Cordelia would become heavy, an opaque and alien otherness in his consciousness. Perhaps, in a conflation of images, Pygmalion's statue also suggests the moral function of the statue of the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*?

The combination of diary and letter entries articulates a thematic tension between immediacy and self-reflexiveness. Trying to achieve the sensual moment, Johannes stages the seduction as an elaborate work of art that he likes to observe and contemplate from a distance. In a symbolically appropriate gesture, he watches Cordelia and the unfolding events from the vantage point of the sitting room mirror. "Unhappy mirror," he muses to himself, "which assuredly can grasp her image but not her" (1.315). For Johannes, Cordelia is a surface onto which he projects his own significance. She has no interior self to him, but exists only as the possession of his own consciousness. Summarizing his condition, he writes, "[e]verything is a metaphor; I myself am a myth about myself, for is it not as a myth that I hasten to this tryst? Who I am is irrelevant; everything finite and temporal is forgotten; only the eternal remains, the power of erotic love, its longing, its bliss" (1.445). Instead of affirming his own existence, Johannes perceives himself and events as metaphor. He displaces any authentic self-identity by casting his consciousness into a hall of mirrors, transforming himself into a succession of infinitely reflected surfaces. As a final irony, not only has he dissolved Cordelia, Johannes has also dissolved himself, leaving him morally and spiritually empty, simply a verbal sign and a visual image.

Ultimately, "The Seducer's Diary," is a subtle and satirical parody of the Hegelian dialectic. Cordelia exists for Johannes as bad consciousness. In her apparent otherness, she is a contradiction in the unity of his mind. His desire to possess her relates to the mind's will to cure its sense of alienation, its desire to reestablish its sense of unity. Once she is fully possessed, fully a part of a new unity in his consciousness, the process begins again. But in raising Cordelia, he has also cancelled her in this erotic *Aufhebung*. Conceiving Cordelia as "being-for-other," Johannes characterizes the being of women as an abstraction whose existence is designated by "gracefulness" and other external gestures (1.431). Her interiority, her own autonomy as a moral agent, has been erased as she is transformed into a contingent prop or surface in the fabric of Johannes's consciousness. For Kierkegaard, this resolution of bad consciousness is really an act of bad faith.

Part Two *(Or)*

Like the statue of the Commendatore that appears at Don Giovanni's dinner party, calling for repentance, the letters of Judge Wilhelm in Part

Two disrupt the aesthetic irony of A. (On a suggestive note, the Judge ends his first letter by inviting A to dinner, perhaps an ironic reversal of Don Giovanni's fatal invitation to the statue.) Inverting A's aesthetic hierarchy, which privileged music over sculpture, the Judge's letters symbolize something that stands outside of time, a concrete expression of the non-historical and the eternal. In their evocation of universal duty, they posit an objective existence against the perpetual motion of the aesthete, a mastering of the moment that pulls the self out of its relativizing, a radical subjectivity that affirms the objectivity of the self in its bare existence. The first of these, "The Esthetic Validity of Marriage," proposes to carry the battle to A's territory. The second letter, "The Balance Between the Esthetic and the Ethical in the Development of the Personality," addresses the issue of duty and the creation of self-identity. The Judge concurs with much of A's critique about the state of the modern world, but adds that A has failed to see the inherent irony of his own position. As an aesthete, A posits values that relate to sensation, self-fulfillment, and making life itself a work of art, yet as an observer of life who refuses to make a choice, he fails to live life. Further, on the other side of the equation, the Judge contends, the life of duty, expressed in marriage, creates greater self-fulfillment.

Loquacious, even at times verbose, the Judge circles around a rich variety of themes; nevertheless, we may trace several central lines of argument. The subject matter of romance and romantic literature, he notes, tends to end with marriage as though it signaled the end of life rather than the beginning. In focusing on the quest and the struggle to achieve the ideal, romantic love situates itself and the beautiful in time. But because of its temporal character, the erotic ideal is doomed to failure, taking its meaning from external circumstances, which inevitably alter with time. Thus we grow old, our looks fade, passions cool, interests change, and boredom sets in. The modern world, acknowledging the transience of the romantic ideal, tends to respond in one of two ways. Refusing to choose marriage and the ideal, one becomes a sensualist, cynically scorning marriage and jumping from one relationship to the next in pursuit of some new sensation. Far from achieving self-fulfillment, the sensualist has fixed his or her identity to even more fleeting external traits. In the end the sensualist can only despair as he or she fails to achieve the ideal and self-identity dissolves in time. The Judge compares the sensualist to Roman emperor Nero, who, though "perpetually surrounded by a countless host of the accommodating messengers of desire" (2.184), can find diversion only in the moment of desire. "He is a riddle to himself, and anxiety is his nature" (2.187). He has no interior life, no authentic self.

The second response is to choose marriage. In saying this, the Judge is quick to distinguish between marriages of "reason" (*Fornuft*) and marriages of "understanding" (*Forstand*), parodying the Hegelian distinction between *reason* (*Vernunft*) that is absolute reason, and *common understanding* (*Verstand*) that is practical, contingent understanding. Marriage of understanding is also sometimes translated as marriage of convenience, that is, a marriage predicated on the satisfaction of various needs and goals, such as sanctioned sex, economic security, the transfer of property, or the efficient nurturing of children. Marriage of this sort is little different from the practice of the aesthete who defines himself in terms of external goals, and therefore is subject to the same inherent contradictions. For the Judge, marriage does not have to fall into that category, though it does not preclude such values. Trying to explain marriage of reason, he says that his wife is not his consort, slave, or goddess. The same is true from the other direction, as well. "Truly, she owes me nothing, and yet I am everything to her. She has not needed me, but I have not therefore been unimportant" (2.81). For the Judge, in the religious and specifically Christian context, marriage is the transfiguration of the romantic into the infinite. Marriage is a duty that represents a free choice, the willing expression of an eternal commitment. Glancing back at the notion of love embodied in the figure of Cherubino (in the "Immediate Erotic Stages"), the Judge suggests that "first love" is the only love. It is "an absolute awakening, an absolute intuiting" (2.42). Further, "a first love is humble and is therefore happy that there is an authority higher than itself, if for no other reason, then at least in order to have someone to thank" (2.54). The object-less love-for-its-own-sake of first love prefigures the eternal love-for-its-own-sake of God. The choice of marriage is the concrete expression of true love, a unity of freedom and necessity. It exists in time, yet belongs to eternity.

The Judge means duty in the Kantian sense of an act performed for its own sake, independent of any consideration of interests and inclinations, assuming the universality of its law. As such it represents an ethical choice made from free will. Its value derives not from the satisfaction of some external goal, but its internal harmony with the universal principle. While Kant argues that the moral commands of universal duty imply a law giver, the Judge differs from Kant, asserting that law and the ethical are not the final resting places. Reference is not to the law, but to God. For the Judge, the consequence of the ethical is despair, but a higher despair than that of the aesthetic, a despair that points from the ethical to the religious. Thus, just as the aesthete feels despair because his external happiness is outside his control and subject to the ravages of time, so the ethical person will also

inevitably experience feelings of profound despair when confronted with the discrepancies between individual conscious and public morality, and in his inability to live up to the universal. In short, his despair is an admission of sin, an acknowledgment of his finiteness against the eternity of God, his need for divine help, and a repentance of his connection to anything but God. In making a true choice, I enter the ethical, thereby opening myself to the religious. In making a choice, I choose myself (2.223). As a free being acting out of duty, I act independently of the web of external contingencies. In choosing, in affirming myself, I lay myself bare in all of my limits and imperfections. Thus, paradoxically, in this radical subjectivity I posit the self as the one objective thing, the one thing not relative to something else. For the Judge (and Kierkegaard) this ethical despair opens the self to the possibility of atonement, the acceptance of God's gift. It opens the self to the religious.

While the Judge appends a sermon aptly titled, "The Upbuilding That Lies in the Thought That in Relation to God We Are Always in the Wrong," by a Jutland parson, the focus of his reply to A remains largely on the ethical. Kierkegaard more fully addresses the implications of the religious life in his later writings. In *Fear and Trembling*, pseudonymous author Johannes de Silentio tries to distinguish the stages of life by the story of Abraham and Isaac, and God's test of Abraham's faith (Genesis 22. 1–14). Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac cannot be understood in terms of the aesthetic, which would relate the act to beneficial consequences. Nor can it be understood in terms of the ethical, which would relate it to universal principles, unless one were to claim that all sons should be arbitrarily sacrificed. The religious, says Johannes de Silentio involves the "teleological suspension of the ethical." "Faith," he adds, "is namely this paradox that the single individual is higher than the universal" (*Fear* 55). Underlining this is that the despair of the ethical does not prove the existence of God. It merely lays open the possibility of acceptance, not the certainty that it will happen. Ultimately faith, like true love is always risky, always a perilous leap into the unknown. There are no guarantees that we will not suffer rejection, loss, or nothingness. But without the willingness to make these choices, we are left with no interior self, no authentic identity. Rather, like Johannes the Seducer, we are only a reflection in the mirror.

SUBSEQUENT INFLUENCE

Kierkegaard quipped that the title, "The Seducer's Diary," would guarantee a wide readership. Whatever the reasons, *Either/Or* was certainly an

immediate success. Kierkegaard considered this proof that "one can write a work in Danish literature" (*Papers* 153), an assessment upheld by a number of Scandinavian writers who were inspired by his treatment of irony and psychology. These include the Danish novelist Jens Peter Jacobsen, whose *Niels Lynne* (1880) took the aesthete to the logical extreme, the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, and the Swedish writer August Strindberg. More recently Isak Dinesen's (Karen Blixen's) novella, *Ehrengard* (1963) represents a direct response to "The Seducer's Diary," as is the 1996 French film *Diary of a Seducer,* directed by Danièle Dubroux. Kierkegaard has also exercised a profound influence through the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman, aspects of *Either/Or* finding their way into films as diverse as *The Devil's Eye* (1960), *Persona* (1966), and *Fanny and Alexander* (1982).

Kierkegaard's writing strongly appealed to writers challenging the boundaries of literature and philosophy. The influential Danish critic Georg Brandes introduced his work to Friedrich Nietzsche, describing Kierkegaard as "one of the profoundest psychologists that has ever existed" (Brandes 69). The Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno learned Danish with the explicit purpose of reading Kierkegaard in the original, as did the Austrian poet, Rainer Maria Rilke. "Now I am reading Kierkegaard," Rilke wrote to a friend in 1910. "It is magnificent, real magnificence, never has he moved me so" (Rilke 17). In turn, the great practitioners of the modernist novel, James Joyce (who also learned Danish) and Thomas Mann also took inspiration. Perhaps Danish novelist William Heinesen best articulates the enduring fascination of Kierkegaard to writers. Comparing him with Goethe's Mephistopheles, in his 1950 novel, *The Lost Musicians* (*De fortabte Spillenmænd*), a character declares, "They are both irresistible in a manner, which is at the same time witty, impudent, and dazzling." To this the Heinesen's narrator adds, "He is not only Mephistopheles, he is at the same time Mephisto's victim, Man, Faust" (Heinesen 187).

Kierkegaard's greatest influence is on modern philosophy and theology. Drawn to the mystical dimensions and play of meaning in his various narrative and language games, Ludwig Wittgenstein considered him one of the deepest thinkers of the nineteenth century. Similarly Martin Heidegger looked to the Kierkegaardian themes of radical subjectivity and the search for being. Also drawn to Kierkegaard's notion of existence as a challenge to idealism were the philosophers Karl Jaspers and Theodor Adorno, and the theologians Karl Barth and Paul Tillich. It is, however, among the philosophical followers of Heidegger, whether existentialist or postmodernist, that the influence of Kierkegaard is most strongly felt. Thus while Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus style themselves atheists, they nevertheless

concur with the quest for authentic existence. Finally, Kierkegaard's attack on authorship and its implicit logocentricim in his elaborate pseudonymous writings finds strong sympathies among contemporary Continental philosophers such as Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida. Derrida's remarks on *Fear and Trembling* are relevant to *Either/Or*, underlining its contemporary relevance to the moral dimensions of current events.

> Such is the secret truth of faith as absolute responsibility and as absolute passion, the "highest passion" as Kierkegaard will say; it is a passion that, sworn to secrecy, cannot be transmitted from generation to generation. In this sense it has no history.... Each generation must begin again to involve itself in it without counting on the generation before. It thus describes the nonhistory of absolute beginnings which are repeated, and the very historicity that presupposes a tradition to be reinvented each step of the way, in this incessant repetition of the absolute beginning. (Derrida 80)

SUGGESTED READINGS

Arbaugh, George E. and George B. Arbaugh. *Kierkegaard's Authorship: A Guide to the Writings of Kierkegaard*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968.

Brandes, Georg. *Friedrich Nietzsche*. Trans. A. C. Chater. London: William Heinemann, 1909.

Collins, James. *The Mind of Kierkegaard*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.

Derrida, Jacques. *The Gift of Death*. Trans. David Wills. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Gardiner, Patrick. *Kierkegaard: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Garff, Joakim. *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*. Trans. Bruce H. Kirmmse. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Hannay, Alistair, and Gordon D. Marino, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

———. *Kierkegaard*. London: Routledge, 1982.

Hegel, G.W.F. *The Phenomenology of Mind*. Trans. J.B. Baillie. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.

Heinesen, William. *The Lost Musicians*. Trans. Erik J. Friis. New York: Twayne Publishers and the American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1971.

Jegstrup, Elsebet, ed. *The New Kierkegaard*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Johnston, Brian. *The Ibsen Cycle: The Design of the Plays from* Pillars of Society *to* When We Dead Awaken. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965.

Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Concept of Irony*. Trans. Lee M. Capel. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965.

———. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.

———. *Either/Or*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. 2 vols. *Kierkegaard's Writings*, 4. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

———. *Enten-Eller*. Ed. Villy Sørensen. 2 vols. Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1988.

———. *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. *Kierkegaard's Writings*, 6. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.

———. *Papers and Journals: A Selection*. Trans. Alastair Hannay. London: Penguin Books, 1996.

———. *Stages in Life's Way*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Kirmmse, Bruce H. *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Lapp, Ralph E. "The Einstein Letter that Started it All." *New York Times Magazine*. August 2, 1964, p. 54.

Lowrie, Walter. *A Short Life of Kierkegaard*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942.

Mackey, Louis. *Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971.

Malantschuk, Gregor. *Kierkegaard's Thought*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.

Pascal, Blaise. *Pensées*. Trans. A. J. Krailsheimer. Baltimore: Penguin Press, 1966.

Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke: 1910–1926*. Trans. Jane Bannard Greene and M. D. Herter Norton. New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 1972.

Taylor, Mark C. *Kierkegaard's Pseudonymous Authorship: A Study of Time and the Self*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

Weston, Michael. *Kierkegaard and Modern Continental Philosophy: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1994.

8

Nietzsche
Thus Spoke Zarathustra
1883–1885

> I am unable to stabilize my subject: it staggers confusedly along with a natural drunkenness. I grasp it as it is now, at this moment when I am lingering over it. I am not portraying being but becoming.
>
> —Michel de Montaigne, *On Repenting*

> My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them.
>
> —Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

By the time Nietzsche had reached the age of 24 in 1868, he had written more than nine autobiographical sketches of himself (Safranski 25; see also Nietzsche, *Werke* 3.9–174). This pattern of self-writing and self-revision persisted throughout his career, even to his last work, *Ecce Homo*, about which he declared to his friend Carl Fuchs, "I have settled for the next eternity the question as to who I am" (*Selected Letters* 340). The following month, January 1889, he suffered a complete mental collapse from which he never recovered. At one level, all of Nietzsche's works can be read in autobiographical terms, part of an abiding imperative to perpetually remake himself. Underlying this imperative is a vision of a world conceived in terms of continual change, a world that denies the reality of the individual as something fixed and autonomous. Read against such change, what is the basis of human value? What is the measure of a good life?

Written during a period of deep personal and spiritual crisis, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (*Also sprach Zarathustra*), subtitled *A Book for All and None*, is the

most autobiographical of Nietzsche's works, even more than the explicitly autobiographical *Ecce Homo*. In a letter to his friend Franz Overbeck, he wrote that *Zarathustra*, "contains an image of myself in the sharpest focus, as I am, once I have thrown off my whole burden. It is poetry, and not a collection of aphorisms" (*Selected Letters* 207). In a letter to Carl von Gersdorff he added, "behind all the plain and strange words stand my *deepest seriousness* and my *whole philosophy*. It is the beginning of my disclosure of myself—not more!!" (*Selected Letters* 213). Behind the mask of Zarathustra, he dramatizes the quest of the self to recreate itself, and its confrontation with various obstacles both within itself and without. Paradoxically, though the least philosophically direct of Nietzsche's works, it is philosophically the richest, suggesting and developing such seminal Nietzschean themes as "the death of God," the will to power (*Wille zur Macht*), eternal recurrence, perspectivism, the Overman (*Übermenschen*), and the Dionysian. In the course of this he explores the philosophical and spiritual state of the modern world, diagnosing crisis. While radically differing in the solution, he shares Kierkegaard's disgust with the complacency of modern society and how its values create a false relation with existence. Thus, in creating a work of autobiographical literature, Nietzsche is also doing philosophy. In the words of Harold Alderman, the autobiographical character of *Zarathustra* exemplifies philosophy itself, understood as "the drama of the individual voice trying to reach beyond itself" (Alderman 19).

BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Surveying his life in 1883, shortly after the completion of the first part of *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche wrote, [m]y whole life has crumbled under my gaze: this whole eerie, deliberately secluded secret life, which takes a step every six years, and actually wants nothing but the taking of this step" (*Selected Letters* 206, 207). While Nietzsche's chronology is not exact, it does outline the major intellectual stages of his life: his years as a university student (1864–1869); his years as a professor at Basel and discipleship with Wagner (1869–1876); his relationship with Lou Salomé (1876–1882); his period of isolation and fevered work, culminating in his breakdown (1883–1889).

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche was born October 15, 1844, in Röcken, Saxony, the eldest of three children of Karl Ludwig Nietzsche, a Lutheran pastor, and Franziska, *née* Oehler. Nietzsche's father died at the age of 36 in 1849, and the family relocated to Naumburg. Precocious but painfully shy and solitary, the young Nietzsche was nicknamed "the little pastor." With the expectation that he would follow in his father's footsteps into the ministry,

he entered the Pforta school, where he excelled intellectually. During this period he discovered the poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843), out of favor at the time. Nietzsche considered him his favorite poet, a discovery both propitious and prophetic. Hölderlin had entered a Lutheran seminary, where he became close friends with fellow seminarians Hegel and Schelling. Finding his true vocation in poetry, he completed his degrees, but never took final orders. Later suffering a mental breakdown, he was first institutionalized, finally living the rest of his life under close observation. More significantly, Hölderlin translated the Greek dramatist Sophocles into German. His own poetry, highly subjective and often apocalyptic in theme, frequently conflated the imagery of Christianity with classical Greece, playing on blood and wine to link the figures of Christ and Dionysus.

Gifted in music and languages, Nietzsche began to develop an interest in classical philology, during his last year at Pforta, and took up the study of both philology and theology when he entered the University of Bonn in October 1864. Here he came under the influence of the noted classical philologist Friedrich Ritschl. Philology combined historical linguistics and archaeology with literary and rhetorical analysis in an attempt to recover and interpret ancient Greek and Latin texts and culture. As philology was practiced in the day, the professional classical philologist edited critical editions of ancient works. Ritschl himself is most noted for his work on the Roman comic playwright, Plautus. By 1865, Nietzsche abandoned his theological studies to devote himself entirely to philology, much to the distress and anger of his mother. That same year he followed Ritschl to the University of Leipzig, declaring that he was disgusted by the "beer materialism" of Bonn (Safranski 356). In Leipzig he discovered the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, F. A. Lange, and most momentously Arthur Schopenhauer.

Nietzsche took a leave from his university studies for a year of military service (October 9, 1867–October 15, 1868), during which he suffered spinal injury from a riding accident. Returning to Leipzig, he first heard Richard Wagner's operas *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, and through the good offices of a friend, met the composer on November 8, who was visiting Leipzig incognito. Thus began Nietzsche's profound and complex relationship with Wagner.

Through the recommendation of Ritschl, Nietzsche was appointed to a professorship at the University of Basel, Switzerland, February 12, 1869, though he had not yet taken his final examinations nor completed his dissertation. He also became a regular visitor at the Tribschen residence of Wagner and Cosima von Bulow near Lucerne, becoming a perfect Wagnerite and advocate for the Wagnerian festival at Bayreuth. Cosima found the young

professor "a cultured and pleasant individual" (Safranski 358). The idyll was interrupted by the Franco-Prussian War, which began July 19, 1871, provoked by the expansionist policies of Bismarck against the Second Empire of Napoleon III. Nietzsche, an early enthusiast of Bismarck's consolidation of the various diverse German speaking states into a Germanic nation, took leave from the university and joined the army, serving as a medical orderly because of his poor eyesight, from August 9 to October 21. His duties of gathering bodies from the battlefield and caring for the wounded, as well as the subsequent consequences of the war, left him disillusioned. Falling ill with dysentery and diphtheria, he left the army, returning to Basel in November.

Even before the Franco-Prussian War, Nietzsche had sought to combine his interests in philology, Schopenhauer, and music, lecturing variously on "Greek Music Drama" and "Socrates and Tragedy," and working on an essay titled, "Dionysian Worldview." The culmination of these efforts was his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, published in January 1872. Arguing there that "art represents the highest task and the truly metaphysical activity of this life" (*Birth* 31, 32), Nietzsche lays out the conception of all his subsequent work.

He argues that there is a duality between reality and appearance, mythopoetically represented by the Apollinian and the Dionysian. The Apollinian, "the transfiguring genius of the *principium individuationis*," is the realm of appearance, a dreamscape constructed by the mind. Aesthetically it is expressed in sculpture and architecture, an art based on image and form. The Dionysian is the realm of flux, the formless, imageless chaos of the underlying reality. Aesthetically it is expressed in the drunken, ecstatic singing and dancing of Dionysian ritual, an experience that temporarily dissolves the boundaries of individual selves, reconnecting us with the underlying flux. In a manner of speaking, we *lose* ourselves in the music. In this model, Nietzsche articulates a version of the Romantic paradox that a rational understanding of the world alienates us from a spontaneous relationship with it, while a spontaneous relationship prevents us from understanding and acting. "Knowledge kills action," he writes, citing the case of Hamlet. "Action requires the veils of illusion" (*Birth* 60). We need the Apollinian in order to function, but at the same time it cuts us off from the spiritual nourishment of the Dionysian. The power and genius of Attic tragedy, especially that of Aeschylus and Sophocles, was the union of the Apollinian and the Dionysian, "music made manifest."

For Nietzsche, Attic tragedy declined with the decline of the Apollinian-Dionysian union. The cause of this was the rise of Socrates and the transformation of the Apollinian into the Socratic. Aesthetic Socraticism equates

the beautiful with the intelligible, just as ethical Socratism equates knowledge with virtue. The effect was a progressive separation between meaning and the wellsprings of life. Under the influence of Socrates, playwrights such as Euripides, "the poet of aesthetic Socratism," and the practitioners of the New Comedy focused more on plot and form and less on the music. The result, according to Nietzsche, was a decline in the transformative power of art and tragedy to create myth. Paradoxically the rationalism of Socratism creates an unhealthy optimism that destroys the healthy pessimism of the Dionysian. It supposes the world is knowable and can eventually be circumscribed by reason. But for Nietzsche, a deeper joy comes from the heroic struggle with sorrow and the confrontation of the tragic. Sorrow and despair are not nihilistic, but as with the sorrowing that Bach dramatizes in the *St. Matthew Passion*, spiritually uplifting, something that takes us beyond ourselves. For Nietzsche, finally, Wagner, and Wagnerian opera-drama had recovered the Apollinian-Dionysian union, and as such was poised to spiritually revive the culture.

Wagner was enthusiastic about *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche's profession, however, with the exception of a negative review by the young classicist, Wilamowitz-Moelendorff (eventually one of the giants of early twentieth-century classics) resounded with stunned silence. Such a book was contrary to the spirit and focus of classical philology.

Hampered by an eye disease that gave him debilitating headaches, Nietzsche began working on the essays that would become the *Untimely Meditations*. In 1876, he attended the first Wagnerian festival at Bayreuth, but was disappointed in Wagner's lack of attention to him. Increasingly more alienated from Wagner, he was horrified when he read the text of Wagner's opera on the myth of the Holy Grail, *Parsifal*, in January 1878, dismissing it as "all too Christian, time-bound, limited; sheer fantastic psychology; no flesh and much too much blood (especially too much blood at the Holy Communion)" (*Selected Letters* 166). Nietzsche's growing crisis culminated in his new book *Human, All Too Human*, published at the end of 1878. Experimenting with the aphoristic style that would characterize much of his later work, as well as aspiring to a lightness of tone inspired by Voltaire, he explored the limits of knowledge. We always remain in the realm of imagination, yet the notion of the "disclosed essence of the world," is necessary to understand reality. For Nietzsche, the result is indeterminacy; there is no *real* underlying meaning to be disclosed. Rather, he concludes, it is in our own actions and creations that we appropriate the world for ourselves, make our own temporary meanings, however precarious.

Ignored by his profession, alienated from Wagner, and plagued with medical problems, Nietzsche resigned his Basel professorship in 1879, embarking

on a nomadic existence, traveling among various resorts in Switzerland and Italy. In 1881 he published *Daybreak*, and as a sort of sequel *The Gay Science* (1882, revised in 1887). In these he made his case against Christianity as life-denying. Later he quipped that both books were commentaries on *Zarathustra*, written before the fact. While visiting Rome, Nietzsche met a Russian Jewish woman named Lou Salomé, through their common friend Paul Rée. (Louise von Salomé [1861–1930] had strong intellectual interests and later included among her friends, Rilke, Freud, and Gorki.) Quickly becoming emotionally attached, Nietzsche proposed marriage twice, and was rejected twice. He then proposed a sort of *ménage à trois* with Rée and Salomé. A famous photograph of the three shows Nietzsche and Rée in the harness of a donkey cart, while Salomé, kneeling in the cart, brandishes a whip. In the Zarathustrian speech "On Little Old and Young Women," thick with allusions to Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, an old woman warns Zarathustra, "You are going to women? Do not forget the whip!" (*Portable Nietzsche* 179). Hostilities soon broke out between Salomé and Nietzsche's sister Elisabeth, a combination of jealousy and anti-Semitism. In turn, the relationship between Salomé and Rée became more passionate, precipitating a break that left Nietzsche devastated. It was in this state of despair that he began work on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in January 1883, completing *Part One* in ten days and publishing it in August. *Part Two* appeared the following January, and *Part Three* in April. He had *Part Four* privately printed for limited circulation in 1885. It did not appear publically until 1892. At this time he also broke with his sister, disgusted with her anti-Semitism. (Nietzsche had also been disturbed by Wagner's anti-Semitism.)

The last creative phase of Nietzsche's life saw the production of *Beyond Good and Evil*, published in 1886, followed by *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887). *Beyond Good and Evil* was his attempt to clarify some of the ethical issues raised in *Zarathustra*. He distinguished what he terms the *slave-morality* from the *master-morality*. The former, which he equated with the principle of utility, related the concept of good in terms of consequences, specifically those of pain and pleasure. Just as the slave attempts to get away with the least effort, so the modern middle-class man, in his valuation of comfort and getting along, is morally a slave: "he is good-natured, easy to deceive, a little stupid perhaps un *bonhomme*" (*Beyond* 207). Nietzsche is equally contemptuous of the Kantian spirit of duty, which he thinks fosters the spirit of mediocrity. He equated the *master-morality* with those who create their own values, those individuals who embody the will to power. They are "supramoral," or, playing on the original sense of the word moral (which derives from the Latin *mos* for custom or norm), they are "immoralists," breaking out of the norms. For

Nietzsche, they embody a spirit of life-affirming nobility, a disposition that he attributes to the medieval Troubadours, the "*gai saber*" (*Beyond* 208).

At this time, Nietzsche also began reading the work of Dostoevsky (in French translation). "I prize his work," he wrote, "as the most valuable psychological material known to me—I am grateful to him in a remarkable way, however much he goes against my deepest instincts" (*Selected Letters* 327). At this time he was making notes for developing his philosophy in an extended work to be known as *The Will To Power*. Eventually he put much of the material into *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Antichrist*, both appearing in 1888. In the same year he published *The Case of Wagner* in which he attacked Wagner's art and doctrine, trying to explain his break with him. At this time he also began to attract interested correspondents, including the Danish critic Georg Brandes who characterized Nietzsche's ethical views as "aristocratic radicalism," an assessment that Nietzsche liked. Brandes also introduced him to the writings of Kierkegaard. He also received sympathetic correspondence from the Swedish writer August Strindberg. The last work Nietzsche completed was *Ecce Homo*, an autobiography in which he proposed to set the record straight. It did not appear in print until 1908.

In January 1889, while staying in Turin, Nietzsche suffered a complete mental collapse, embracing a horse in the street that was being beaten by a carriage driver. Friend Franz Overbeck took Nietzsche to a clinic in Basel. Later that year his mother moved him to a psychiatric clinic in Jena. In May 1890 she moved him home to Naumburg, and, after her death in 1897, Nietzsche fell under the care of his sister in Weimar, until his death August 25, 1900. In her custodial role, she controlled his papers, editing some of them to support her own right-wing and anti-Semitic views, creating a cult of Nietzsche in which she turned her helpless brother into a sort of oracle and prophet of Nazism, an ideology fundamentally anathema to his own views.

SCHOPENHAUER AND WAGNER

Given the prominence of Schopenhauer and Wagner in Nietzsche's thinking in general and *Zarathustra* in particular, it is important to look at each in more detail. Initially ignored by the philosophical establishment, Arthur Schopenhauer was an explosive influence on subsequent generations of writers, artists, and thinkers from Wagner, Tolstoy, and Nietzsche, through Thomas Hardy, Thomas Mann and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Acknowledging a debt to both Kant and Asian thought, especially the Vedânta of Vyasa, Schopenhauer opens the seminal *The World as Will and Representation* (*Die Welt als Wille und*

Vorstellung) with the declaration, "The world is my representation" (1.3). Kant had argued that because all of our knowledge of the world derives from experience, and since experience is mediated by the intellect and the five senses, we can never have access to the actual world, the thing-in-itself. The result is a radical dualism between reality and conscious experience. Schopenhauer, however, argued that the thing-in-itself was not beyond human experience. The key to this comes from self-consciousness.

We are conscious of ourselves in two ways. When I think about myself and self-awareness, I perceive myself as an object, a body and limbs. This body is represented to me as an object among other objects. In this regard, insofar as this body is an object moving and interacting with other bodies, time, space, and causality are simply part of how the body is represented, "the *principium individuationis*," or those aspects of representation that isolate and abstract the body (1.112). In addition to outer experience, there is also an inner self-awareness of acting, doing, and motivating—in short, will. But since consciousness of motion is always motion of some object, so my consciousness of will is expressed in the motions of my body. Dissolving the mind-body dualism, my body is simply the objectification of my will. "The action of the body is nothing but the act of will objectified, i.e. translated into perception" (1.100). In other words, body and will are simply different attributes or aspects of the same thing. To borrow William Butler Yeats's famous metaphor (from "Among School Children"), I cannot separate the dancer from the dance. The dancer is a dancer only when she is dancing, and the dance exists objectively only when expressed in the movement of the dancer. Put another way, to use Schopenhauer's example, the body and its organs are the objectification of actions. "Teeth, gullet, and intestinal canal are objectified hunger; the genitals are objectified sexual impulse" (1.108).

For Schopenhauer, then, the will *is* the thing-in-itself, and the outer world of representation is an expression of the will. Here, however, Schopenhauer proposes a radical "extension" of the principle. Just as my objective being is the expression of *my* will, so by extension all objective phenomena (including me) are the expression of a greater collective will. This cosmic will is a nonhuman, nonrational force, the endless struggle to sustain existence. (Nietzsche speaks of the "will to power;" French philosopher Henri Bergson, the "*élan vital*;" others, "the life force.") In the same way, a forest fire is impelled by a force that causes it to consume and keep going until extinguished. But, as we should not personify the forest fire or suppose that it is motivated by some deliberate intelligence, so we should not suppose that the cosmos has any consciousness or ultimate purpose or goal. For this reason, philosophy is pessimistic, says Schopenhauer. It is about removing the veil

of deception (*Maya* from Hinduism), and confronting the ultimate meaninglessness of things, including the self as autonomous ego. "It sees through the form of the phenomenon, the principium individuationis; the egoism resting on this expires with it" (1.253).

Of special interest to Wagner and Nietzsche, Schopenhauer privileges music above all the arts. Music, he argues, is the only form of art not about representation. The subject of painting, sculpture, and even some written literature is surface phenomenon (in Platonic terms, an imitation of an imitation). Pure music, however, does not *represent* anything. Its subject is the will itself and the expression of the will. As such, music is both the most universal form of expression, since it taps into the thing-in-itself, and the best route into the depths of reality, beyond the limited grasp or explanation of reason. "[T]hus when the composer has known how to express in the universal language of music the stirrings of will that constitute the kernel of an event, then the melody of the song, the music of the opera, is expressive" (1.263). While modern philosophers of music quibble with Schopenhauer (see for instance Peter Kivy 47–51), composers such as Wagner, or expressionist aesthetes from Walter Pater, who declared that all art aspires to the form of music, through Oscar Wilde, and up to the present, took inspiration.

As a young man, Richard Wagner had been drawn to the philosophical and political radicalism of the Left-Hegelians, provoked by Feuerbach's notion that religion, and especially Christianity was the mythic projection of human psychology. He turned to the Norse Edda and the twelfth-century *Nibelungenlied* as authentic expressions of the Germanic spirit, and therefore the basis for a "national opera." With this in mind he began work on an opera based on the legendary hero Siegfried, which would eventually grow into the four operas of the *Ring of the Nibelungen* cycle (consisting of *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung*). In turn, rejecting the idea of opera as entertainment or diversion, Wagner conceived the idea of a music-drama as both a total and transformative spiritual experience, something of a substitute religion, an experience that would require a special festival theater. This would culminate in the famous Bayreuth *Festspielhaus*.

Given the many starts and shifting conceptions embedded in the text, it is difficult to reduce the *Ring* to any single theme, but given Nietzsche's references to it throughout *Zarathustra*, it is useful to touch on several elements of it. The cycle plays on both a vertical hierarchy and a circular movement. Thus the cosmos begins in chaos, symbolized by the shifting waters of the Rhine at the base, an earthy middle realm of humans, symbolized by the Niebelungen, and an airy realm of the gods in their mountaintop palace Valhalla. The chief god is Wotan, the mythic embodiment of consciousness.

In Schopenhauerian terms, consciousness stands precariously at the edge of matter and chaos, and, indeed, through the course of the cycle, Wotan comes to understand and accept his condition and the inevitable apocalypse. Although the limits of space here prevent going into the numerous characters and complexities of Wagner's story, we can say briefly that the plot of the *Ring* follows the pattern of a circle. The Niebelungen dwarf, Alberich, steals the gold of the Rhine maidens, which supposedly gives its owner world domination, but at the sacrifice of all love. Alberich has the gold forged into a ring. Wotan, however, learning of the ring, takes it from Alberich by force, in order to pay off the giants Fasolt and Fafner for the construction of Valhalla, and to ransom Freia, goddess of love. Caught up in the curse of the ring, Fafner kills Fasolt. Later, the young hero Siegfried will slay Fafner, who has taken the form of a dragon, and take the ring, which he gives to the Valkyrie, Brünnhilde, one of the warrior goddess daughters of Wotan. In accepting the pledge of love, she sacrifices her divinity, becoming mortal, thus positing a theme of love and death. In the final installment of the *Ring*, Alberich's son, Hagen, successfully schemes to kill Siegfried and steal the ring. In the end Brünnhilde rides her horse into Siegfried's funeral pyre, engulfing the world and finally Valhalla itself in flames, destroying the old order. The Rhine itself now bursts its banks, flooding everything, and the Rhine maidens finally recover their gold. The circle is completed, and chaos returns to the world. In the so-called "Schopenhauer ending," Brünnhilde says,

> Grieving love's
> profoundest suffering
> opened my eyes for me:
> I saw the world end. (Wagner 363)

Although Wagner finally excluded these lines, they summarize a prominent theme in the *Ring* cycle, that the world is ultimately meaningless, that there is no final purpose, goal, or telos that redeems life or gives it meaning. Rather following Schopenhauer with echoes of Hinduism and Buddhism, the cosmos in the *Ring* exists as a moment that emerges from an eternal cycle of creation and destruction, starting the process over again. Those such as Alberich, initially Wotan, Fafner, and finally Hagen, who become obsessed with a false telos (symbolized by the promise of the gold and the ring) create misery for themselves. In a sense the ring is a false goal, the figure of a zero, something that signifies nothing. Only by the suffering of love are we redeemed—love as a free gift without goal or purpose. In the end, everything is consumed and returned to chaos.

PLOT, FORM, AND THEMES

It is difficult to categorize *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Nietzsche himself described his book as "a sort of abyss of the future—something to make one shudder, especially the joy in it." Explaining its genre, he added, "[e]verything in it is my own, without model, kindred, precursor; a person who has lived in it will return to the world seeing things differently" (*Selected Letters* 221). That said, parallels can be found. At one level, it is a parody of ancient wisdom literatures such as the Bible, the Upanishads, or even the Zoroastrian Gathas; at another, it is a collection of lapidary aphorisms or essays in the spirit of Montaigne or Balthasar Gracián, both of whom Nietzsche admired. It can also be read as a sort of genre breaking (pre) post-modern novel, one of a select handful of such works, including Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, and Giacomo Leopardi's *Operette Morali*. We might return to the Humanists of the Northern Renaissance, looking at the play of genres, textual games, pseudonyms, and authorial masks in works such as Thomas More's *Utopia*, Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, and the five books of Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Recalling Nietzsche's background as a classical philologist, we might also return to the Platonic dialogues, or consider the structure of Greek drama, which presented its topic in a cycle of three tragedies, followed by a farcical satyr play. Kathleen M. Higgins notes the striking affinities between *Zarathustra* (especially in Part Four) and the Roman novel (in particular Lucius Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* [*Metamorphosis*]) and the Menippian satire with its mixture of genre, tones, and voices. (Not irrelevantly, much recent scholarship argues for the influence of the epic and Roman novel on the form of the Gospels.) Given the similarities between Nietzsche's sense of his work as a transformative experience and Wagner's own conception of opera and drama, it is also fruitful to see *Zarathustra* in terms of Nietzsche's own revision of the four-part *Ring of the Niebelung*.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra is divided into four parts. Part One consists of an extended prologue followed by 22 of "Zarathustra's speeches." Part Two contains another 22 speeches, Part Three, 16, and Part Four presents an extended account of Zarathustra's encounter with the "higher men" (*höheren Menschen*), his 12 would-be disciples. The Prologue and Part Four are organized along a narrative plot line, while the collected speeches can be read as a collection of separate essays or extended aphorisms. Nevertheless, their arrangement suggests an overarching narrative as Zarathustra moves from spiritual triumph, through doubt, despair, reconciliation, and finally new triumph, a journey of spiritual discovery and transformation, or as Nietzsche said in a letter to Peter Gast, "a not insignificant *victory* over the 'spirit of

gravity'" (*Selected Letters* 217). Nietzsche saw the first three parts as forming three acts of a single whole. The fourth part began as the start of a new cycle, but quickly became a sort of coda to the first three.

The Prologue opens with the statement that at the age of thirty Zarathustra left his home for the solitude of a cave in the mountains. After a ten-year hiatus, perhaps a bit like Wagner's break in the composition of *Siegfried*, he feels himself full of wisdom, like a bee overflowing with honey. "I would give away and distribute until the wise among men find joy once again in their folly, and the poor in their riches" (*Portable Nietzsche* 122). Nietzsche plays repeatedly with variations on the words "over" (*über*) and "under" (*unter*). Echoing the opening of Plato's *Republic* as well as the Parable of the Cave, he decides to "go down" and "go under" in order to share the gift of his wisdom. As he descends, he first encounters a saintly hermit, explaining to him that he has now "become a child" and an "awakened one," and that for the love of mankind, he has come to bring them a gift. The hermit replies that he loves God, but not men. "Love of man would kill me," adding that it is better to give alms. To this Zarathustra says, "I give no alms, For that I am not poor enough" (123). Finally leaving the hermit, Zarathustra wonders incredulously to himself, "Could it be possible? This old saint in the forest has not yet heard anything of this, that *God is dead!* [Gott tot ist!]" (124).

While the phrase "God is dead," is often attributed to Nietzsche, theologian Hans Küng points out that it derives from the philosopher Georg Friedrich Hegel, who, in turn, was citing Martin Luther from an Easter sermon. Küng also points out that by the time Nietzsche was writing in the 1880s, statements about the death or demythologizing of God were already dusty intellectual clichés, dating from work such as David Friedrich Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (1835), Ludwig Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* (1846), and Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jésus* (1863). Thus, when Nietzsche and his Zarathustra speak of God's death, they are expressing something more complex than merely an assertion of atheism. Nietzsche is as hostile to Christianity as he is to any cultural institution that has become rigid and dogmatic. For Nietzsche this gives rise to two problems. First, such dogmatism drains the underlying spirit and dynamic tensions that produce creativity and transformation. People become habitual, lazy, and complacent, observing the letter of the law rather than its substance. In a later speech Zarathustra says that that the devil told him that "God died of his pity for man" (*Portable Nietzsche* 202). In Nietzsche's terminology, pity, compassion, and charity are expressions of an unspoken selfishness, unwelcome gifts that obligate the recipient, and engender resentment. Better to eliminate the source of poverty than give charity. Drawing psychological insight from Rousseau, Zarathustra observes

that indebtedness does not make people grateful—thus his refusal to give alms. (The British poet William Blake makes a similar point.) Second, such inflexibility falsifies the true nature of reality, hindering the transformation. Zarathustra suggests that had not Jesus died so early, he would have recanted his views. "Perhaps he would have learned to live and to love the earth—and laughter too" (185). Life is a succession of Apollinian moments. The moral imperative is to remember that they are illusions. The *real* reality is the Dionysian flux. Thus in understanding "God is dead," the verbal formula spoken on the death of a monarch, "the king is dead," followed by the reply "long live the king" is not irrelevant.

Arriving at the marketplace of a town, Zarathustra offers the gift of his wisdom, the doctrine of the *overman*, translating *Der Übermensch* (following George Bernard Shaw, this is sometimes mistranslated *superman*). "Man is something that shall be overcome," Zarathustra preaches (*Portable Nietzsche* 124). Nietzsche borrows the term "overman" from Goethe. The Spirit of the Earth (*Geist der Erde*) had applied it ironically to Faust (Goethe, *Faust* 489). Elaborating, Zarathustra goes on to say, "I beseech you, my brothers, *remain faithful to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes!" (125). One must learn to go *under* to go *over*. Further echoing Goethe's *Faust* that damnation comes at the moment of satisfaction, Zarathustra declares that the hour of happiness should also arouse disgust and contempt. "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that he is an *overture* and a *going under*" (127).

Zarathustra's words summarize the core of Nietzsche's metaphysics and ethics. The notion that humans are somehow fixed, autonomous beings is an illusion, the product of the *principium individuationis*. The reality is the unfolding life force or the will to power, a Heraclitian flux. True to the anti-Hegelian spirit of Schopenhauer, this unfolding is not teleological in nature, but open-ended and perpetual, without a final goal or ultimate purpose. In the light of biological evolution, the supposition that any species is fixed and unchanging is contrary to evidence. As we have evolved from other creatures, so other creatures will evolve from us. Transition is the reality. Following the logic of this, does it make any sense to suppose that I am the end of evolution, the goal that eons of biological development and history has striven to achieve? Such a question underlines two themes: first, that the assumption of myself as the final purpose of history and biology is a vanity, a sort of cosmic egotism approaching the ludicrous; second, the notion of some final goal or purpose is incoherent with the notion of causal development. For instance, though the laws of gravity and mechanics determine that a rock will roll down a hill instead of up, and also circumscribe the manner

of how it will roll and what course it will run, it does not follow that reaching the bottom of the hill is therefore the goal or destiny of the rock. In a manner consistent with natural law, the course of the rock will depend on various chance encounters it has with stumps, holes, and other rocks on the hill. In like fashion, it does not follow from the fact that the unfolding of my organism is also governed by natural laws that the condition in which I find myself at any moment represents some goal or purpose. That I am fat or thin, male or female, healthy or sickly is the necessary consequence of the complex interaction of natural forces in their chance encounter with other natural forces, not the meaning of my life. In other words, even though I am a natural being, nature is not my destiny. Natural functions do not entail purpose or meaning in any teleological sense. The nonsensicality of the converse position is vividly illustrated by a character in George Bernard Shaw's play *Candida*, who insists that "obviously" the nose was meant to hold glasses, and "obviously" the leg was meant to kick a football. In challenging the teleological, Nietzsche follows in a philosophical line that runs through Hobbes, Spinoza, Hume, and Schopenhauer. But it is precisely in the *lack* of telos or ultimate purpose that Nietzsche finds an space for ethical agency.

To highlight the ethical implications of the doctrine, as well as to underline the absurdity of the Hegelian position that history and human consciousness have achieved their summit in modern Western civilization, Zarathustra contrasts the overman with what he terms "the last man." The last men suppose mankind to be the end-in-itself, the final goal. They have domesticated the chaos, the dynamic forces within themselves. Because of this they have become self-satisfied and complacent, no longer able to strive or create. "'What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?' thus asks the last man, and he blinks" (*Portable Nietzsche* 129). Anticipating the slave morality described in *Beyond Good and Evil*, the last men invent "happiness," by which they mean being comfortable, avoiding difficulties, challenges, conflicts, or exertion. "One still loves one's neighbor and rubs against him, for one needs warmth" (129). The edges of individuality, difference, and creativity are rubbed off to achieve a smooth collective harmony; values are founded on the lowest common denominator. "No shepherd and one herd!" declares the last man. "Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse" (130).

In place of a utilitarian ethics that aspires to minimize pain and maximize pleasure, or a Kantian ethics that seeks to make the individual subservient to the command of universal duty, Nietzsche posits an ethics that goes beyond the fixed categories of good and evil. In being faithful to the earth, true to our real natures as bodies in a perpetual state of transformation, we

struggle to create beyond ourselves, to overcome ourselves. Happiness is not to achieve pleasure or comfort. Suffering and misery are not to be evaded, but as Nietzsche describes it in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the basis of creation and transformation. The overman is a goal that is not a goal, an openness to the possibility and potentiality of creation.

While Zarathustra delivers his sermon to the people, a tightrope dancer (*der Seiltänzer*) who was setting up in the marketplace at the same time, heard the talk about the overman and supposed that it referred to himself, since he performs *over* people's heads. He therefore begins his act. He is about halfway across the abyss when a jester in motley appears through a door and follows him onto the wire. Shouting, the jester jumps over him and disappears through a door at the other side of the rope. Disconcerted, the tightrope dancer loses his balance and plunges to the ground, "a whirlpool of arms and legs." Running to comfort the dying man, Zarathustra assures him, "there is no devil and no hell. Your soul will be dead even before your body; fear nothing further." (*Portable Nietzsche* 131). When the dancer despairs that the lack of heaven or hell makes him little better than an animal, Zarathustra replies, "You have made danger your vocation; there is nothing contemptible in that. Now you perish of your vocation: for that I will bury you with my own hands" (132). As he carries the body from the marketplace, Zarathustra is approached by the jester from the tightrope and warned to leave town because he has made many enemies among "the good and just" and "the believers in the true faith." Returning to the forest, he again stops at the cottage of the saintly hermit, who offers him bread and wine. The hermit also offers it to the corpse of the tightrope walker. When Zarathustra points out that he is dead, the old man replies peevishly that he does not care, that whoever knocks must accept his hospitality (134).

After this farcical parody of Christian Communion (Nietzsche may also be taking a dig at Wagner's *Parsifal*), juxtaposing the symbolic body and blood of Christ (the bread and wine) with an actual corpse, Zarathustra comes to the realization that he needs living companions. "Companions, the creator seeks, not corpses, not herds and believers. Fellow creators, the creator seeks—those who write new values on new tablets" (*Portable Nietzsche* 136). Nietzsche may also have had in mind the poet Friedrich Hölderlin whose poem *Brot und Wein* [*Bread and Wine*] links the figure of Dionysius with Christ. The bread and wine, which are supposed to affirm the symbolic presence of Christ, also underline absence:

> Besser zu schlafen, wie so ohne Genossen zu sein,
> So zu harren und was zu tun indes und zu sagen,

> Weiss ich nicht und wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit?
> [better to sleep than to be friendless as we are, alone, / Always waiting, and what I do or say in the meantime / I don't know, and who wants poets at all in lean times?] (Hölderlin 326, 327)

Burying the corpse in a hollow tree, Zarathustra realizes it is high noon. In the sky he sees an eagle with a serpent circled around its neck. These creatures become his animal companions, the male eagle symbolic of the sky, and the female serpent, symbolic of the earth. Finally praying that his pride fly either with his wisdom or his folly (*Torheit*), he "began to go under" (137). The play on wisdom and folly in Zarathustra's prayer hints at the influence of Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* (*Das Lob der Torheit* in German), playing both with the theme of inversion, and in the spirit of the Humanists of the Northern Renaissance, the wisdom to be found in folly, play, and laughter. And, indeed, in the speeches of Zarathustra that follow the Prologue, folly, play, and laughter are central.

The 60 speeches of Parts One, Two, and Three can be read separately. Each is an essay exploring some aspect of Zarathustra's wisdom. At the same time, they chronicle Zarathustra's doubts and spiritual crises as he comes to grips more fully with the implications of the doctrine of the overman. Each of the speeches is rich, stimulating, suggestive, and insightful, rewarding close reading and analysis. Given the limits of space, it is possible here only to touch on a select handful in this chapter in order to bring out several important philosophical themes.

The very first of Zarathustra's speeches, "On the Three Metamorphoses," outlines the trajectory of Nietzsche's whole philosophical vision. The spirit, says Zarathustra , needs to go through three stages of development, becoming first a camel, then a lion, and finally a child. In its great strength, the camel is a beast of burden, exulting in its ability to endure hardship, abuse, and still carry great loads. In the "loneliest desert," however, the camel goes through a metamorphosis and becomes a lion. The lion seeks to conquer, to seek his last master: "he wants to fight him and his last god; for ultimate victory he wants to fight with the great dragon" (*Portable Nietzsche* 138). The great dragon is named "Thou shalt [*Du sollst!*]." On each of his scales shines a golden "thou shalt," and from each of his scales shine thousand-year-old values. "All value has long been created, and I am all created value," says the dragon. "Verily, there shall be no more 'I will.'" (139). The lion cannot create new values, but creates the freedom for new creation by the "sacred 'No,'" the rejection of old values as illusion. With this, the lion becomes the child. "The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game,

a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred 'Yes'" (139). In broad terms, we are all born into a world that is already fully established. We are loaded with a burden of traditions and values, told that they are eternal and unchanging. Eventually the courageous in his quiet moments (the dark night of the soul) comes to realize that there are inconsistencies within the values, and that he can no longer believe in them without question. Only when he has the courage to reject them, does he open himself to the possibility of creating and overcoming, becoming the child. In the course of his journey Zarathustra also comes to learn that the process does not end, that the play of the child loses its innocence and spontaneity, that the child may become the new camel. The overall shape of the spirit's journey is a circle. There is no final goal or rest. Complacency is the great enemy. Not irrelevantly, Wagner's hero Siegfried, figuratively speaking, is both a fierce lion and a child, in his innocence and delight in nature.

Nietzsche's language critiques both Kant and Hegel. The burden of tradition carried by the camel points to the weight of tradition and the assumption that values represent something eternal and unchanging. The "Thou Shalt" of the dragon (*Du Sollst*) echoes the Kantian terms for moral imperative, the command of a universal obligation derived from the logical fabric of the world. In a parody of the Hegelian dialectic, the bad consciousness represented by these values must be negated to make way for a new affirmation. But where Hegel saw this process of cancelling as also a raising and preserving (*Aufhebung*), Nietzsche sees it as an annihilation and starting over. In turn Nietzsche's conception of the child's play is analogous to Kant's conception of duty, an action performed for its own sake. Play here is not a form of training, habituation, or indoctrination, but an act freely done in the joyful spirit of creativity, independent of any particular purpose or outcome.

Developing a theory of truth often termed perspectivism, Zarathustra explains the origins of values and morality in "On the Thousand and One Goals." He begins with an observation of the empirical fact that different cultures have different values (cultural relativism), from which he infers different moral values (moral relativism). "No people could live without first esteeming; but if they want to preserve themselves, then they must not esteem as the neighbor esteems. Much that was good to one people was scorn and infamy to another" (*Portable Nietzsche* 170) Valuing—in basic terms, the assessment of things and actions as good or evil—is essential for survival. From a negative perspective, each culture values different things from other cultures in order to affirm its own identity. It defines itself in terms of differences. Taken to a psychological extreme, each culture defines itself not

merely by difference, but by equating the difference with evil. "Much I found called evil here, and decked out with purple honors," Zarathustra notes, adding ironically, "[n]ever did one neighbor understand the other; ever was his soul amazed at the neighbor's delusion and wickedness" (170). From a positive perspective, each culture values what it finds difficult. "A table of the good hangs over every people. Behold, it is the tablet of their overcomings; behold, it is the voice of their will to power." Explaining, Zarathustra says, "[p]raiseworthy is whatever seems difficult to a people; whatever seems indispensable and difficult is called good" (170). In effect, Nietzsche extends the psychological commonplace that we tend to put greater value on those things that require effort than on those things that come easily, to the collective consciousness of the community.

Offering the general principle that "once you have recognized the need and land and sky and neighbor of a people, you may also guess the law of their overcomings," Zarathustra presents a series of examples. The ancient Greeks, for instance, declared, "You shall always be the first and excel all others: your jealous soul shall love no one, unless it be the friend" (*Portable Nietzsche* 170). For the ancient Israelites, the tablet of the good stated that one was to honor father and mother, and follow their will "to the root of one's soul." The last example that he cites is "To practice loyalty and, for the sake of loyalty, to risk honor and blood even for evil and dangerous stings," the tablet of the good of a people identified as "pregnant and heavy with great hopes" (171). Here Nietzsche would seem to have in mind the German nation. Underlying these tablets of the good is a perspectivist epistemology, which holds that each statement is true within its particular perspective, though not universally valid. Thus, for instance, from an American perspective, it is a true statement that Benedict Arnold was a traitor, but it is equally true that from a British perspective, he was a loyal patriot. For Nietzsche, although values differ from people to people, they are objectively grounded (as Zarathustra suggests) in the conditions of that people, "the need and land and sky and neighbor of a people."

There is, however, an ironic and satirical edge in Zarathustra's comments. In saying, of the Greeks, that "to be first and excel all others: your jealous shall love no one, unless it be the friend" was their ideal standard of the good, and that the good is that which is most difficult to overcome, then one is also saying that the norm for the Greeks would be mediocrity and the betrayal of friends, certainly a recurrent theme in classical Greek history and literature. Similarly the norm for the ancient Israelites would be stubbornness and disrespectfulness to the parent, as the Bible repeatedly chronicles. Most pointedly, Nietzsche's logic implies that the norm of the German nation is marked

by disloyalty, dishonor, and an aversion to risk. In the end, he reiterates the theme of the "Three Metamorphoses." "Whoever must be a creator always annihilates" (*Portable Nietzsche* 171).

The cluster of speeches at the end of Part Two and the beginning of Part Three dramatizes Zarathustra's spiritual crisis, evoking images of despair, the dark night of the soul, and the Garden of Gethsemane. These include "On Redemption," "Human Prudence," "The Stillest Hour," "The Wanderer," and "On the Vision and the Riddle." The resolution of Zarathustra's crisis culminates in what is known as the doctrine of eternal recurrence. In "On Redemption," Zarathustra asks, "how could I bear to be a man if man were not also a creator and guesser of riddles and redeemer of accidents?" (*Portable Nietzsche* 251). The answer is to transform the "it was" into the "thus I willed it." As with Wagner's Wotan, will is the key to liberation and joy. But there is also a problem. How do I will the past, the "it was"? "The will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time and time's covetousness, that is the will's loneliest melancholy." We are trapped in the despair and regret over past actions, things out of our control to change. In "The Stillest Hour," he wonders if he is worthy of his doctrine. Echoing the parable of the *Three Metamorphoses*, he says, "I lack the lion's voice for commanding" (258). To this, the voice of the stillest hour tells him that he must yet become a child. Finally, underlining his condition of bad faith, the voice of the stillest hour tells him, "O Zarathustra, your fruit is ripe, but you are not ripe for your fruit" (259).

Part Three opens with Zarathustra as "The Wanderer." In Wagner's *Siegfried*, Wotan, also identified as the Wanderer, contemplates the end of the gods:

> Fear of the end of the gods
> no longer consumes me
> now that my wish so wills it!
> What I once resolved in despair,
> in the searing smart of inner turmoil,
> I now perform freely
> in gladness and joy:
> . . .
> I leave my heritage now. (Wagner 257, 258)

While Wagner's Wanderer joyfully wills the end of himself and the gods, Zarathustra's Wanderer struggles with inner turmoil, finding it difficult to accept the transcendence of the self. "What returns, what finally comes home to me, is my own self" (*Portable Nietzsche* 264). Speaking to himself in a form

of self-alienation, he declares, "One must learn to look away from oneself in order to see much" (265), indeed, that he must climb *over* himself.

"On the Vision and the Riddle" is the climax. Struggling to overcome, Zarathustra trudges upward on a lonely mountain path. Sitting on his back is an Alberich-like dwarf, "the spirit of gravity," "dripping lead into my ear, leaden thoughts into my brain" (*Portable Nietzsche* 268), telling him that he is sentenced to himself. Finally reaching his limit and discovering his courage, Zarathustra challenges the dwarf with a riddle about the nature of time and our relation to it. "Behold this gateway, dwarf," he says,

> It has two faces. Two paths meet here; no one has yet followed either to its end. This long lane stretches back for an eternity. And the long lane out there, that is another eternity. They contradict each other, these paths; . . . and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: "Moment." But whoever would follow one of them on and on, farther and farther—do you believe, dwarf, that these paths contradict each other eternally? (269, 270)

Does time exist as something independent of us? The dwarf, following Schopenhauer and Wagner replies, "All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle," that is a cycle that moves from chaos back to chaos.

Zarathustra angrily dismisses this answer as too easy. "From this gateway, Moment, a long, eternal lane leads *backward*: behind us lies an eternity. Must not whatever *can* walk have walked on this lane before? . . . And are not all things knotted together so firmly that this moment draws after it all that is to come? Therefore—itself too?" In short, "must we not eternally return?" (270). If, as causality dictates, things are interconnected, and can only unfold according to the limits of causality, then does it not follow that in the course of infinite time, things will eventually recur over and over again in the same way? What has happened in the past will someday happen again and again.

Notions of eternal return can be found in the writings of the ancient Stoics, and Nietzsche himself plays with the idea earlier in Aphorism 341 of *The Gay Science*, and later in various sections of *The Will to Power*. Interpretations of the doctrine of eternal recurrence have generated an extensive philosophical literature. Whether or not we take the doctrine as an attempt to describe the actual workings of the cosmos, we can read it as a moral test against which to judge our lives, in a sense Nietzsche's revision of Kant's categorical imperative. Where Kant had said that we ought to act only on those moral rules that we could will to be universal (apply to everyone), Nietzsche seems to be saying that we ought to live only that life that we would will to recur

eternally. Or, as Zarathustra tells the dwarf: "Was *that* life? Well then! Once more!" (*Portable Nietzsche* 269). If my response to the question, "how would you like to live the same life over and over?" is one of nausea, disgust, or self-pity, then clearly there is something wrong with the life that I am leading at the moment.

Discovering the dwarf has disappeared, Zarathustra suddenly hears the sound of a howling dog, and, investigating, finds a shepherd choking on a black snake that had crawled down his throat and was partly hanging out of his mouth. Unable to pull the snake out of the mouth, Zarathustra shouts at the shepherd to bite the snake's head off. The shepherd obeys, and jumping up, is suddenly transformed. "No longer shepherd, no long human—one changed, radiant, *laughing!*" (*Portable Nietzsche* 271). Zarathustra must still come fully to grips with the meaning of his vision and riddle. He has, nevertheless, passed the crisis, bitten the head off of the doubts that plagued him, and begun to accept the conditions of life.

While a sharp wit and mordant sense of humor pervade all of *Zarathustra*, Part Four turns sharply to the farcical. Set many years after the events of the first three parts, Zarathustra's hair has turned white. One day, investigating a cry of distress, he encounters a series of "higher men," who have come to seek Zarathustra in his cave. Each sees himself as one of Zarathustra's disciples, and Zarathustra is disconcerted to hear his philosophy misconstrued and misunderstood. These include the Soothsayer, the Kings of the Right and the Left (driving an ass), the Conscientious in Spirit (a materialist scientist studying leeches on his arm), the Magician, the Last Pope (who recounts the death of God), the Ugliest Man (a giant aborted fetus who asks the Oedipal riddle "who am I?"), the Voluntary Beggar (the Sermonizer on the Mount who preaches to cows), and, at noon, Zarathustra's Shadow. When Zarathustra finally returns to his cave, he finds all of these "higher men" who, along with his eagle and serpent, form 12 disciples. Looking at this motley group, he declares, "It was not for *you* that I waited in these mountains" (*Portable Nietzsche* 394).

The identity and significance of the various higher men is complex. Several have been identified among Nietzsche's friends or enemies. Of special note is the figure of the Magician, who may be a satirical portrait of Wagner. The music critic Eduard Hanslick, whom Wagner caricatured as Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger*, described Wagner as exercising an "incomprehensible *magic*" over his followers (Magee, *Aspects* 32). Nietzsche may have had in mind his own experiences under the Wagnerian spell. Tackling the Magician, Zarathustra calls him an actor, counterfeiter, and liar. Nietzsche may also have had in mind the seductive power of Wagner's music to evoke

a sense of spiritual triumph, even where the material did not justify it. In the final analysis, however, the identity of each of the higher men, as Kathleen Higgins argues, is Nietzsche himself, or various earlier developments or revisions of his thought. Thus at one time he might be a Bismarckian nationalist, at another an anti-nationalist; at one time a Langean materialist, at another a Schopenhauerian idealist; a Wagnerian and an anti-Wagnerian, a Christian and an anti-Christian. Nietzsche would fully agree with Emerson's words from the essay "Self-Reliance." "With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do.... Speak what you think today in hard words and tomorrow speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said today" (Emerson 263–264).

Part Four reaches its climax when Zarathustra's 12 disciples decide to celebrate an "ass festival." This is part parody of the Last Supper, in which everyone is unintentionally Judas, and part medieval *Feast of Fools* (*Das Narrenfest*), a carnivalesque inversion of the Mass. The ass brought by the Kings of the Right and Left brays "Yea-Yuh [*I-A*]," phonologically similar in sound to the German affirmative adverb *ja*, and thus an ironic and satirical comment on the sacred 'Yes' from the "Three Metamorphoses." (The medieval *Feast of Fools* also included the *Mass of the Asses* with its *Kyrie asini* and the braying of an ass in the response, as well as hymns to Bacchus—Dionysus—and drunkenness.)

The following morning a roaring lion frightens the higher men, who disappear back down the mountain in terror. Zarathustra realizes that discipleship, either in the sense of being a disciple or having them, is itself contrary to the spirit of the overman. Contemplating the events of the day, he says to himself, "Well then! The lion came, my children are near, Zarathustra has ripened, my hour has come: this is *my* morning, my day is breaking: *rise now, rise, though great noon!*" (*Portable Nietzsche* 439). Book Four, thus concludes where the Prologue of Part One began, with the ripe Zarathustra contemplating the rising sun and the potentiality of life. Where Wagner had seen despair in the end of the world and the twilight of the gods (*Götterdämmerung*), Zarathustra sees joy and laughter in the sunrise. Recalling his Homer (for instance, *Odyssey* 8.266–366), Nietzsche the classical philologist would know that the immortal gods are dispelled not with flames but with laughter.

SUBSEQUENT INFLUENCE

Nietzsche's early reception in the English-speaking world was limited to a handful of enthusiasts, such as the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw, whose play *Man and Superman* combines elements of the overman with Don

Giovanni; or the iconoclastic American journalist, H.L. Mencken, who published a study of Nietzsche in 1908, and a translation of *The Antichrist* in 1920. The dominant attitude, however, is captured in John Buchan's classic spy novel, *Greenmantle* (1914). Asked if he has heard about the "Superman," the hero Richard Hannay, replies, "I gather it was invented by a sportsman called Nietzsche." To this his friend, Sandy Arbuthnot, based on T.E. Lawrence (of Arabia), says, "Old Nietzsche has been blamed for a great deal of rubbish he would have died rather than acknowledge." With some prophetic irony, he adds, "There is no Superman. The poor old donkeys that fancy themselves in the part are either crack-brained professors who couldn't rule a Sunday-school, or bristling soldiers with pint-pot heads" (Buchan 234). P.G. Wodehouse offers a comic reversal of the slave-master morality in his short story, "Jeeves Takes Charge" (1916), when the intellectually superior butler dissuades his dim-witted master Bertie Wooster from reading him: "You would not like Nietzsche, sir. He is fundamentally unsound" (Wodehouse 30).

Given Buchan's and Wodehouse's middle-class dismissal, it is not surprising that Nietzsche found early popularity among various *fin de siècle* aesthetes and decadent writers and artists, who shared with him a passion for Baudelaire and Wagner, a religious regard for music, and an aristocratic contempt for the bourgeois. Indeed, though neither seems to have been familiar with the other, there are a number of interesting parallels between the thought of Nietzsche and Oscar Wilde, almost his exact contemporary, and in fact a number of writers and composers of the next generation were drawn explicitly to both. In this category we might consider Richard Strauss, who set parts of *Zarathustra* to music in his 1896 tone poem *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (its famous opening inspired the beginning of Stanley Kubrick's 1968 movie *2001—A Space Odyssey*), and Gustav Mahler, who incorporates the text of Zarathustra's "Midnight Song"—"O Man, Take Care" (*Portable Nietzsche* 436)—into the fourth movement of his *Third Symphony*. Also of interest are compositions by Delius and Schoenberg. Of note in the realm of literature are French writer André Gide's *Notebooks of André Walter* (1891), *Fruits of the Earth* (1897), and even more explicitly *The Immoralist* (1902), and German novelist Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*(1912),which plays on the fatal tensions between the Dionysian and Apollinian, and his *Doktor Faustus* (1947),which imagines a Nietzschean composer named Adrian Leverkühn who suffers total mental collapse to pursue his art. All of this points to Nietzsche's seminal role in the devolvement of modernism, and even more so of postmodernism.

Nietzsche is one of a handful of historical philosophers to be himself the subject of literature; others of note include Socrates and Wittgenstein.

I have already mentioned Mann's *Doktor Faustus*. More recently we might add Irvin D. Yalom's *When Nietzsche Wept: A Novel of Obsession* (1992) and David Farrell Krell's *Nietzsche: A Novel* (1996). He is also portrayed in the Tony Palmer's movie *Wagner* (1983), starring Richard Burton in the title role, and even more interestingly in Liliana Cavani's *Al di là del bene e del male* (1979).

In the area of modern European philosophy, it is not too much to say that almost every philosopher works under the influence of Nietzsche, whether phenomenologist, Western Marxist, existentialist, or postmodernist. And though he does not play a prominent role in British or American philosophy (with a few notable exceptions, among them Richard Rorty), Nietzsche is one of the few modern philosophers who enjoys a wide general readership. We may conclude with H.L. Mencken, "There is no escaping Nietzsche."

SUGGESTED READINGS

Alderman, Harold. *Nietzsche's Gift*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977.

Allison, David B., ed. *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985.

Buchan, John. *Greenmantle*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1916.

Danto, Arthur C. *Nietzsche as Philosopher*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1965.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. William H. Gilman. New York: New American Library, 1965.

Higgins, Kathleen Marie. *Nietzsche's* Zarathustra. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987.

Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Poems and Fragments*. Trans. Michael Hamburger. London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2004.

Kaufmann, Walter. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. 3rd ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1968.

Kivy, Peter. *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.

Küng, Hans. *The Incarnation of God: An Introduction to Hegel's Theological Thought as Prolegomena to a Future Christology*. Trans. J.R. Stephenson. New York: Herder and Herder, 1999.

Lampert, Laurence. *Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of* Thus Spoke Zarathustra. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.

Lange, Frederick Albert. *The History of Materialism*. Trans. Ernest Chester Thomas. 3 vols. New York: Arno Press, 1974.

Magee, Bryan. *Aspects of Wagner*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

———. *The Tristan Chord: Wagner and Philosophy*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2001.

Nehamas, Alexander. *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1966.

———. *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Case of Wagner*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1967.

———. *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

———. *On the Genealogy of Morals* and *Ecce Homo*. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.

———. *The Portable Nietzsche*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Viking Press, 1968.

———. *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Ed. and Trans. Christopher Middleton. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969.

———. *Werke*. Ed. Karl Schlechta. 3 vols. Munich: Carl Hanser, 1966.

Porter, James I. *The Invention of Dionysus: An Essay on* The Birth of Tragedy. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Safranski, Rüidger. *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*. Trans. Shelley Frisch. New York: W.W. Norton, 2002.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation*. Trans. E.F.J. Payne. 2 vols. New York: Dover, 1958.

Shaprio, Gary. *Nietzschean Narratives*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.

Silk, M.S. and J.P. Stern. *Nietzsche on Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Strong, Tracy B. *Friderich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Tanner, Michael. *Wagner*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Wagner, Richard. *Wagner's Ring of the Niebelung: A Companion*. Ed. Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington. London: Thames and Hudson, 1993.

Wodehouse, P.G. *Carry On, Jeeves*. New York: Penguin Books, 1956.

9

Huxley
Brave New World
1932

> This system has been disproved and it is dead; but you cannot disprove the person behind it—the person cannot be killed.
>
> —Friedrich Nietzsche

> What's the use of a train taking one quickly from Islington to Camberwell, if it only takes one from a dismal and illiberal life in Islington to a dismal and illiberal life in Camberwell?
>
> —Matthew Arnold

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is one of that small handful of utopian or dystopian novels that has retained its power to unsettle, amuse, disturb, and remain current, despite the passage of time and shifts in fashion. (Eugene Zamiatin's 1924 *We* is another instance.) Most such novels tend quickly to look dated, quaint or even camp, like the technological wonders in old science fiction movies, historical artifacts that embody the shortsightedness of another time. As George Orwell wrote, "a Utopia necessarily reflects the aesthetic ideas of its own period" (Orwell 428). His own *Nineteen Eighty-Four* speaks more to the political conditions in the immediate wake of the Second World War, when he was writing, than it does to the near future now long past, signified by the title. Even Huxley's own essay, *Brave New World Revisited* (1958), speaks more to the preoccupations of the late 1950s and early 1960s than it explicates the real legacy of the original. (The same may be said for his 1962 novel *Island*.) What is ultimately enduring in any great utopian fiction (from Plato's *Republic* and Thomas More's *Utopia* onward) is not what it prophecies about future social conditions and technological

innovations, but what it reveals about the human character, its aspirations and limitations. It is not about apparent differences of appearance, but about underlying continuities, the disconcerting recognition of what we share with the past and the future.

Even with his title, Huxley signals the theme that apparent human differences are superficial, a function of appearance rather than character. The title comes from a line in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. At the end of the play, Miranda is astonished by the sight of well-dressed European men, her prior experience having been limited to her elderly father Prospero and the "savage" Caliban. "How many goodly creatures are there here! / How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world / That has such people in't!" (5.1.182–184). Her father replies dryly, "'Tis new to thee," recollecting that these same *goodly creatures* had once deposed him and were just recently plotting to murder each other. In Elizabethan English, *bravery* signifies not merely courageousness, but also fine attire. Miranda is taken with elegant appearances, but perilously ignorant of human character. Her words are for her unintentionally ironic. In alluding to Shakespeare, Huxley's novel signals from the beginning the double consciousness that characterizes utopian literature, reflecting both a fascination with the possibilities of an ideal society, but the dangers of supposing one can escape instinct or human nature.

LIFE AND WORK

The sum of Huxley's life and work could be seen as dedicated to the exploration of utopian paradoxes. He was born in 1894, six years before the death of Queen Victoria. He died November 22, 1963, the day that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. The beginning of his life witnessed the last glories of the Victorian Era, and his death, the beginning of the end of a period of American optimism. During his 68 years he was witness to the titanic struggles among the twentieth century's utopian ideologies—modern industrial capitalism, socialism, communism, fascism, Nazism. On a smaller scale, he was both witness to and active participant in various utopian experiments, challenging constricting conventional views on sexual arrangements, spirituality, and even the borders of consciousness, explorations that took him into the realms of mysticism, Asian philosophies, and psychedelic drugs. Nurtured in an environment of Victorian liberal intellectualism, he thrived in a bohemian and anti-establishment atmosphere, and included among his friends Bertrand Russell, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, and T.S. Eliot. The result was an open-mindedness and wide-ranging curiosity that acknowledged no intellectual or professional limits, ranging freely over

science, history, literature, philosophy, religion, psychology, and sociology. Huston Smith, noted Professor of Asian Philosophy, wrote of Huxley, "More impressive than the range of the man's mind, however, was its sympathy and interest. Few major intelligences since William James have been as open" (qtd. in Bedford 653). Huxley once described himself a "Visiting Professor of Nothing in Particular" (qtd. in Murray 2).

Despite the range of his interests, they share an underlying utopian preoccupation, aptly described by biographer Nicholas Murray: "Huxley's philosophy might be summed up as: the world can be made better, but only if we make ourselves better" (Murray 5). To make ourselves better, we must have a good world, but to have a good world, we must ourselves be good. This is the paradox at the heart of all utopian writing, and it is the paradox at the center of Huxley's own writings, whether the explicitly utopian or dystopian works such as *Brave New World*, *Ape and Essence*, and *Island*, or the social satires such as *Crome Yellow*, *Point Counter Point*, and *Eyeless in Gaza* that look at sexual, social, and political experiments of the day.

Aldous Leonard Huxley was born July 26, 1894, in Godalming, Surrey, near where, as a number of readers observe, John the Savage sets up his retreat at the end of *Brave New World*. Huxley's father, Leonard Huxley, was a Classics master and later editor and literary critic. His mother, Julia *née* Arnold, had been the first woman to attend Somerville College, Oxford, where she graduated in 1880. On his father's side Huxley was the grandson of the famous Victorian biologist Thomas Henry Huxley, "Darwin's bulldog." On his mother's side, he was the grandnephew of the Victorian poet and critic Matthew Arnold, and the nephew of novelist "Mrs Humphry" Ward. Perhaps owing to his origins, Huxley's thought was shaped by a serious avocation in the sciences, especially biology, and an Arnoldian commitment to the disinterested pursuit of culture. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that the combined spirits of Thomas Henry Huxley and Matthew Arnold suffuse most of Huxley's thinking. Huxley had two older brothers and a younger sister: Julian, later himself a noted biologist and writer, Trevenen, and Margaret.

Huxley's eminent background assumed he that he would pursue a life of the mind, a destiny he fully and gladly satisfied. He entered Eton in June 1908, but his early education was interrupted by two profound disasters. In November his mother died of cancer. Then, in 1911, he was forced to leave Eton because of an eye disease diagnosed as *keratitis punctata*, which left him nearly completely blind for eighteen months, requiring that he learn Braille. Though he eventually regained some sight, his vision was always limited. Despite this limitation, he remained all his life a voracious reader, books

being his "besetting vice" (Huxley, *Complete* 2.524). He entered Bailliol College, Oxford, October 1913, graduating with a first in English in 1916. His Oxford years were rocked by the suicide of his brother Trevenen. During this period he also entered the avant-garde social and artistic circles centered at Garsington, the Oxfordshire estate of Philip and Lady Ottoline Morrell. Here, the young Huxley came to know writers D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, philosopher Bertrand Russell, literary and art critics Desmond McCarthy, Clive Bell, and Lytton Strachey, and painter Dora Carrington, and many others associated with Bloomsbury. Here in 1916 he also met the Flemish Maria Nys, whom he would marry. Many of these acquaintances, much to the distress of Ottoline Morrell, became the basis for characters in Huxley's first published novel, *Crome Yellow* (1921), including elements of Ottoline herself in the figure of Priscilla Wimbush. Lawrence had himself caricatured her as Hermione Roddice in *Women in Love* (1920). Though Huxley always denied it, many of his characters throughout his literary career drew significantly on himself and his friends.

Graduating from Oxford, Huxley found few satisfying options. He was rejected for military service in the First World War because of his sight, so he worked briefly as a clerk on the Air Board, and eventually took a temporary position as a master at Eton. During this period he published his first book, *The Burning Wheel* (1916), a collection of poems. With the end of the war, he began earning a sufficient living publishing stories, essays and reviews, and was able to marry Maria in July 10, 1919. Their only child, Matthew, was born in 1920. From this period onward, Huxley supported his family as a writer, publishing in a variety of places, including *The Athenaeum* magazine, the *Westminster Gazette*, *House and Garden*, and *Condé Nast*. Although he had already published three volumes of poetry and a collection of short stories, the success of his first novel, *Crome Yellow*, which included praise from Marcel Proust, marked the beginnings of his career as a successful and prolific professional writer. Huxley characterized this novel as "Peacockian," that is a novel in the manner of the British Romantic satirist, Thomas Love Peacock, playing on the comic possibilities of "a houseful of oddities" (Murray 131). His eventual literary production included eleven novels, six collections of short stories, some twenty volumes of essays and travel writings, two biographical studies, three plays, and a number of screenplays. It is impossible here to do more than touch on a small handful of works relevant to *Brave New World*.

As early as the 1921 *Crome Yellow*, Huxley was playing with the theme of utopia, albeit in passing. The novel's hero, a hapless young poet named Denis Stone, finds himself in conversation with the gaunt and beak-nosed

intellectual Mr. Scogan who proposes to describe the "Rational State." The figure of Scogan contains shades of philosopher Bertrand Russell, and the iconoclastic American critic and journalist H.L. Mencken, who never tired of gleefully railing against the "booboisie." Scogan imagined the Rational State subdivided according to three species of humans: "the Directing Intelligences, the Men of Faith, and the Herd" (Huxley, *Great Short Works* 105). The Intelligences, governed by cold and ruthless reason, possess freedom and govern things. The Men of Faith he also terms "Madmen," because of their enthusiasm and belief in the irrational. Their task is propaganda. "Moulded by a long process of suggestion, they will go out into the world, preaching and practicing with a generous mania the coldly reasonable projects of the Directors from above" (106). The Herd, lacking intelligence and enthusiasm, are easily manipulated by suggestion to be obedient, carrying out the physical labor of society in the name of happiness. "Oh, I envy the lot of the commonality in the Rational State!" Scogan rhapsodizes ironically, "obeying their betters, convinced of their own grandeur and significance and immortality, they will be marvelously happy, happier than any race of men has ever been. They will go through life in a rosy state of intoxication, from which they will never awake" (106, 107). The division of Scogan's Rational Society anticipates the basic social hierarchy of *Brave New World* with its rational controller, Mustapha Mond at the top, directing the work of the lower orders, who are made happy by the literal intoxication of soma and sex. And, like Mustapha Mond, Scogan's Intelligences differ from the herd, living "in sad and sober privacy behind the scenes" (107). Similarly, the poet Helmholtz Watson from *Brave New World*, a lecturer at the College of Emotional Engineering (Department of Writing), elaborates on the Men of Faith. (Czech novelist, Josef Skvorecky noted that under communism, authors were known as engineers of the human soul.) In a complex genealogy, the Marxist notion that religion as the opiate of the people, anesthetizing the working classes to their subservient conditions, is subsumed by the poet (and propagandist). In this, Huxley plays the idea of late nineteenth century thinkers like (uncle) Matthew Arnold, who thought that the spiritual function of the priest was now filled by the poet, or like Richard Wagner, who thought of his operas as quasi-religious experiences.

At the end of Scogan's discourse, Denis asks where he would fit in such a Rational State. Scogan reflects that Denis lacks the clear and merciless reason of the Intelligences, has insufficient enthusiasm for the Men of Faith, and yet is too independent and unsusceptible to suggestion to belong to the herd. "No, I can see no place for you," Scogan cheerfully concludes, adding

in terms that look chillingly past *Brave New World* to the not-distant future, "only the lethal chamber" (107).

A later conversation with Mr. Scogan is also relevant. "How often have I tried to take holidays, to get away from myself, my own boring nature," Scogan sighs. Turning specifically to the experience of the religious and the aesthetic, he notes his own lack of emotion, his own inability to feel the power of religious or artistic works. Lacking shared emotions, the "inexpressible" expressions of the mystics seem like "deplorable claptrap." "For the unreligious it is a symbol of nothing, and so appears merely grotesque" (118). Turning to the artists, he notes that he has dutifully visited museums, and even studied so much that his knowledge of some periods was "omniscient." Yet despite this education and knowledge, he *feels* nothing. "Confronted by a picture of which I could tell you all the known and presumed history . . . I felt none of that strange excitement and exaltation which is, as I am informed by those who do feel it, the true aesthetic emotion" (118). On one hand, Scogan's comments repeat the banal observation that some people have a sensitivity or capacity to feel things that others do not. But on a more sober note, it undercuts the utopian commonplace that education or improved social conditions can transform human nature. Education, conditioning, and reason, in other words, are insufficient to create or evoke a feeling where the capacity does not already exist. Like Milton's Satan (or Goethe's Faust), we carry ourselves with us wherever we go, and it is this self that makes a heaven of hell or a hell of heaven.

The period from 1921 to 1937 saw Huxley's production of six novels, including his three most important *Point Counter Point* (1927), *Brave New World* (1931), and *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936). Huxley and his family spent much of this period living at various locations in Italy and southern France, which was less expensive than England. In 1926 he renewed his friendship with D.H. Lawrence, and was at Lawrence's deathbed in Vence, near Nice in southern France, in 1930. Later he edited Lawrence's letters, published in 1932. Born the son of a coal miner in 1885, Lawrence chafed against the conventions of family and class hierarchy, exploring instead the primal and transformative force of sexuality in his poetry and novels such as *Sons and Lovers* (1913), *The Rainbow* (1915), *Women in Love* (1920), and the infamous *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928). Feeling that the First World War had exhausted European culture, he traveled around the world, living for a time in Taos, New Mexico, producing important essays, stories, and the novel *St. Mawr* (1925), and in Mexico. He was deeply impressed by the Indians, writing about the persistence and resurgence of their ancient culture and beliefs, in his novel *The Plumed Serpent* (1926). His health collapsing because of tuberculosis, he returned to Europe in 1925.

Huxley's relationship with Lawrence contributes to our understanding of *Brave New World*, especially the figure of John the Savage. Huxley and Lawrence represent an attraction of opposites, in Nietzschean terms a relationship between the Apollinian Huxley and the Dionysian Lawrence. In *Point Counter Point*, the painter Mark Rampion is based on Lawrence, a man who has integrated body and soul, who lives life fully. "After a few hours in Mark Rampion's company he really believed in noble savagery," muses novelist Philip Quarles, a character based on Huxley himself. "He felt convinced that the proudly conscious intellect ought to humble itself a little and admit the claims of the heart—aye, and the bowels, the loins, the bones and skin and muscles—to a fair share of life" (Huxley, *Point* 195). Rampion, on the other hand, calls Quarles, "an intellectual-aesthetic pervert," a person who would deny his humanity by focusing exclusively on the intellect, the religious, the moral, or the scientific (405).

Huxley, very much the reserved and cultured aesthete, was attracted by the elemental power embodied by Lawrence, but hesitant to abandon his Arnoldian disinterestedness and intellectual commitment to science. In an essay written at about the same time as *Brave New World*, "On the Charms of History and the Future of the Past," he suggests that the attraction to "primitives" is more a reaction to the complexities of the modern world than to the reality of the primitive. "As actual primitives disappear . . . , this admiration for them will tend to increase; the most satisfactory ideals are those that have no actual fancy-cramping embodiments." Turning specifically to the popularity of Lawrence, he adds, "With every advance of industrial civilization the savage past will be more and more appreciated, and the cult of D.H. Lawrence's Dark God may be expected to spread through an ever-widening circle of worshipers" (Huxley, *Complete* 3.135). Lawrence himself debunked any notion of "going native," even while he admired the power and persistence of Indian culture. There is nevertheless a spiritual affinity between Lawrence and John the Savage, who both find themselves at a loss, the Western world sterile and unappealing to them, and the primitive world closed and inaccessible. Both are in the condition analogous to that described by the narrator of Matthew Arnold's 1855 poem, "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse:" "Wandering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born" (85, 86). It is a state of mind that besets many of Huxley's protagonists.

Bracketing *Brave New World* (1932), *Point Counter Point* (1928) and *Eyeless in Gaza* (1936) give some perspective on Huxley's thinking at the time. The first juxtaposes members of the intelligencia, self-absorbed, caught up in their social rounds and casual adulteries, only fleetingly

aware of the political tides rising around them. Flipping through a pamphlet by an old flame, Everard Webley, Elinor Quarles reads, "'We shall dispose of the dictatorship of the proletariat as our fathers disposed of the divine right of kings. We shall deny majority infallibility as they denied Papal infallibility. The British Freemen stand for . . . , . . . stand for what? she wondered. For the dictatorship of Everard and the infallibility of Webley?" (*Point* 274). Webley is based loosely on Oswald Mosley, founder of the British Union of Fascists, and his British Freemen (the Greenshirts) are based on the fascist Blackshirts. Elinor is, however, soon distracted from her musings, contemplating reigniting the old relationship. Huxley himself admitted at this time that though democratic by inclination, he had few political convictions and was indifferent to political systems. "Provided that it guaranteed my safety and let me in peace to do my work, I should live just as happily under an alien despotism as under the British constitution" (*Jesting* 134).

Another character, the murderous Maurice Spandrell, bemoans the music snobs and what he calls God-snobs, both variations on Mr. Scogan's theme concerning inability to feel either the aesthetic or the religious. For Spandrell, too many people merely pretend to have aesthetic or religious feelings because it gives them the status of being cultured: "Unable to distinguish Bach from Wagner, but mooing with ecstacy as soon as the fiddles strike up," Spandrell complains. "It's exactly the same with God. The world's full of ridiculous God-snobs. People who aren't really alive, who've never done any vital act, who aren't in any living relation with anything." Elaborating, he adds, "But they moo away in churches, they coo over their prayers, they pervert and destroy their whole dismal existences by acting in accordance with the will of an arbitrarily imagined abstraction which they choose to call God" (*Point* 422). Spandrell attempts to resolve his dilemma by an act of violence, much in the spirit of Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, murdering Webley. His final consolation comes for an intimation of something beyond himself that he receives, listening to the *heilige Dankgesang* passage from Beethoven's A minor Quartet.

The conditions described by Quarles and Spandrell anticipate the characteristic state of mind of the citizens of *Brave New World*, caught up in their small lives, oblivious to anything larger than personal satisfaction. The similarities between the worlds of upper-class London in the 1920s and A.F. 632 point to the underlying irony of claiming that the cloned citizens of *Brave New World* (or clones of any world) are not human or at best half-human. If the citizens of the brave new world of the future are not human, then neither are their counterparts in the same old world. The real problem is more the

other way around. The citizens of both worlds remain in Nietzsche's words, "human, all too human."

The autobiographical *Eyeless in Gaza*, written with a clearer sense of the real dangers of war and ideological conflict, reexamines the social and intellectual world of *Point Counter Point*. It centers on the life of an intellectual, Anthony Beavis, who passes through life with little emotion or sense of commitment to anyone or anything, aside from "detached, momentary sensuality." Among his friends is Mark Staithes, once the class bully from old public school days, now a communist. Cut from the same cloth as Spandrell, Staithes despairs at the implications of his Marxist orthodoxy. "Behavior and modes of thought are the outcome of economic circumstances. Reproduce Babbitt's circumstances and you can't help reproducing his manners and customs. Christ!" (*Eyeless* 240). In short, Marxism would seem to predict a vicious circle in which the economic prosperity of social revolution will produce minds such as the dull and smug hero of Sinclair Lewis's famous 1922 novel, *Babbitt*—"pig and prig simultaneously" (*Eyeless* 240). In the end, Staithes, like Spandrell turns to violence, leaving him literally and intellectually legless. Beavis, on the other hand, discovers mysticism and turns to a real and serious commitment to pacificism, a move that echoes Huxley's own response to the outbreak of the Civil War in Spain. "For beneath all being, beneath the countless identical but separate patterns, beneath the attractions and the repulsions, lies peace. The same peace as underlies the frenzy of the mind. Dark peace, immeasurably deep" (Eyeless 471, 472).

After the success of *Eyeless in Gaza,* Huxley traveled to the United States, visiting Lawrence's widow, Frieda in Taos, New Mexico, and working on the *Encyclopedia of Pacificism*. In 1938, he accepted an offer to do a screenplay for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, moving to California, where, with several visits to Europe, he lived with his family the rest of life. His being a pacifist, however, prevented his gaining U.S. citizenship. Of note among his contributions as a screenwriter were the 1940 version of *Pride and Prejudice*, starring Greer Garson and Laurence Olivier, and the 1944 version of *Jane Eyre*, starring Joan Fontaine and Orson Wells. He also made uncredited contributions to Walt Disney's 1951 animated version of *Alice in Wonderland*. (Huxley's mother had as a child been one of Lewis Carroll's photographic subjects.)

The resolution of *Eyeless in Gaza* anticipated Huxley's turn to religion and mysticism as the only solution for the human condition. Much of his work in the last phase of his life reflects this preoccupation. Among his projects was the 1941 biographical study, *Grey Eminence*, about Père Joseph, who had been an assistant to Cardinal Richelieu in seventeenth century France, as well as a practicing mystic. Huxley's later *Devils of Loudun* (1952) grew

out of this project. During this time, he became increasingly interested in Eastern thought, struck up a friendship with Jiddu Krishnamuriti, and later joined the Vedânta society of Swami Prabhavananda. Perhaps the most important of his works in this area is *The Perennial Philosophy* (1944), an anthology and commentary in which he traced recurrent or common themes in world religious and mystical writings, for him the basis for an "empirical theology" that seemed to affirm the claim of a transcendent ground to all being. He also began to delve into parapsychology and psychedelic drugs. In 1953, under the guidance of Dr. Humphry Osmond, he took mescalin. The experience became the basis for his extended essay, *The Doors of Perception* (1954). The title borrows from a line from the poet William Blake, and later inspired the name of Jim Morrison's rock band, The Doors. Huxley suggested that the drug suspended the filtering effects of the individual mind in order to reveal the "Mind at Large," the sense of a larger consciousness, which he compares to the Buddhist notion of Dharma-Body and Meister Eckhart's *Istigkeit*—"Is-ness," an awareness of pure being, the "more than personal." Huxley complains that the focus of modern poetry on the personal and the subconsciousness of the individual was a retreat away from "outward Datum" (Huxley, *Doors* 49).

Much of the last decade of Huxley's life was spent in the role of public intellectual, lecturing at various conferences around the world on topics ranging over world population, parapsychology, and technology and the human condition. In 1955 Maria Huxley died of cancer. The following year Huxley married Laura Archera. In 1958 he wrote *Brave New World Revisited*, in which, with an eye on George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, he sought to situate *Brave New World* in relation to the subsequent terrors of Hitler and Stalin and his current preoccupations with population control and world hunger. "In the context of 1948, *1984* seemed dreadfully convincing. But tyrants, after all, are mortal and circumstances change. Recent developments in Russia and recent advances in science and technology have robbed Orwell's book of some of its gruesome verisimilitude" (Huxley, *Brave* 2). In 1960, Huxley was diagnosed with cancer. In the final years of his life he published his last novel, *Island* (1962), one last look at utopia, though this time in a positive light. That same year a fire destroyed his house, resulting in the loss of a number of letters and manuscripts that he had accumulated with the intention of working on his memoirs. Despite declining health, he continued a busy schedule of lecturing and completing his last book, *Literature and Science* (1963). He died on November 22, 1963. His ashes were eventually buried in his parents' grave in Surrey, followed later by those of Maria.

PLOT AND THEMES

Brave New World begins in and around London at a point in the future dated A.F. 632, A.F. signifying *After Ford* (or sometimes *After Freud*). On one level, the A.F. provides the basis of a running gag, playing off of the phonetic similarity of Ford and Lord. Thus where Huxley's reader might exclaim, "Oh, Lord!," the inhabitants of this future world will say, "Oh, Ford!" Analogously A.D. (*Anno Domini—Year of the Lord*), becomes A.F. More seriously, the designation indicates that Ford or Fordism is the abiding religion of this world. The term Fordism was coined by the industrial engineer Frederick Taylor to describe the system of management and industrial organization developed by Henry Ford, based on the assembly line and uniform commodities, coupled with the use of good wages and benefits to earn employee loyalty. This is the central organizing principle of the society that Huxley describes. Humans are propagated according to an elaborate system of eugenics, based on a vast assembly line in which mass-produced human ova are fertilized, developed, grown in bottles, and conditioned to produce uniform classes of people. The highest of these are the Alphas, who are destined for administrative roles in society, followed in descending social order and function by Betas, Gammas, Deltas and Epsilons. By chemically and radioactively treating the embryos at various stages of development, individuals are inoculated against various diseases, or degrees of mental development, with the result that the lower orders lack the ability to judge their circumstances or question the higher authorities. Since there is no family structure, aside from the whole, children are raised in great collective nurseries, segregated by their genetic predestination, which in turn is reinforced by a process of "Neo-Pavlovian conditioning" and indoctrination carried out through "hypnopaedia," in which phrases inculcating their respective class prejudices and values are repeated to them in their sleep. Finally, at the highest level, social order is preserved by a combination of total consumption, trivial amusements, unrestrained sex, and soma, a drug that produces calming dreams. Reversing Karl Marx, opium has become the religion of the people.

Huxley introduces this new society in the first chapters by the device of following a group of school children on a field trip to "Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Centre," where they see the eugenics assembly-lines and conditioning rooms in action. In the course of this tour, they also meet "his fordship" Mustapha Mond, the Resident Controller for Western Europe, and one of the ten controllers of the world. He explains to the children that everything is about stability, everyone an organic cog in the great machine: "No civilization without social stability. No social stability without

individual stability" (31). The chief instruments of this stability center on sex and drugs. He describes the process metaphorically like water under pressure in a pipe. "I pierce it once . . . What a jet!" "Mother, monogamy, romance. High spurts the fountain; fierce and foamy the wild jet. The urge has but a single outlet" (30). By contrast, many holes release the pressure. "The unchecked stream follows smoothly down its appointed channels into a calm well-being" (32). Since the reproductive process is entirely artificial, sexuality is liberated from any role with regard to reproduction or family structure, with the result that words like mother, father, son, or daughter are considered obscene. Indeed contraception ("Malthusian Drill") and abortion are mandatary. Thus sex is open and free. In a comic reversal, children are punished for not engaging in sexual games, and women are chided for not being more promiscuous. "Everyone," as one of the hypnopaedia phrases repeats, "belongs to everyone." Thus, in theory, there should be no instability caused by sexual rivalry or blood ties, no neuroses caused by sexual repression. In turn, one's spare time is filled with soma and consumption and various pointless amusements, including television (progenitors of the television had been developed in the 1920s independently by Zworykin and Farnsworth but did not reach commercial production until after the Second World War), tactile pornographic movies ("feelies"), Obstacle Golf, Riemann-Surface Tennis, and Centrifugal Bumble-puppy, each designed to encourage production and consumption by planned obsolescence. In short, the citizens of this civilization produce to consume, and consume to produce, a closed cycle with no desiderata left to think, contemplate, or create, no room to become alienated or disaffected.

In a narrative strategy using montage (a technique used in both *Point Counterpoint* and more fully in *Eyeless in Gaza*), Huxley cuts back and forth from the scene with Mond among the school children to a series of scenes introducing the protagonists, Bernard Marx, a disaffected Alpha Plus, sensitive about his small stature, attributed to alcohol in his blood-surrogate when an embryo, and Lenina Crowne, a "pneumatic" Beta. (T. S. Eliot coined the usage of pneumatic to signify a well-rounded figure in his 1919 poem "Whispers of Immortality.") Each is attracted to the other, but is self-conscious and reticent. Bernard is planning a vacation to the Savage Reservation, a secured region in New Mexico, where modern civilization does not extend and the savage inhabitants preserve old customs, and wants to invite Lenina along.

The narrative also introduces various friends and co-workers. Of note is Bernard's friend, Helmholtz Watson, whose job as a poet is to compose hypnopaedic rhymes. Broad-shouldered, strong necked, and curly haired,

Helmholtz physically resembles the Romantic poet, Lord Byron (1788–1824). Like Lord Byron, Helmholtz is also disaffected, despite his privilege, talent, and physical attractiveness. "Did you ever feel," he asks Bernard, "as though you had something inside you that was only waiting for you to give it a chance to come out? Some sort of extra power that you aren't using." He then adds, in a metaphor that inverts Mond's of the water and the pipe, "you know, like all the water that goes down the falls instead of through the turbines?" (54).

When Bernard mentions his vacation plans to his supervisor, the supervisor recalls he himself had once visited the Savage Reservation many years before, but that his girlfriend, long since forgotten, had disappeared without a trace in the desert. With this piece of information Bernard and Lenina fly to a resort hotel in Santa Fé, New Mexico. From there they are helicoptered across miles of desolate wastes to the pueblo of Malpais in the middle of the Reservation, a place full of Indians and "half-breeds," ferocious animals, infectious diseases, venomous lizards, monstrous superstitions, marriage, childbirth, families, Christianity, totemism and ancestor worship—in short, the polar opposite of the brave new world of civilized London. A number of readers have noted that *malpais* is Spanish for "bad place," and as such the inverse analogue to *utopia* (happy place).

While at Malpais, Bernard and Lenina witness an Indian snake dance, which includes the flagellation of a young man (a *penitente*) by a coyote-masked dancer. (Much of Huxley's knowledge of the Pueblo Indian rituals came from Lawrence and from his reading of Frank Hamilton Cushing's 1901 *Zuni Folk Tales* and other sources.) After this ceremony Bernard and Lenina are approached by a young man dressed as an Indian, but with blond hair, blue eyes, and white, though bronzed, skin, who addresses them in "faultless but peculiar English" (89). The young man, whose name is John, expresses his regret that he had not been chosen as a *penitente* for the flagellation ritual, explaining that he had been rejected because of his foreign origins. Putting two and two together, Bernard realizes that John is none other than the son of the lost girlfriend of Bernard's supervisor back in London. While walking alone in the desert, she had fallen into a ravine and been knocked unconscious. Eventually she found herself in the pueblo, pregnant because of some failure in her "Malthusian Drill," and lacking access to an "Abortion Centre," becoming the mother of John. Her emotions, new environment, and conditioning come into profound conflict. Thus she feels motherly affection for her son, while intellectually rejecting such retrograde concepts as motherhood. Her sexual promiscusity earns the wrath of the pueblo women, and later, on her deathbed, she longingly recalls Popé, who had been among

her long-term Indian lovers. Living these many years in the pueblo, the once pneumatic Linda has become old, wrinkled, worn, bloated, and filthy, a sight outside the experience and comprehension of the revolted Lenina, who knows only the hygiene and artificial youthfulness of civilization.

Bernard feels a sympathy for John the Savage, who is also disaffected, also an outsider. John longs to be a part of the Indian society, to participate in its rituals, but is rejected because of this ethnic difference. He also feels an Oedipal reaction to Linda's attraction to Popé, further complicating his emotional life, leaving him sexually repressed. His only consolation is a copy of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (once owned by some ancient missionary) that Popé had once given Linda along with his usual gift of *mescal*, which she used as a substitute for soma. From the Shakespeare, John learned the use of language, thus his "peculiar English," and a set of narratives for describing and interpreting the world. Shakespeare is also his only emotional outlet. Bernard formulates a plan. Knowing that his supervisor back in London wants to have him transferred to Iceland because he finds Bernard's attitude disruptive, and realizing the connection between the supervisor, Linda, and John, Bernard schemes to have Linda and John return to London with him. The result on their return is a confrontation that leads to the supervisor's disgrace and resignation.

Back in London, Linda descends into a permanent soma holiday, and Bernard, as the spokesman and keeper for John the Savage, finds his own prestige and popularity in society are much enhanced. Now that he is in demand, he finds himself no longer feeling disaffected. John, on the other hand, feels nothing but contempt for this brave new world. In turn Lenina realizes that she is falling in love with John, but is unequipped by her conditioning to comprehend his sexual repression. The crisis breaks when she undresses with the intention of offering herself sexually. John responds with the fury and words of the betrayed Othello, forcing her to take refuge in the bathroom. She is saved only by John's getting a phone call about Linda that sends him hurrying off to the hospital. At the hospital he watches over his dying mother, while fending off inquisitive schoolchildren and officious personnel. He is further distressed that Linda imagines in her delirium that she is with Popé. In a mixture of rage and despair upon her death, John tries to incite the Delta hospital workers to revolt against the system, encouraging them to throw away their weekly allotment of soma. Warned of the crisis, Bernard and Helmholtz rush to the hospital. Helmholtz enthusiastically joins John in throwing pill bottles out the window, while Bernard disingenuously tries to be on both sides. The Deltas, however, prefer their drugs to freedom, and the ensuing riot leads to police intervention.

Arrested, John, Bernard, and Helmholtz are ushered into Mustapha Mond's study for interrogation. The scene dramatizes the personalities of three characters and presents the central conflicts. Helmholtz, ever confident and cheerful, sits himself in the most comfortable chair in the room; Bernard, abject and craven, selects the most uncomfortable; while John restlessly wanders about the room, looking at books. Mustapha Mond enters briskly, shakes hands around, then good-humoredly addresses John. "So you don't much like civilization, Mr. Savage?" (167) He is never the swaggering or blustering dictator making pronouncements, but like Mr. Scogan, the bemused intellectual. Throughout, Mond's abiding principle is duty to happiness—"a hard master—particularly other people's happiness," he confesses (174). Here happiness is understood as psychological contentment and physical well-being which in turn is the product of social stability. In a sort of circular argument, anything that causes discontent endangers social stability, and anything that destabilizes social order endangers happiness. For this reason, Mond explains, he must oppose anything to do with beauty (art or the aesthetic), real science, and religion. Each of these by its very nature disrupts the *status quo*, makes us dissatisfied, leads us to look beyond the comfortably given and to question its authority. Instead of beauty, tragedies such as Shakespeare's, or the high call of art, which would make us think about disconcerting emotions, the brave new civilization posits entertainment and distractions to fill consciousness and prevent thought, and to channel the emotions into the consumption of goods. Instead of a real science that makes us think about the foundation of the world, what we are and how we fit into the natural order of the universe, the science of the brave new civilization limits itself to matters of engineering, solving immediate problems or refining its consumer goods. "[A]ll our science is just a cookery book, with an orthodox theory of cooking that nobody's allowed to question, and a list of recipes that mustn't be added to" (173). Finally, instead of a real religion that makes us probe the radical limits of the self by relating it to something greater or beyond ourselves ("the Mind at large"), the brave new civilization offers Solidarity sing-alongs to create warm feelings of belonging. "Call it the fault of civilization," Mond sighs. "God isn't compatible with machinery and scientific medicine and universal happiness" (180).

Confronted with the sort of happiness that the brave new world offers, Bernard, Helmholtz, and John decide on unhappiness. "I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin," John asserts. In other words, replies Mustapha Mond, "you're claiming the right to be unhappy" (184). The hero of Eugene Zamiatin's more explicitly totalitarian utopia makes a strikingly similar point: "If they will not

understand that we are bringing them a mathematically faultless happiness, our duty will be to force them to be happy" (Zamiatin 3).

In the end Bernard and Helmholtz are resolved to their fate, and exiled to islands where their individualism will not affect the smooth flow of society. John, however, is to be kept in England for further observation and experimentation. He decides to set himself up in an old lighthouse as a hermitage. Here he hopes to reconnect with his Indian heritage by a process of purification and self-flagellation. Society, however, will not leave him in peace, and the daily tabloids begin to report on his activities, followed by the appearance of tourists come in search of a new thrill. "That evening the swarm of helicopters that came buzzing across the Hog's Back was a dark cloud ten kilometers long. The description of last night's orgy of atonement had been in all the papers" (198). Alienated from the pueblo, alienated from civilization, unable to find any refuge, unable to conceive any alternative, John finally hangs himself as the only way to escape the world and himself.

CHARACTERS

Huxley's characters reflect a complex mixture of impulses. At one level he echoes, with a few ironic twists, the main constellation of characters in Shakespeare's *Tempest*. John the Savage corresponds to Caliban and Lenina to Miranda, though it is Huxley's Miranda who sexually desires Caliban, while the latter struggles to remain pure and repress his own sexual attraction for her. Mustapha Mond, Resident Controller for Western Europe, corresponds, of course, to Prospero the magician, each above the fray, manipulating events. More satirically, Bernard Marx, stunted by alcohol in his blood-surrogate, and his friend Helmholtz Watson, the poet, point to Stephano the drunken butler and Trinculo the jester, who join forces with Caliban in a plot to overthrow Prospero, their subversive pretensions more comic relief than any real threat to the system.

Many of the names Huxley concocted for his characters are a mixture of bemused humor and casual reference to current events. In this it is important to keep in mind that when *Brave New World* appeared in February 1932, Europe was still in the midst of uneasy calm, caused by world economic depression. Though the Nazi party was just making itself felt in Germany, Hitler did not achieve power until 1933. Mussolini's imperialist designs in Ethiopia did not begin until 1935, and while Stalin had been ruthlessly consolidating power in the Soviet Union after the death of Lenin in 1924, he was still largely an unknown on the world stage until the infamous Moscow show trials beginning in 1936, and the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). (It would take Arthur

Koestler's 1941 novel *Darkness at Noon* to indict Stalin.) Thus Bernard's friend Benito Hoover, chubby, red-faced, and "notoriously good-natured" (47), offers a tongue-in-cheek composite of Benito Mussolini, fascist prime minister of Italy, and Herbert Hoover, president of the United States. Lenina, a feminine version of Lenin, links the late leader of the Bolshevik Revolution with a "pneumatic" brunette. More telling, the name of the malcontented Bernard Marx suggests a composite reference to Fabian Socialist George Bernard Shaw and European Socialist Karl Marx. The association with Shaw and Marx underlines Bernard's political discontent, as well as Huxley's sense of the futility of their political vision. Most interesting of all is the name "Mustapha Mond." Sir Arthur Mond was an important industrialist and politician, his Imperial Chemical Industries rivaled in size only by Ford Motor Company. H. G. Wells thought of him as a sort of intellectual aristocrat who could bring paternal order and progress to society by scientific and industrial organization (Firchow 67). In *Point Counter Point*, the artist Mark Rampion sketches a satirical allegory of evolution, reaching contemporary consummation with the figures of H. G. Wells and Sir Alfred Mond. "Through the radiant mist of prophecy the forms of Wells and Mond, . . . wound away in a triumphant spiral clean off the paper, toward Utopian infinity" (Huxley, *Point* 210). Mustapha Kemal, later renamed Atatürk, was one of the founders and served as the first president of modern Turkey (1923–1938), which had emerged from the collapse of the old Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. As virtual dictator, he instituted a number of social and cultural reforms that westernized and secularized Turkey, even instituting a new alphabet, based on Latin rather than Arabic letters. From the perspective of 1932, Atatürk would have been one of Huxley's chief models for a modern dictator.

Ultimately, however, the characters of *Brave New World* are variations on the hapless, self-absorbed upper-class misfits of his other novels. Although Huxley does not give them the depth and development of the characters of his other novels, Bernard and Helmholtz are among Huxley's flawed intellectual types, including Denis Stone from *Crome Yellow*, Philip Quarles and Walter Bidlake from *Point Counter Point*, and Anthony Beavis from *Eyeless in Gaza*, disaffected, but weak, ineffectual, even neurotic in their inabilities to connect with people, blind to the larger implications of their respective worlds. Similarly the intense, searching, and violent Maurice Spandrell of *Point Counter Point* and Mark Staithes of *Eyeless in Gaza* share many features with the spiritually and physically self-lacerating John the Savage. Finally, though of a different class and intellect, Lenina reflects many of the same desires and reservations of Elinor Quarles of *Point Counter Point* and Helen Amberley of *Eyeless in Gaza*. What is thematically relevant is how

personalities remain the same, whether in the London of 1928, 1934, or A.F. 632. Despite the privileged place that each has in his or her respective world, they devote the desiderata of their freedom not to wisdom, but to petty, trivial concerns. Borrowing from Huxley's later account from *The Doors of Perception*, they can be said to live in the closed, cramped and shoddy universe of their own selves—"[t]his suffocating interior of a dime-store ship was my own personal self; these gimcrack mobiles of tin and plastic were my personal contributions to the universe"—that stands in the way, blocking the door to the Mind at large (*Doors* 44, 45).

PHILOSOPHICAL THEMES

Huxley claimed that his immediate inspiration for *Brave New World* was H.G. Wells's utopian novel, *Men Like Gods* (1921), with its optimistic vision of eugenics and social order. Russian novelist, Eugene Zamiatin's *We* was also a reply to Wells (see Baker 36–45). However, the basic social organization presented in *Brave New World* and the institution of eugenics find their origins in Plato's *Republic*. There the ideal society was also divided among the ruling philosopher kings, their auxiliaries, and the rest (Gold, Silver, and Bronze people instead of Alphas, Betas, etc.). To assure loyalty to the whole, and to assure that people will be placed in society according to their natural capacities, and not family connections, children are bred to enhance the selection of the best features, and the newborn are taken away from their parents to be raised and educated collectively by the state. Huxley has merely elaborated Plato's model with the idiom of modern biology, coupled with the modern industrial assembly line, giving his vision a plausibility that startles many readers. As with Plato's *Republic*, however, the point has less to do with the possibility of such a society and more to do with what by way of comparison such a world tells us about the present human condition and the prospects of nurturing an integrated self. Comparing *Brave New World* to Zamiatin's *We*, George Orwell complained that "Huxley's book shows less political awareness and is more influenced by recent biological and psychological theories" (Orwell 73). In the narrow sense of not addressing the terror and ideology of the modern totalitarian state, nor offering a clear political program, this is true. In a deeper sense, however, Huxley's book is about the very foundations of the political. For Orwell, the political is about the coercive power of the modern state. "It is this intuitive grasp of the irrational side of totalitarianism—human sacrifice, cruelty as an end in itself , the worship of a Leader who is credited with divine attributes—that makes Zamyatin's [sic] book superior to Huxley's" (Orwell 75). Huxley is concerned not with

coercion, but with how people willingly and unquestioningly embrace such orders.

Civilization and technology have freed many humans from the drudgery and struggle of subsistence. What do we do with the freedom and leisure offered by our technology? The idea of the *liber*al education, from the Latin *liber*, signifying free, derives from the classical notion of what the *free* man does, as opposed to the slave or bondsman. Matthew Arnold defined culture as not about knowledge, not about the possession of cultural artifacts, and not about filling up one's spare time, but about perfection. In this, he challenged those who dismissed culture and liberal education as not contributing to production and consumption. It is, Arnold wrote in his 1869 book *Culture and Anarchy*, "[a] perfection which consists in becoming something rather than in having something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances" (Arnold 95). In turn, Arnold was skeptical of the optimism placed on technology (machinery in his Victorian context) as the solution to the human condition. "Faith in machinery is, I said, our besetting danger; often in machinery most absurdly disproportioned to the end which this machinery, if it is do any good at all, is to serve; but always in machinery, as if it had a value in and of itself." As a result the machinery has become the abiding metaphor of human value and human meaning. "What is freedom but machinery? what is population but machinery? what is coal but machinery? what are railroads but machinery? What is wealth but machinery? what are, even, religious organizations but machinery?" (Arnold 96). In terms that Kierkegaard would have well understood, mechanical or technological progress means little if we remain the same people, consumed by the same old spiritual problems. French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss made a similar point when he warned of the need for technology to solve the problems created by technology.

In his 1927 essay, "The Outlook for American Culture," Huxley examined the question. "Machinery has brought leisure to America and the rest of the Western world, and that leisure will certainly tend to increase. But can we honestly say that this leisure has given birth to a corresponding culture . . . ?" (Huxley, *Complete* 3.187). Surveying the contemporary scene, he is not optimistic. "A great many men and women—let us frankly admit it, in spite of all our humanitarian and democratic prejudices—do not want to be cultured, are not interested in the higher life." He continues in terms that anticipate the civilization of *Brave New World*, and the debate between Mustapha Mond and John the Savage: "Given food, drink, the company of their fellows, sexual enjoyment, and plenty of noisy distractions from without, they are happy. They enjoy bodily, but hate mental, exercise. They

cannot bear to be alone, or to think" (3.187). It is not a culture or way of life that Huxley would endorse for himself, yet he is hard put to deny the empirical evidence that many people are perfectly happy if their physical needs are taken care of.

In *Brave New World*, the problem is most clearly articulated in the debate between Mustapha Mond and John the Savage. Behind this is a perennial debate in ethics. Modern western ethics tends to divide itself between consequentialists and non-consequentialists, between those who focus on utility and those who focus on the imperatives of duty. Aristotle had argued in the *Nichomachean Ethics* that all actions aspire to the good, and the highest realizable good is happiness or well-being (*eudaimonia*). He is quick to acknowledge the ambiguity of the word and that many things claim to represent happiness. He rejects the equation of happiness with pleasure, arguing instead that because happiness is the highest realizable good, it must represent some final goal or end-in-itself. From his point of view, two activities satisfy this criteria: amusement and contemplation. As it seems hard for Aristotle to imagine that people would endure the hardships of life simply for the sake of amusement, he concludes (not surprisingly for a philosopher) that the highest happiness involves contemplation and the struggle to understand the world and go beyond our human limits. Despite Aristotle, many philosophers from the Epicureans to the Utilitarians see happiness and the ultimate motivation of actions in the pursuit of pleasure and the minimization of pain. Seeking a compromise position, Victorian philosopher John Stuart Mill proposed to distinguish between "higher" human pleasures and "lower" animal ones: "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied" (Mill 10). Although most modern Utilitarians, reflecting Mill's distinction, refine the definition of happiness to what will best enhance well-being among the available alternatives, it is easy to see the utilitarian dimensions in the brave new civilization, reverting to its roots in pleasure and pain, or as Glaucon says of the self-sufficient community that satisfies all physical needs, it becomes "a city of pigs" (Plato, *Republic* 372d).

On the other side of the ethical debate, Immanuel Kant argues that happiness is not the key to the highest realizable good. Rather, since it is an end-in-itself, the moral value of good is independent of any consideration of outcomes or consequences. What makes an action good is the good will behind it, not that the benefits produced are happiness, pleasure or any advantage (though certainly those are desirable and to be hoped for). Thus, for instance, in one case, if I accidently punch you in the nose while trying to help you, and, in another case I deliberately punch you, the consequences

are identical, but one would judge me morally bad in the second case because my intentions are bad, but not morally bad in the first, because while the consequences are unfortunate, the intentions were good. For Kant, the clearest version of an action done from good will is one performed strictly for its own sake, independent of any concern for satisfying desire or producing benefit. For Kant, the good Prussian, this is an act formed out of duty. It is paradoxical that in the utilitarian brave new world Mustapha Mond should be Kantian, governing in the name of duty, even though it be duty to the happiness of others.

What is the solution? In *Brave New World*, Huxley is deliberately ambiguous. One may certainly want the unsettling values of art, science, and religion, but at the same time few, except for the luddite John the Savage, would also want to give up the benefits of modern medicine or hygiene, the comforts afforded by central heating and air conditioning, and dependable food and water. Visiting India in the 1920s, Huxley wrote, "[a]t a safe distance and from the midst of a network of sanitary plumbing, Western observers, disgusted, not unjustifiably, with their own civilization, express their admiration for the 'spirituality' of the Indians, and for the immemorial contentment which is the fruit of it. Sometimes, such is their enthusiasm, this admiration actually survives a visit to India" (Huxley, *Jesting* 128).

Reflecting on *Brave New World* in a "Forward" written around 1958, Huxley regretted that he had not provided John the Savage with an alternative between the utopian and primitive. Central to this, he suggests, would be the religious, which he understood in terms of the intelligent pursuit of man's "Final End, the unitive knowledge of the immanent Tao or Logos, the transcendent Godhead or Brahman" (*Brave* xv). In turn, the ethical philosophical principle governing such a world would be a Higher Utilitarianism in which the "Final End principle" would take precedence over the "Greatest Happiness principle." Such an alternative is the product of Huxley's thinking after *Brave New World* and *Eyeless in Gaza*, and the readings manifest in *The Perennial Philosophy* and *The Doors of Perception*. In its original conception, the fate of John the Savage, Huxley tells us, was the amused affirmation of the "Pyrrhonic aesthete who was the author of the fable" (*Brave* xiv). It is easy to pass over the real significance of this self-characterization. Pyrrhoism was an ancient school of Greek scepticism that played on a suspension of final judgement, developing a strategy of balancing opposite opinions without resolving them. The Pyrrhoists and their methods were much admired by Michel de Montaigne and Voltaire, both of whom were important influences on Huxley (who owned a first French edition of Voltaire's *Candide*). In this manner, *Brave New World* juxtaposes the primitive world, with its ascetic

religion of the Indian *Penitente* and its mutilation of the human body, and what Huxley in an early essay calls the "ascetic religions of Fordism" with its "mutilations of the human psyche" (Huxley, *Complete* 3.238). Rather than evoking Othello or Miranda, Huxley's abiding spirit is Mercutio, from *Romeo and Juliet*: "A plague, on both your houses!" (3.1.108). It is exactly in Huxley's refusal to offer a solution, his refusal to resolve the dilemma between the primitive and technological utopia, that the enduring power of *Brave New World* resides. Any specific program would inevitably be a product of its time and place, and as such quickly rendered obsolete by the passage of time. Instead, Huxley focused on the persistence of the human character, which keeps emerging despite social constructs, despite eugenics. Near the end of *The Doors of Perception*, Huxley writes, "Our goal is to discover that we have always been where we ought to be" (78). In other words, we have always been in Utopia.

SUBSEQUENT INFLUENCE

The initial critical response to *Brave New World* ranged across the spectrum from those who were bewildered or dismissed the book as a joke, to those who found it profound. H. G. Wells, one of its satirical targets, was not amused, and accused Huxley of treason to science. Acknowledging the novel a "very great book," reviewer Charlotte Haldane could not resist playing on Huxley's genealogy. "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are nothing to Dr. Huxley and Mr. Arnold. . . . Dr. Huxley, who knows and cares about biology and music, science and art, is once again ousted by this double of his, morbid, masochistic, medieval-Christian. Mr. Arnold takes charge of the last chapter of *Brave New World*" (Watt 209). On the other hand, Rebecca West considered it a work of importance, and was one of the first readers to cite the resemblance of the debate between Mustapha Mond and John the Savage with that of the Grand Inquisitor and Christ, in the famous episode from Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* (Watt 201). The noted biochemist Joseph Needham affirmed the correctness of Huxley's biology, while George Orwell questioned the correctness of his ideology. Summing up Huxley's career to that date (1933), novelist and scientist C. P. Snow, later author of the 1959 essay *The Two Cultures*, which explored the divide between science and the humanities, called Huxley one of the most significant English novelists of his day (Watt 226). While I would argue that *Point Counter Point* and *Eyeless in Gaza* are greater contributions to literature, *Brave New World* is without question the most popular and influential of Huxley's books.

We might conclude by returning to the philosophical question about the nature of happiness and a more recent take on the novel. "Everyone says *Brave New World* is supposed to be a totalitarian nightmare," says Bruno, a character in French writer Michel Houellebecq's novel *The Elementary Particles* (first published in France in 1998). In a chapter titled "Julian and Aldous," Bruno declares that such claims are "bullshit." "*Brave New World* is our idea of heaven: genetic manipulation, sexual liberation, the war against aging, the leisure society. This is precisely the world that we have tried—and so far failed—to create" (131). Put another way, does anyone really want sexual repression, aging, disease or drudgery? Long before other science fiction writers, Huxley recognized that biology was the driving force of society. For Bruno, Huxley's only failure was to suppose that in liberating sexuality from reproduction, he would eliminate individualism and the corresponding jealousies and rivalries that derive from it. Just as economic rivalry is about mastery over space, so sexual rivalry is about mastery over time. "He doesn't understand that sex, even stripped of its link with reproduction, still exists—not as a pleasure principle, but as a form of narcissistic differentiation" (133). The problem is not pleasure, but desire; the human becomes an assembly of desiring machines. Houellebecq is reading Huxley through the postmodernist philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, a reading that sustains the relevance of Huxley's book. However they are conceived, human nature and human character remain the shaping force, no matter what the society. *Brave New World* is still with us.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy*. Ed. R.H. Super. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965.

Baker, Robert S. *Brave New World: History, Science, and Dystopia*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1990.

Bedford, Sybille. *Aldous Huxley: A Biography*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1974.

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Aldous Huxley's* Brave New World. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2003.

Clark, Ronald W. *The Huxleys*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968.

Firchow, Peter Edgerly. *The End of Utopia: A Study of Aldous Huxley's* Brave New World. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1984.

Houellebecq, Michel. *The Elementary Particles*. Trans. Frank Wynne. New York: Vintage International, 2000.

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World & Brave New World Revisited*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1960.

———. *Complete Essays*. Ed. Robert S. Baker and James Sexton. 6 vols. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000–2002.
———. *The Doors of Perception* and *Heaven and Hell*. New York: Perennial Classic, 2004.
———. *Eyeless in Gaza*. New York: Carroll and Graf, 1995.
———. *Great Short Works of Aldous Huxley*. New York: Perennial Classic, 1969.
———. *Jesting Pilate: An Intellectual Holiday*. New York: George H. Doran Co., 1926.
———. *The Perennial Philosophy*. New York: Harper and Row, 1970.
———. *Point Counter Point*. Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1996.
Levi-Strauss, Claude. *Tristes tropiques*. Trans. John and Doreen Weightman. New York: Atheneum, 1974.
Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism*. Ed. George Sher. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co. 1979.
Murray, Nicholas. *Aldous Huxley: A Biography*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002.
Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Trans. Christopher Middleton. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969.
Orwell, George. *In Front of Your Nose: 1945–1950*. Vol. 4 of *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters*. Eds. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus. Boston: David R. Godine, 2000.
Plato. *Plato's Republic*. Trans. G.M.A. Grube. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1974.
Shakespeare, William. *The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare*. Ed. Slyvan Barnet. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1963.
Skvorecky, Josef. *The Engineer of Human Souls*. Trans. Paul Wilson. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1984.
Watt, Donald. *Aldous Huxley: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 1975.
Zamiatin, Eugene. *We*. Trans. Gregory Zilboorg. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1952.

10

Borges
Labyrinths
1962

> "Do you know, Victor, I have an impression that you are inventing me—"
>
> —Miguel de Unamuno

> "*That,* now, I believe," said the king, "because I have read something of the kind before, in a book."
>
> —Edgar Allan Poe, "The Thousand-and-Second Tale"

"I live, let myself go on living, so that Borges may contrive his literature, and this literature justifies me," writes the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges in the autobiographical, "Borges and I" (*Labyrinths* 246), a parable in turns whimsical and disquieting. The stories, poems, and essays identified with Borges have long survived the living, breathing being identified with Borges. Our actions and our works make us twins; one who has done and one who lives and is conscious. Paradoxically, we wonder which Borges is more real: the author who will last as long as his texts, theoretically eternal, or the transient living being, "destined to perish, definitively"? Our works render us a shadowy twin of ourselves, somehow less real than our own names, leaving us merely the linguistic fiction attached to the book. While French philosopher Michel Foucault and critic Roland Barthes, who both much admired Borges' work, thought that the act of reading dissolved "the author function," Borges found that the author dissolves the very identity of the self, concluding. "I do not know which of us has written this page" (247). The sense of self-estrangement that Borges describes is a feeling that most of us have shared at one time or another, especially when we look at an old

picture of ourselves, or read old letters: Did I really look like that? Did I really say that? These expressions of ourselves have become detached, taking on an existence of their own.

Underlying these disturbing paradoxes is the philosophical problem of language. "Language," wrote Wittgenstein in terms that Borges might appreciate, "is a labyrinth of paths [*ein Labyrinth von Wegen*]. You approach from *one* side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about" (*Philosophical Investigations* #204). The challenge is not to see something new, but to see what is already there, what, like Edgar Allan Poe's purloined letter, is hidden in plain view, obscured by our language, by the conceptual framework by which we picture the world. "Philosophy" Wittgenstein says earlier, " is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language" (#109). Uncovering the bewitchment is the task of the philosopher. It is also the task of Borges' stories. While it is neither evident nor likely that Borges and Wittgenstein were familiar with each other, it is striking that they should use similar imagery to articulate similar themes, pointing to a shared preoccupation with the power of language to create realities, and the profound perils of getting lost in the labyrinth of language.

His awareness of the artifice of language makes Borges one of the most influential modern masters of philosophical literature. His enduring fame rests on the relatively small body of stories he wrote between the late 1930s through the 1940s. A selection of these stories appeared in English translation under the title *Labyrinths* (1962). In the words of critic George Steiner, "had he produced no more than the *Fictions* . . . , Borges would rank among the very few fresh dreamers since Poe and Baudelaire. He has, that being the mark of a truly major artist, deepened the landscape of our memories" (Alazraki 122). Borges gives the impression of having read everything, though he confessed to having been defeated by Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. With regard to his famed erudition, it is tempting to recall the words of Canadian author Robertson Davies, many of whose novels display vast esoteric lore: "Any writer worth his salt can pick up enough in an hour with the encyclopedia to flannel the audience into thinking he knows a great deal more than he really knows" (qtd. in Strouse 80). Having said that, it is probably most accurate to say that Borges uses his philosophical erudition more as material to fabricate his stories, than that he uses his stories to articulate a systematic philosophical doctrine. Nevertheless, Borges noted, "the history of philosophy is not a vain museum of distractions and verbal games" (*Other* 156). Behind his fictions is a serious quest to understand the intersections of language, textuality, the self and the real.

BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Jorge Luis Borges was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, August 24, 1899. Though his paternal grandmother was English, his family was *criollo,* with Spanish roots that dated before the Argentine war for independence in 1816, and included national heroes. This background nourished the nostalgia for a romantic past that appears in his many stories about gauchos, knife-fighting *compadritos*, and the tango. Borges's father, Jorge Guillermo Borges, was a lawyer, writer, and a student of modern languages. His mother, Leonor Acevedo, was a translator.

Between the influences of his father's well-stocked library and an English tutor, Borges became fluent in English at a very young age. He even admitted first reading the *Quijote* in an English translation, and only later in Spanish, a disorienting experience that informed his story, "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quijote*." Later he claimed that the Victorian and Edwardian literature that he read in his father's library was the most decisive influence on his later stories and parables. Of special note are the works of Thomas De Quincey, whose *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* explores the nature of dreams and imagination; Robert Lewis Stevenson, whose *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* explores dreams and the problem of inner and outer identity; Arthur Machen, whose fantastic tales look at the depths of consciousness; and H.G. Wells, whose *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, *The Time Machine*, and *The Invisible Man* raise various metaphysical questions. Borges also enjoyed the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, and G.K. Chesterton, especially the detective fiction. At this time he also read *A Thousand and One Nights*, a recurrent reference in his stories, symbolizing the infinite text, especially in the translation of Sir Richard Burton, with its elaborate apparatus of footnotes and commentary.

The family traveled to Europe in 1914, Borges attending the Collège Calvin of Geneva, completing his secondary education in 1919, and adding French, German, and Latin to his repertoire. At this time he read among other things Schopenhauer, a deep and abiding influence on his philosophical thinking, Meyrink's Cabalistic novel *Der Golem*, and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which he devoured in a dozen different editions, adding Italian to his repertoire of languages. At this time he also came under the influence of the writings of the French poet and critic, Paul Valéry. Valéry's creation, Monsieur Teste, appears in his novel *La Soirée Monsieur Teste*, which Borges called, "the most extraordinary invention of contemporary letters" (Borges, *Selected Non-Fictions* 270), offers an important prototype for the Borgesian character. M. Teste, whose name puns on *text* and *tête* (head), is a figure

of pure consciousness and detachment. Visiting Spain in 1921, Borges was inspired by the *Ultraísta*, a group of avant-garde poets (flourishing in 1918–1922), who, much in the spirit of the Imagists (such as Ezra Pound and H. D.), sought to purify poetic language of emotions, politics, and sentiment in order to release the expressive power of images and typography. Borges published his first poem at this time, deciding on the vocation of poet and man-of-letters. Returning to Buenos Aires in 1921, he became the leading spokesman of *Ultraísmo*, helping to edit the "muralist" magazine *Prisma*, so called because it pasted up its pages on walls like posters. A brief review of James Joyce's *Ulysses* written around this time (1925) gives some sense of Borges's aesthetics and points to his future themes:

> A total reality teems vociferously in the pages of *Ulysses*, and not the mediocre reality of those who notice in the world only the abstract operations of the mind and its ambitious fear of not being able to overcome death, nor that other reality that enters only our senses, juxtaposing our flesh and the streets, the moon and the well. The duality of existence dwells within this book, an ontological anxiety that is amazed not merely at being, but at being in this particular world. . . . In no other book . . . do we witness the actual presence of things with such convincing firmness. (Borges, *Selected Non-Fiction* 14)

Here we see an almost Parmenidean sense of the primacy of being, a presence that is stronger than that of the perceptual and cognitive functions of the human consciousness. Against the reality of being, the human self is transient.

1935 saw the publication of *Historia universal de la infamia* (*Universal History of Infamy*), a collection of nine narrative sketches about famous criminals, the beginning of Borges's mature works. These included, amid a large output, the collections that contain his most famous and influential stories and essays, the 1941 *El jardín de senderos que se bifrucan* (*Garden of Forking Paths*), *Ficciones* (1944), *El Aleph* (1949), as well as the 1962 *Otras inquisiciones* (*Other Inquisitions*), and the 1960 *El hacedor* (originally translated into English as *Dreamtigers* in 1964, but might more accurately be translated *The Maker*, as the Spanish equivalent of the medieval English term for a poet). In 1940 Borges met the young writer Adolfo Bioy Casares (1914–1999), with whom he would collaborate on a number of projects under the joint pseudonym H. Bustos Domecq, including a collection of detective stories under the title *Six Problems of Don Isidore Parodi* (1942). Himself an important writer, Bioy Casares nurtured Borges's interest in the possibilities of the detective story.

Despite an increasing reputation in literary circles, Borges enjoyed little financial success, editing various journals and newspaper supplements. On the

death of his father in 1937, he took a post as an assistant librarian in a small municipal library, a civil service job. A head injury in 1938 followed by septicemia was nearly fatal. (This became the basis of his story "The South.") His failure to win the National Literary Prize in 1941 for *El jardín de senderos que se bifrucan*, led Victoria Ocampo, translator of Virginia Woolf and the founder of the journal, *Sur* [*South*], to dedicate an issue to the "vindication" of Borges. When the fascist regime of Juan Perón was elected in 1946, Borges was removed from his library position, ostensibly "promoted" to inspector of poultry and rabbits in public markets (Alazraki 46). He resigned. While Borges was largely apolitical, he had often signed petitions against Perón, and had supported the Allies against the Axis in the Second World War. He preferred a cultural nationalism to the right-wing *nacionalismo* of Juan and his wife Evita. With the fall of Perón in a 1955 coup, Borges was appointed director of the National Library, though, as by this time he was nearly blind, the position was largely honorary. In 1957 he was also named Professor of English Literature at the University of Buenos Aires. At about this time, he also began to nourish a passion for the Anglo-Saxon language and literatures, working his way through *Beowulf*, *The Dream of the Rood*, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* in the original Old English. This interest eventually led him to the studies of Old Norse, Old Icelandic, and the Icelandic Sagas.

Winning the International Publishers Prize in 1961 catapulted Borges into international celebrity (see below under Influence). Translation of his works began to appear, and he was invited to lecture in the United States, Britain, and Europe. With the return of Juan Perón in 1973, Borges retired from the National Library, spending much of his time traveling and lecturing. Charming and highly romantic, Borges was also deeply self-conscious and shy, modeling his relationships with women after Dante and Beatrice. Not surprisingly, many women, such as the writer Norah Lange, author of the 1933 novel *45 días y 30 marineros* (*45 Days and 30 Sailors*) found him temperamentally incompatible. Borges was married briefly and unhappily to Elsa Astete de Millán from 1967 until 1970. Most of his life, he lived with his mother until her death in 1975 at the age of 99. In his last years he traveled with a companion, the photographer María Kodama, a young woman of Japanese-Argentine origins, some 46 years his junior. Visiting Geneva, they married in April 1986. Borges died June 14, and, according to his wishes, was buried in Geneva.

PERENNIAL CRISIS IN METAPHYSICS

All men are born Aristotelian or Platonist, Coleridge declared. Borges amends this, in his essay "From Allegories to Novels," to say that all men are

essentially nominalists or realists. "The Platonist knows that the universe is somehow a cosmos, an order, which, for the Aristotelian, may be an error or a figment of our partial knowledge" (Borges, *Other* 156). Suggesting that the two positions are probably corresponding manners of perceiving reality, he traces the two strands through Western philosophy. "Across the latitudes and the ages, the two immortal antagonists change their name and language: one is Parmenides, Plato, Spinoza, Kant, Francis Bradley; the other is Heraclitus, Aristotle, Locke, Hume, William James. In the arduous schools of the Middle Ages they all invoke Aristotle . . . but the nominalists are Aristotle; the realists, Plato" (*Other* 156).

Whether Borges himself is a realist or a nominalist is difficult to say. Different stories point in each direction. Many of his characters are would-be realists in a nominalist world. Borges' *Ultraíst* aesthetic quoted above in his review of Joyce's *Ulysses*, with its "amazement at the being of this particular world," and the "actual presence of things," strongly resonates with the position described by Wittgenstein at almost exactly the same time in his 1921 *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical" (#6.522). Umberto Eco deliberately underlines the affinity between Wittgenstein and Borges in his Borgesian detective novel, *The Name of the Rose* (1980). His hero, the Franciscian monk William of Baskerville, a nominalist in the mode of William of Ockham (and his implied namesake, Sherlock Holmes), is also Wittgensteinian. "The order that our mind imagines is like a net, or a ladder, built to attain something," says William, parodying Tractatus #6.54. "But afterwards, you must throw the ladder away" (Eco 492). To get a clearer understanding of what Borges is doing, it is important to touch on the debate between realism and nominalism.

The distinction between realism and nominalism has profound metaphysical and epistemological implications. These are most clearly brought out in terms of the problem of universals. Consider the claims of two sentences: "Socrates is a human," and "Plato is a human." Each posits that the particular, Socrates and Plato, predicate something termed human. As a generality, "human" would seem to be of a different order of being from the particular person. The question becomes: what is the reality or being of "human," when I am not talking about specific individuals? Does the generality "human" have an existence independent of the particular, or independent of me as the knower? In broad terms, the realist argues that the generality has an independent existence, while the nominalist argues that it is merely a name (Latin *nomen*), arbitrarily applied to the particulars in order to signify the perception of similarities. Are these perceived similarities real or merely

apparent? Are they an artifact of perception, the product of the mind or the imagination? How do I separate these various components or mental contributions from my knowledge of the world? Indeed, can I know anything about the world beyond my mind or imagination?

Plato the realist contended that behind statements such as "Socrates is a human," is the form or idea of humanness. The forms are eternal and independent, so can claim to be universal, as they apply to all specific instances that "participate" in the form. Plato encounters a problem, however, when he tries to explain our knowledge of the forms. On one hand, the forms seem necessary to account for our having knowledge of the world, but how do we receive this knowledge? Here Plato must rely on metaphorical leaps that we glimpse an intuition of the forms. Aristotle responds to the problem by pressing the question, "what *kind* of thing is it?" dividing the answers into non-overlapping categories, according to the definition that a species is genus + difference. Thus, what is Socrates? a human + those accidental features that differentiate him from other humans. What is a human? an animal + reason. What is an animal? a living thing + animation. And so on, until Aristotle arrives at the notion of a real and existent substance. By this means, he supposes he has grounded the reality of humans in an independent existence. How far must I press the question, "what kind of thing is it?" before I have reached the ground of being? There is a potential problem here, of some resonance for our understanding of Borges. One response is to say that such a description is adequate, but requires an infinite elaboration. That is, we find that each term requires elaboration, which in turn requires elaboration, leading us (to use Borges' metaphor) into a labyrinth of terms and categories. In turn, such a comprehensive description would require an infinite encyclopedia, a book of books, or in another favorite Borgesian metaphor, an infinite library. In Borges this also signified by the commentary and the footnote, the notion of a text that gives birth to subsequent and theoretically infinite interpretation and elaboration.

Many of the games that Borges plays in his stories emerge from the problems raised by the nominalists and realists, especially by the great rationalists Spinoza and Leibniz, and the empiricist, David Hume. In particular, how do my statements or propositions about the world connect to the world? Do these statements that purport to be facts of a form A = B, actually say something about the world? Are they definitions of the form A = A, self-contained tautologies? Or do these statements merely seem to have the form of something meaningful, but are really nonsensical? To say "the triangle is large," does communicate something factual. To say "the triangle is three-sided," is true by definition, but does not communicate anything new about

triangles. But to say "the triangle is circular," or "the triangle is a banana" are nonsense statements, both logically incoherent and empirically unverifiable. It is like claiming A = −A.

For the rationalists and Borges, the "bewitching" power of language and its ability to create plausible realities relates to the confusion of these three types of propositions. A favorite motif in Borges' stories is that of the mirror, and especially the *regressus in infinitum* of an image reflected in two facing mirrors. Is the reflected image A = A or A = B? Does the infinite repetition of the image create a reality, or does it remain something self-enclosed, cut off from the outside, independent, self-contained, but ultimately separate parallel universes (like Euclidian and non-Euclidian geometries)? Another favorite version of this theme occurs in the motif of the twin or double. Are twins a case of A = A, A = B, or A = −A?

Yet another aspect of the "bewitching" power of language is found in Borges's stories, especially with regard to the creation of realities out of fictitious books, the obsession with various pet theories or *idée fixe*, the problem of seeing significance in chance events, and the quandary of decoding, interpreting, or reading signs. This also informs his fascination with the *Cabala* and Meyrink's *Golem* with its evocation of the power of the word, and its treatment of dreams. This aspect relates to the mind's ability to create significance or realities out of the nonsense statements. On the level of existence, such statements remain meaningless in that they say nothing about an *actual*, independent world. However, on another level, insofar as the mind shapes understanding of things, orients disposition towards what it understands, and directs actions in a manner congruent with that understanding, then it is that understanding that is reality, and not the actual existence. Indeed much modern philosophy, from the pragmatism of William James, the phenomenology of Heidegger, the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, to the poststructuralism of Derrida, centers on the role of self-creation or self-signification in the creation of a meaningful reality. It is what Kant writes about when he distinguishes the actual, independent "thing-in-itself" from the phenomenal realm of our perception. Along these lines, Borges is particularly influenced by the thinking of Arthur Schopenhauer, who opens *The World as Will and Representation* with the statement: "The world is my representation," which ultimately looks back to the Presocratic Parmenides: "Thought and being are the same." For Borges, imagined worlds can produce tangible consequences, whether they exist or not.

The confusion of the three propositions also relates to the problem of self-identity. In Borges's stories, this is manifest in the tenuous boundary between dreaming and waking. Here he is deeply influenced by Meyrink,

and especially Thomas De Quincy. Drawing on his experiences with opium, Thomas De Quincey writes in his *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* of the power of dreams to create realities or to subvert the waking state. For him, what is real is constructed by the mind's assembling from memory all of the *things* derived from experience. For De Quincey the "dread book of account," a metaphor whose tenor of which Borges concurred, is the mind itself: "there is no such thing as forgetting possible to the mind; a thousand accidents may, and will interpose a veil between our present consciousness and the secret inscriptions on the mind; accidents of the same sort will also rend away this veil; but alike, whether veiled or unveiled, the inscription remains for ever" (De Quincey 69). The world in its "actual presence of things" is recorded in the memory even though obscured by chance. In the realm of dreams, the individual may dissolve, but being remains. As the imprisoned Mayan priest Tzinacán from "The God's Script" (another of Borges's tales) discovers: "a man is, by and large, his circumstances. More than a decipherer or an avenger, more than a priest of the god, I was one imprisoned. From the tireless labyrinth of dreams I returned as if to my home to the harsh prison" (*Labyrinths* 172). In the end, the individual self is obliterated, leaving the presence of being. "What is the life of that other to him, the nation of that other to him, if he, now, is no one?" (173) In a similar fashion, the hero of "The Circular Ruins" who has been struggling to dream a man, and thereby bring him into existence (shades of the Golem), realizes in the end that he is the dream of another.

In our dreams, we are everything, and the boundaries of our dreams are not clear. De Quincey describes himself in one of his opium nightmares in terms of a cascade of successive identities, expanding and contracting time and space. "I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by paroquets, by cockatoos. I ran into pagodas; and was fixed for centuries, at the summit, or in secret rooms; I was the idol. I was the priest; I was worshiped; I was sacrificed. I fled from the wrath of Brahma through all the forests of Asia: Vishnu hated me: Seeva laid wait for me" (De Quincey 73). Borges makes a similar point. In the parable "Everything and Nothing," Borges imagines Shakespeare on his deathbed, asking God, "I who have been so many men in vain want to be one and myself" (*Labyrinths* 249). In his life and career he has played and created many characters, but despairs that "there was no one in him; behind his face . . . and his words . . . a dream dreamt by no one" (248). What is the identity of the self? What is the reality of the subject underlying the appearance, underlying the act? In wanting to be "one and myself," he is asking for the self-identity of God, that is, in the formula of *Exodus* 3:14, "I am what I am," the absolute unity of being and

self (the A = A that is also A = B). God answers Shakespeare, speaking as a voice in the whirlwind: "Neither am I anyone; I have dreamt the world as you dreamt your work, my Shakespeare, and among the forms in my dream are you, who like myself are many and no one" (249). Borges's God (characterized in terms of something unstable, the moving flux of a whirlwind), is merely a representation of the world, in Schopenhauer's terms an expression of the *principium individuationis*. Like De Quincey's dreamer, Shakespeare is a cascade of identities, at one moment Lear, at another Hamlet. What is real is the persistent presence of consciousness, not the particular content of the dream. As Wittgenstein says of the mystical in the *Tractatus*, "It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists" (6.44).

SELECTED TALES AND THEMES

Given the limits of space, it is possible only to consider a handful of the most influential of Borges' stories from *Labyrinths*. This is done with the full awareness that over-interpretation and the dangers of misinterpretation are favorite Borgesian traps.

"Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius"

The plot of the story revolves around the supposed discovery by Borges and Bioy Casares that an article about the mysterious land of Uqbar is missing (a Borgesian nothing that is a something). A chance look into the depths of a mirror leads by association to an old saying about mirrors that Bioy Casares recalled once reading in an encyclopedia article on Uqbar. Looking through the appropriate volume of *The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia*, really a reprint of an out-of-copyright edition of the *Britannica* under a different name, Borges and Bioy Casares are surprised to find the Uqbar entry missing. Later checking his own copy of the *Cyclopaedia*, Bioy Casares locates the article and the saying: "For one of those gnostics, the visible universe was an illusion or (more precisely) a sophism. Mirrors and fatherhood are abominable because they multiply and disseminate that universe" (*Labyrinths* 4). With the exception of the article on Uqbar, the encyclopedias are identical. The bibliography claims four sources. One is a book by a Silas Haslam, an author whose name also appears in the catalogue of a book collector. Another refers to a theologian who can also be found mentioned in the writings of De Quincey. Casares and Borges wonder: Since other books mention these authors, are they not real? However, investigations in atlases, catalogues, and other sources fail to reveal any reference to the mysterious land.

The mystery lapses until one day Borges happens to be examining a package that had once belonged to one Herbert Ashe, an engineer who had also been an acquaintance of Borges's father. In it, he finds a book identified as *A First Encyclopaedia of Tlön. Vol. XI. Hlaer to Jangr*. It is further inscribed, *Orbis Tertius*. Examining the book, Borges recounts the language, geometry, and philosophical doctrines of Tlön. Two are worth noting. Radical idealists, the people of Tlön believe that reality is composed of irreducible states of mind, and therefore the act of naming or classifying is a falsification. Further, in the realm of literature, they believe that all fiction contains one plot with all imaginable permutations, and that "a book which does not contain its counter book is considered incomplete" (*Labyrinths* 13).

In an appended *Postscript* (part of the fiction), Borges claims that a letter written by one Gunnar Erfjord, and found in another book that had belonged to Asche, explained that the *Encyclopaedia of Tlön* had its genesis in a project conceived by a secret society, among whose members was the philosopher George Berkeley, whose goal was to invent an imaginary country. In the nineteenth century, an American patron, one Ezra Buckley, proposed to endow the project with his fortune, if the goal were expanded to create a planet, and make no reference to God. Asche and Erfjord were apparently involved in a yet-expanded edition. Borges reflects: "The contact and the habit of Tlön have disintegrated this world. Enchanted by its rigor, humanity forgets over and again that it is a rigor of chess masters, not of angels." (*Labyrinths* 18). He himself ignores it, preferring to work on his translation of Sir Thomas Browne's seventeenth century *Urn Burial*.

Among Borges' stories, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," writes W. H. Bossart, is the one that "exhibits most forcefully the contention that reality cannot be distinguished from fiction" (Bossart 32). The first line of the story points to the whole, in which Borges claims to owe the discovery of Uqbar to "the conjunction of a mirror and an encyclopedia" (*Labyrinths* 3). The worlds of Uqbar and Tlön are given reality by the power of words. Their authority comes from their presence in the encyclopedia, and the encyclopedia becomes the book of books. In its descriptive function, it mirrors the world, but in its multiplication of images, it simply reiterates the same textual surface, an empty tautology (A = A) that has no necessary connection to anything but itself. In addition, the notion that works of fiction are variations on one plot, with interpretation a "counter book," sees the act of reading itself as a process of infinite rewritings (a view shared by the postmodernists). In a sense each book is a seed or origin from which infinite works emanate, in the same way that the finite letters of the alphabet can generate an infinite number of combinations.

At the same time, Borges playfully offers various winks and red herring to simultaneously warn and confuse. In a variation on the "Liars Paradox," an encyclopedia, which by definition *classifies* and arranges knowledge, according to the sages of Tlön is false, because all *classification*s are falsification. In another case, Borges again appealed to the authority of De Quincey, whose encyclopedic essays on obscure matters were always an inspiration. In addition De Quincey was prominent in the infamous "Walladmor Hoax," in which he found a German novel by Alex Willibald falsely passing itself off as a translation of Sir Walter Scott, which De Quincey proceeded to translated into English, significantly rewriting and improving it. Thus the original novel disguised as a false translation becomes a new original novel disguised as a false translation. Much of this logic of mirror images that are the same yet different informs Borges's story. We have the device of the two encyclopedias, the *Britannica* and the *Cyclopaedia*, which claim to be different, but are really the same, as well as the two realms, which also claim to be different, but are part of the same literary fabric, in each seemingly a case of $A = -A$.

In the end, Borges reminds us that these creations are made by mortals, not angels, and as mortal creations, are finally fictions. By implication, insofar as the encyclopedia purports to be an objective classification of our knowledge of the world, our world is itself a mortal fiction. What seems new in the world is really the estrangement of looking at the same thing from a different side, to recall Wittgenstein's labyrinth cited above, "you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about." We as humans live in a middle realm (the *Orbis Tertius*—literally *third circle* or *sphere* of the Gnostics). In the end, Borges would certainly have agreed with his beloved Sir Thomas Browne who writes in *Urn Burial*: "There is nothing strictly immortall [sic], but immortality; whatever hath no beginning may be confident of no end. All others have a dependent being" (Browne 284).

"The Garden of Forking Paths"

The story unfolds as a sort of commentary on a passage from Liddell Hart's *History of World War I* about an "insignificant" delay in an attack by the British against the German line, caused by torrential rains. To this is appended what is identified as the signed death row confession of a Dr. Yu Tsun, former professor of English at the Hochschule at Tsingtao, its first two pages missing. Working as a spy for Germany in England, Yu Tsun discovers that his cover had been broken and that he is in imminent danger of being apprehended by Captain Richard Madden, an Irishman in the English service. Needing

to delay his capture and to signal to his German masters the location of a British artillery park, Yu Tsun devises a desperate plan. Looking in the phone book, he finds the name of "the only person capable of transmitting the message" (21).

Just steps ahead of Madden, Yu Tsun takes a train to a London suburb, where he locates the address he had found in the phone book, which leads to a house. While seeking this house, he recalls an ancestor named Ts'ui Pên, who had given up power in order to write a novel that "might be even more populous than the *Hung Lu Meng* [*The Dream of the Red Chamber*] and to construct a labyrinth in which all men would become lost" (22). At the house, Yu Tsun is surprised to discover that its inhabitant, one Stephen Albert, is by pure chance a Sinologist, and none other than an authority on Ts'ui Pên. Albert has constructed a "garden of forking paths," inspired by his desire to resolve the problem of the novel and the labyrinth contained in a letter of Ts'ui Pên's: "I leave to the various futures (not to all) my garden of forking paths" (25). Albert has deduced that the labyrinth and the novel are somehow the same, "[a] labyrinth of symbols.... An invisible labyrinth of time" (25).

Recalling the *Thousand and One Nights*, Albert had first thought that the novel was circular, in which one section repeats another and so starts the novel over again from the beginning. He finally concludes that the narrative forms a network of times. "In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others," Albert explains. "[I]n the fiction of Ts'ui Pên, he chooses—simultaneously—all of them. *He creates*, in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which themselves also proliferate and fork" (26). All of this is a parable about the nature of time. Contrary to Newton, who argued that time was absolute, a sort of frame of reference that held reality, and against which reality might be measured, Ts'ui Pên had concluded that time was contingent on a combination of chance, circumstance, and choice.

Yu Tsun expressed his deep gratitude to Albert for solving the problem. With this, he takes out his revolver and shoots Albert, killing him instantly, just as Captain Madden breaks into the garden. The last paragraph reveals Yu Tsun's plot. The newspaper story about one Yu Tsun murdering one Stephen Albert successfully signals to the spy master in Berlin that the location of the British artillery park was in a city called Albert.

Is Borges's plot circular, forking, or linear? He tantalizes, but remains ambiguous. The explanation of the plot at the end brings us back in a circle to the opening reference to Liddell Hart that the British attack was delayed because of rain, suggesting that though Yu Tsun's message was deciphered by

Berlin, it did not matter, or that other chance events (the rain) changed the possible outcome, underlining the futility of Albert's death. In turn, despite the chance involved in the selection of Albert's name in the phone book, the chance discovery that he was a Sinologist, and further the chance that Albert was devoted to unraveling the mystery of Ts'ui Pên, Yu Tsun proceeds with his plot in a linear fashion, from conception to conclusion. Like many of Borges's would-be realists in the realm of nominalism, Albert has forgotten that his labyrinth is of words not reality. By contrast, the regretful Yu Tsun is a nominalist who wishes he were a realist, that there would be some alternative universe that would redeem his actions.

At the same time, Borges plays with his usual games. The name Yu Tsun suggests that of Yu-tsun, a poor scholar in Tso Hsueh-Chin's *Dream of the Red Chamber*, one of the masterpieces of classical Chinese literature. The ungrateful Yu-tsun, whose name means "to clothe fiction in rustic or uncultivated language," plots to betray his benefactors. In a recurrent Borgesian motif of mirror images or twins, Yu Tsun echoes Captain Madden, both agents in the service of their colonial masters, both feeling the need to prove themselves, even if they are not sympathetic to the cause.

"Death and the Compass"

"Death and the Compass" plays with the conventions and history of the detective story. Paired are the detective Erik Lönnrot and his nemesis, the criminal Red Scharlach. Lönnrot considers himself a pure rationalist, a detective in the spirit of Poe's Auguste Dupin (from *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, and *The Purloined Letter*). One night Lönnrot and Inspector Treviranus are called to a murder scene at a hotel in the eastern part of town. One Doctor Marcel Yarmolinsky, an authority on the Cabala, in town for a Talmudic Congress had been found murdered in his room. In an adjoining room is the visiting Tetrarch of Galilee who owns a fine collection of sapphires. Treviranus immediately concludes that a thief seeking the sapphires had gotten into the wrong room and killed Yarmolinsky to cover his tracks. Lönnrot dismisses this hypothesis as *possible*, "but not interesting," suggesting that it involved too much chance: "I would prefer a purely rabbinical explanation, not the imaginary mischances of an imaginary robber" (*Labyrinths* 77). He discovers a note in the Doctor's typewriter: "The first letter of the Name has been uttered" (78). Intrigued, Lönnrot takes home the Doctor's books to search for clues and to solve the puzzle, much to the amusement of the newspapers, which declare that the detective is studying the names of God to discover the name of the murderer.

A month later on the same date, a similar murder occurs in the western suburbs. The victim is an old bandit named Azevedo. Chalked on a nearby wall is the message: "The second letter of the Name has been uttered." A third murder occurs the next month on the same date, this time at a hotel in a northern district. A call made by a man named Gryphius to the police to tell them that he could help them solve the case, was cut off. Investigation reveals that masked men, dressed as harlequins, had taken Gryphius away. As before, the police find a message: "The last of the letters of the Name has been uttered" (81).

Studying the dates and a map, and using a compass, Lönnrot believes that he has solved the mystery, and takes a train to the southern district of the town at twilight. Here he finds an old villa. Entering, he is lost in a labyrinth of identical rooms. After much wandering, he is suddenly ambushed, disarmed and handcuffed. Lönnrot finds himself face to face with Red Scharlach. Scharlach explains that the murder of Yarmolinsky was an accident. Azevedo and Scharlach's gang were to steal the Tetrarch's sapphires, but Azevedo had double-crossed them, gotten lost and ended up in the wrong room. Inspired by the newspaper's account of Lönnrot's search for the name of God, Scharlach hatched a plot to intrigue and entrap him, a literal and metaphorical labyrinth. Thus the traitorous Azevedo was dispatched in a manner to echo the first, and the disappearance of Gryphius staged to fit the pattern. Thus the murders occurred on the East, West, and North points of the compass on the same date, one month apart. Deducing and completing the pattern, Lönnrot had walked into the trap at the South point. Scharlach's own obsession is to avenge his brother, whom Lönnrot had imprisoned. Lönnrot's only response to this is to evoke a version of Zeno's Paradox, that one must cross an infinite number of points to reach a finite destination. With this Scharlach shoots him, cutting the paradox short.

"The detective is always outside the event, while the criminal is inside the event," wrote G.K. Chesteron (quoted, Martín 88). Such a position is a perilous delusion. Borges' story reminds us that the observer of the world is not standing in some privileged place outside of reality, but is very much caught up inside it. Lönnrot, the pure reasoner, discovers that he is not a god above events, but an integral part of them. Jorge Martín and W.H. Bossart note that Scharlach's name also suggests that of *Sherlock* Holmes (Martín 77–95; Bossart 73–76). In this regard, the story juxtaposes Auguste Dupin, the arch-rationalist, with Sherlock Holmes, the arch-empiricist. Holmes's inductive methodology is famously summarized in *The Sign of the Four*: "When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth" (Doyle 638).

Many readers notice the mirroring of Lönnrot's and Scharlach's names—Lönnrot, which in German means *blaze* or *flare up* (*lohen*) and *red* (*rot*), and Red Scharlach, *red scarlet*. The latter also points to the Sherlock Holmes allusion. Martín (91) cites Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet*. Of even greater significance, however, is "The Red-Headed League," which is more appropriately about red herrings. Here Holmes's client is a red-haired man named Jabez Wilson, whom he identifies as a mason by an "arc and *compass* breastpin" (Doyle 420). Wilson had been made the member of a mysterious society in which he is paid to copy the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. All of this turns out to be an elaborate diversion to get Wilson out of the shop, so that a gang can use his shop to tunnel to a nearby bank. The references, including the compass and the beloved *Britannica*, point to the theme of diversion and the danger of false interpretations. Ironically, Treviranus's solution to the original crime was correct from the beginning, while Lönnrot becomes the victim of his own sense of rational omniscience, like Stephen Albert, a metaphysical realist in the realm of nominalism, an idealist in the realm of the mundane.

"Averroes' Search"

This story imagines the great medieval Islamic philosopher Ibn Rushd, known as Averroes, who is famous for his defense of philosophy against Ghazali, *Tahafut-ul-Tahafut*, and most importantly for his commentary on Aristotle, for which he was subsequently known among medieval philosophers by the epithet the *Commentator*. In the premise of the story, Averroes, ignorant of Syriac and Greek, is trying to deal with a translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, but reaches an impasse with the words *tragedy* and *comedy*, which have no equivalents in Arabic. Not knowing what to do, he recalls that he is to dine with a traveler named Abulcasim Al-Ashari, who had claimed to reach China, and a Koran scholar named Farach Abulcasim.

At Farach's home, the three wander in the garden, looking at roses. Abulcasim declares that there were no roses like those in Andalusia. Trying to trick him, Farach observes that the learned Iban Qutaiba had described a variety of eternal rose in Hindustan, whose petals exhibited the praises of God and Mohammed, and says that Abulcasim has surely seen them. Abulcasim realizes he is in a quandary. If he answers "yes," people would realize he was an imposter. If "no," he would be judged an infidel. "He elected to muse that the Lord possesses the key to all hidden things and that there is not a green or withered thing on earth which is not recorded in His Book" (*Labyrinths* 150). Farach expounds on this theme. "The Koran (he said) is

one of the attributes of God . . . the language and the signs and the writing are the work of man, but the Koran is irrevocable and eternal" (151).

Asked to describe one of the wonders he had seen on his travels, Abulcasim tells of witnessing a play: Masked men were praying, singing, conversing, suffering, riding on horseback, "but no one could see the horse; they fought, but the swords were of reed; they died and then stood up again" (152). As Islamic culture bans the representation of the human image, no one knows what Abulcasim is talking about, and all suppose that he describes madmen. He tries to explain that these masked men were not mad, but were "representing a story" (152). Lacking the necessary concept of theater, Abulcasim's auditors can interpret the actions he describes only in terms of their own frames of reference. Reflecting on the matter, Averroes tries to understand the effects of drama in terms of the nostalgia he felt for Cordova whenever he recited some lines of poetry.

Later, in his library, he returns to his task, and tries to define tragedy and comedy. "Aristu (Aristotle) gives the name of tragedy to panegyrics and that of comedy to satires and anathemas. Admirable tragedies and comedies abound in the pages of the Koran" (155). Feeling sleepy, he looks into a mirror, whereupon he disappears along with his house and world. Reflecting on this disappearance, the narrator (Borges) explains that, within the closed "orb of Islam," Averroes could never know the meaning of the terms "tragedy" and "comedy," but Borges acknowledges that this is no different from his claim to know the meaning of the term "Averroes." Borges realizes that he is also confined to his own closed orb ("orbis tertius"): "The moment I cease to believe in him, "Averroes" disappears" (155). Given Averroes's prominence in shaping western philosophy's understanding of Aristotle through his commentary, Borges also plants a subtle doubt in Aquinian realism.

The story is a nominalist parable on the nature and limits of language. Words do not have inherent meaning, but take their signification from context, cultural and historical. Language is metaphorical, and the metaphors are arbitrary. As Averroes explains to the assembly: "The image one man can form is an image that touches no one. There are infinite things on earth; any one of them may be likened to any other. Likening stars to leaves is no less arbitrary than likening them to fish or birds" (154). At a certain level, words, especially the wrong words, can have consequences, as when Farach tries to trap Abulcasim over the roses. In turn the various speakers feel compelled to affirm the Koran as the book of books, the one ultimate source and authority, an assertion that encloses them into their "orb." But, more seriously, Borges reminds us that mere empirical description of the actions of a play (a mirror reflecting appearances) is not sufficient to communicate the

concept of drama, lacking any prior notion of theater, so the images disappear in the empty reiteration of the same, the infinity of the world a *regressus in infinitum*.

"The Library of Babel"

The Library is among the most famous of Borges's parables. In part it is a Kafkaesque nightmare derived from his experiences in the municipal library; in part the confessions of one of the obsessed and hyper-rational madmen who frequent the tales of Poe. "The universe (which others call the Library) is composed of an indefinite and perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries" (*Labyrinths* 51), the narrator declares. He adds that the galleries are illuminated by spherical lamps. "The light they emit is insufficient, incessant" (51). In turn the hexagonal galleries surround atriums that reveal unending galleries above and below. The hexagonal structure may suggest the multiply reduplicated hexagonal cells of the beehive; it may suggest the hexameter in the poetic lines of Parmenides or Lucretius, or it may signify nothing, simply a suggestive figure. Each of these possibilities resonates with other elements of the story. The philosopher W. H. Bossart comments that the motif of light is recurrent in Borges: insufficient light, twilight, the yellow or red light of the afternoon, typically signify partial, ephemeral, or illusory knowledge, while white light, or the brightness of high noon, typically signify understanding (Bossart 6, 7). With regard to the Library, the light is *insufficient* to provide illumination, but *incessant* enough to suggest that one *ought* to be able to see.

Unpacking the implications of the opening metaphor, the narrator outlines alternative theories of the Library that parallel alternative metaphysical interpretations of the universe. The idealists suppose that the hexagonal rooms are our intuition of space, a parody of Spinoza and Kant. The mystics claim that there is a circular chamber containing the great circular book (shades of the eternal being of Parmenides and the forms of Plato—with a hint of Edwin Abbott's Victorian classic, *Flatland* thrown in): "This cyclical book is God."

Next is the problem of the relation of order to chaos. Amid the chaos of books, the narrator tries to decipher order or patterns, though he complains that the letters on the spines of the books that identify them by a system of classification have nothing to do with the contents. Some supposed the order was merely the product of chance, and the narrator recalled in his childhood seeing older librarians hide in the latrine, "with some metal disks in a forbidden dice cup and feebly mimic the divine disorder" (56). One "librarian

of genius," however, deduced the "fundamental law of the Library." That is, starting first with the observation that all books are composed of the same 25 orthographic elements (spaces, punctuation, and letters in the Spanish alphabet), and coupling this with the fact that no two books are identical, then we must conclude that the Library is total, and that every possible combination of symbols is contained in the books. In other words, everything that can be said has been said, thereby conflating past, present, and future, dissolving time. In this discussion, Borges parodies Leibniz (who had been a librarian in Hanover) and his doctrine of the principle of the identity of indiscernibles (see Bossart 23), central both to his metaphysics and the development of differential calculus.

The narrator concludes with the suspicion that the human species is about to be extinguished, "but the Library will endure: illuminated, solitary, infinite, perfectly motionless, equipped with precious volumes, useless, incorruptible, secret" (*Labyrinths* 58). He takes comfort in the thought that some eternal traveler would see that "the same volumes were repeated in the same disorder (which, thus repeated, would be an order: the Order)" (58). Paradoxically, even repeated disorder is order. Does the municipal library mirror the universe, or does the universe mirror the municipal library?

SUBSEQUENT INFLUENCE

Borges was long an advocate for Latin American literature, arguing that Latin American writers should not be inhibited by the Western tradition. In a 1951 lecture he declared, "[W]e can handle all European themes, handle them without superstition, with an irreverence which can have, and already does have, fortunate consequences" (*Labyrinths* 184). His influence on Latin American literature has been profound, especially among the so-called "Boom" writers of the late 1950s and the 1960s, including Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar, and Gabriel García Márquez, and later Post-Boom Manuel Puig and Isabel Allende. All were drawn to Borges's cosmopolitanism, his narrative experimentation, his readiness to cross literary boundaries. Assessing the new novel that emerged from the Boom, Carlos Fuentes wrote: "The end effect of Borges' prose, without which there simply would not be a Spanish American novel, is to attest, first of all that Latin America lacks a language and consequently that it should create one. To do this, Borges shuffles the genres, rescues all traditions, eliminates the bad habits and creates a new order or rigorousness" (qtd. in Kristal 66). In his famous MGM list, Manuel Puig playfully compared Borges to Norma Shearer: "Oh so refined!" (Levine, *Manuel Puig* 200). Borges has even appeared as a

character in various works, sometimes negatively, as in Argentine Leopoldo Marechal's Joycean novel *Adán Buenosaires* (1948), and sometimes positively, as in Brazilian Luis Fernando Verissimo's noir satire *Borges and the Eternal Orangutans* (2000).

The 1951 French translation of *Ficciones* was instrumental to Borges's achieving a wider reputation, leading to his receipt of the International Publisher's Prize in 1961, which he shared with Samuel Beckett (most noted for his plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*). Winning the International Publisher's Prize spurred English translations. In 1962, *Ficciones* appeared in Britain and the United States followed by *Labyrinths* (1962), which included selections from *Ficciones*, *El Aleph*, *Discussión*, *Ortas Inquisciones*, and *El Hacedor*. More than any other source, the 1962 *Labyrinths* cemented Borges's American reputation.

Borges has enjoyed a strong influence on North American literature, especially from the 1960s through the 1980s. Often paired with Vladimir Nabokov, he informed the more experimental writers, those reacting against realist narrative. Of note are novelists John Barth, Donald Barthelme, Robert Coover, William Gass, and Thomas Pynchon, and poet John Ashbery. In his influential 1967 essay, "The Literature of Exhaustion," Barth sees in Borges a reaction against the exhaustion of nineteenth-century realism. Citing Borges's own definition of the Baroque as a style that tries to exhaust its possibilities to the edge of caricature, Barth writes, "While his own work is not Baroque, except intellectually . . . , it suggests the view that intellectual and literary history has been Baroque, and has pretty well exhausted the possibilities of novelty. His *ficciones* are not only footnotes to imaginary texts, but postscripts to the real corpus of literature" (Alazraki 91). Novelist John Updike praised Borges's attempt at a radical revision of literature, springing "from a clear sense of technical crisis" (Alazraki 62, 63). His later autobiographical sketch, "Updike and I," explicitly parodies "Borges and I" in form and theme.

Many European writers, from exponents of the *nouveau roman*, including Michel Butor and Alain Robbe-Grillet, to postmodernists, have been drawn to Borges, and have been especially attracted to the playful philosophical dimensions of his work. Italian writer Italo Calvino specifically cites Borges's use of philosophy as a stimulus for the imagination. "From one moment to the next we expect the secret filigree of the universe to be made manifest: an expectation that is always disappointed, as is only right" (Calvino 48). A similar influence can be seen on Czech writer Milan Kundera, especially in his *Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984). Polish novelist Stanislaw Lem employs the genre of science fiction the way Borges used the detective story.

Lem's *A Perfect Vacuum* (1979), a collection of reviews of imaginary books, is a deliberately Borgesian exercise. Yugoslavian Danilo Kiš, author of such works as *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich* (1978) and *The Encyclopedia of the Dead* (1989), opined that the short story could be divided into Pre-Borges and Post-Borges, a division between an "exhausted" realism based on induction, and a narrative symbolism based on deduction (Kiš39).

Borges' influence on poststructuralist thought is pronounced. French philosopher Michel Foucault found in Borges a disturbing, if sympathetic, figure, one who disrupts our linguistic and cognitive habits, undermining the order of the world by turning it into a narrative or fable. "The uneasiness that makes us laugh when we read Borges is certainly related to the profound distress of those whose language has been destroyed: loss of what is 'common' to place and name. Atopia, aphasia" (Foucault xviii, xix). Borges can also be seen as an influential presence on the philosopher Jacques Derrida. Crossing the boundaries of philosophy and literature, Umberto Eco's detective novel, *The Name of the Rose* (cited above), the plot of which owes much to "Death and the Compass" and "Averroes' Search," draws similar conclusions, correlating elements of Borges with Wittgenstein. To underline the connection, the mystery centers on a labyrinthine hexagonal library, under the direction of a blind librarian named Jorge of Burgos. Eco further correlates Borges with Foucault in his subsequent novel, *Foucault's Pendulum* (1988), playing with the motif of codes, Cabalistic cults, and the power of non-existent books to motivate action.

Summarizing Borges's influence, we might consider the words of critic and novelist Susan Sontag. Reaffirming an earlier assessment she wrote, "Very few writers of today have not learned from him or imitated him." To this she adds, in an imaginary letter to Borges, "You said that we owe literature almost everything we are and what we have been. . . . Books are not only the arbitrary sum of our dreams and our memory. They also give us the model of self-transcendence" (Sontag 112). In Borges, we find philosophical literature at its most fertile.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Alazraki, Jaime, ed. *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges*. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1987.

Ayer, A.J. ed. *Logical Positivism*. New York: Free Press, 1959.

Barrenechea, Ana María. *Borges: The Labyrinth Maker*. Trans. Robert Lima. New York: New York University Press, 1965.

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Modern Critical Views: Jorge Luis Borges*. New York: Chelsea House, 1986.

Borges, Jorge Luis. *Collected Fictions*. Trans. Andrew Hurley. New York: Viking, 1998.
———. *Ficciones*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1995.
———. *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*. Trans. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby. New York: New Directions, 1964.
———. *Other Inquisitions: 1937–1952*. Trans. Ruth L.C. Simms. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965.
———. *Selected Non-Fictions*. Ed. Eliot Weinberger. New York: Viking, 1999.
———. *Selected Poems*. Ed. Alexander Coleman. New York: Viking, 1999.
———. *This Craft of Verse*. Ed. Calin-Andrei Mihailescu. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.
Bossart. W.H. *Borges and Philosophy: Self, Time, and Metaphysics*. New York: Peter Lang, 2003.
Browne, Thomas. *The Prose of Sir Thomas Browne*. Ed. Norman J. Endicott. Garden City: Anchor Books, 1967.
Calvino, Italo. *The Uses of Literature*. Trans. Patrick Creagh. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1986.
De Quincey, Thomas. *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and Other Writings*. Ed. Grevel Lindop. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
Doyle, Arthur Conan. *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*. Ed. William S. Baring-Gould. New York: Wing Books, 1992.
Eco, Umberto. *The Name of the Rose*. Trans. William Weaver. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1983.
Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.
Franco, Jean. *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City: Latin America in the Cold War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
Irwin, John T. *The Mystery to a Solution: Poe, Borges, and the Analytic Detective Story*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.
Kiš, Danilo. *Homo Poeticus: Essays and Interviews*. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1995.
Kristal, Efraín, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Latin American Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
Levine, Suzanne Jill. *Manuel Puig and the Spider Woman: His Life and Fictions*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2000.
_____. *The Subversive Scribe: Translating Latin American Fiction*. Saint Paul: Gray Wolf Press, 1991.
Martín, Jorge Hernández. *Readers and Labyrinths: Detective Fiction in Borges, Bustos Domecq, and Eco*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1995.
McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1987.
Nuño, Juan. *La filosofía de Borges*. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1986.
Sontag, Susan. *Where the Stress Falls: Essays*. New York: Picador, 2002.
Stabb, Martin S. *Jorge Luis Borges*. New York: Twayne, 1970.

Strouse, Jean. "The Inventor of Gods." *Newsweek* (February 8, 1982): 78–80.
Sturrock, John. *Paper Tigers: The Ideal Fictions of Jorge Luis Borges*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
Unamuno, Miguel de. *Mist: A Tragicomic Novel*. Trans. Warner Fite. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.
Verissimo, Luis Fernando. *Borges and the Eternal Orangutans*. Trans. Margaret Jull Costa. New York: New Directions, 2004.
Wheelock, Carter. *The Mythmaker: A Study of Motif and Symbol in the Short Stories of Jorge Luis Borges*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969.
Williamson, Edwin. *Borges: A Life*. New York: Viking, 2004.
Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan Company, 1958.
———. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. New York: Humanities Press, 1971.
Woodall, James. *The Man in the Mirror of the Book: A Life of Jorge Luis Borges*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996.

Selected Bibliography

Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

Auerbach, Erich. Mimesis: *The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.

Bakhtin, M. M. *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.

———. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983.

Barthes, Roland. *The Rustle of Language*. Trans. Richard Howard. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

Blanchot, Maurice. *The Space of Literature*. Trans. Ann Smock. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982.

Bogue, Ronald. *Deleuze on Literature*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Booth, Wayne, C. *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Burke, Kenneth. *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

———. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

———. *The Philosophy of Literary Form*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

Calinescu, Matei. *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1987.

Calvino, Italo. *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*. New York: Vintage, 1988.

———. *The Uses of Literature*. Trans. Patrick Creagh. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1986.

———. *Why Read the Classics?* Trans. Martin McLaughlin. New York: Pantheon, 1999.
Cascardi, Anthony J., ed. *Literature and the Question of Philosophy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.
Cave, Terence. *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.
Cavell, Stanley. *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2004.
Christensen, Inger. *The Meaning of Metafiction: A Critical Study of Selected Novels by Sterne, Nabokov, Barth, and Beckett*. Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1981.
Damrosch, David. *What Is World Literature?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
———. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.
de Man, Paul. *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.
———. *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. 2nd. ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.
Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.
———. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
Diamond, Cora. *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy and the Mind*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995.
Eco, Umberto. *The Open Work*. Trans. Anna Cancogni. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.
———. *Travels in Hyperreality*. Trans. William Weaver. London: Picador, 1987.
Eldridge, Richard. *On Moral Personhood: Philosophy, Literature, Criticism and Self-Understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
Foucault, Michel. *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*. Trans. Charles Ruas. London: Continuum, 2004.
Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.
Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Gadamer on Celan: "Who Am I and Who Are You?" and Other Essays*. Trans. Richard Heinemann and Bruce Krajewski. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.
———. *Truth and Method*. Eds. Garrett Barden and John Cumming. New York: Continuum, 1975.
Garcia, Jorge J. E., Carolyn Korsmeyer, and Rodolphe Gasché, eds. *Literary Philosophers: Borges, Calvino, Eco*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
Gould, Thomas. *The Ancient Quarrel Between Poetry and Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

———. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper Colophon, 1971.

Hogan, Patrick Colm. *Philosophical Approaches to the Study of Literature*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000.

Ingarden, Roman. *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*. Trans. Ruth Ann Crowley and Kenneth R. Olson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

———. *The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature*. Trans. George G. Grabowicz. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

Jauss, Hans Robert. *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*. Trans. Timothy Bahti. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

Johnson, Charles. *Turning the Wheel: Essays on Buddhism and Writing*. New York: Scribner, 2003.

Kaufmann, Walter A. *From Shakespeare to Existentialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

———. *Tragedy and Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. 2nd. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Kivy, Peter. *Philosophies of Arts: An Essay in Differences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Krell, David Farrell. *Lunar Voices: Of Tragedy, Poetry, Fiction and Thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Kuhns, Richard. *Decameron and the Philosophy of Storytelling: Author as Midwife and Pimp*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

———. *Structures of Experience: Essays on the Affinity Between Philosophy and Literature*. New York: Basic Books, 1971.

Lamarque, Peter and Stein Haugom Olsen. *Truth, Fiction and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Landy, Joshua. *Philosophy as Fiction: Self, Deception, and Knowledge in Proust*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Lang, Berel. *Philosophy and the Art of Writing: Studies in Philosophy and Literary Style*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1983.

———. *The Anatomy of Philosophical Style: Literary Philosophy and the Philosophy of Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.

Larmore, Charles. *The Morals of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

MacDonald, Dennis R. *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

McGinn, Colin. *Ethics, Evil, and Fiction*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

McHale, Brian. *Constructing Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Miller, J. Hillis. *The Ethics of Reading*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.

Minor, Earl. *Comparative Poetics: An Intercultural Essay on Theories of Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Montaigne, Michel de. *The Complete Essays*. Trans. M. A. Screech. London: Penguin, 1991.

Murdoch, Iris. *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*. Ed. Peter J. Conradi. London: Penguin, 1999.

Natsume, Sōseki. *My Individualism* and *The Philosophical Foundations of Literature*. Trans. Sammy I. Tsunematsu. Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2004.

New, Christopher. *Philosophy of Literature: An Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1999.

Nuttall, A. D. *A Common Sky: Philosophy and the Literary Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. London: Routledge, 1982.

Pettersson, Anders. *Verbal Art: A Philosophy of Literature and Literary Experience*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.

Phillips, D. Z. *Philosophy's Cool Place*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.

Pippin, Robert B. *Henry James and Modern Moral Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

———. *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

Rama, Angel. *The Lettered City*. Trans. John Charles Chasteen. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.

Rée, Jonathan. *Philosophical Tales: An Essay on Philosophy and Literature*. London: Routledge, 1988.

Rhees, Rush. *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*. Ed. D. Z. Phillips. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Rickman, H. P. *Philosophy in Literature*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. Trans. Kathleen Blamey and Davie Pellauer. 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984–1988.

Rorty, Richard. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Ross, Stephen D. *Literature and Philosophy: An Analysis of the Philosophical Novel*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1969.

Santayana, George. *Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante, Goethe*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press, 1966.

Saussy, Haun. *The Problem of a Chinese Aesthetics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.

Scruton, Roger. *Art and Imagination: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind*. London: Routledge, 1982.

Seigel, Jerrold E. *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Skilleås, Ole Martin. *Philosophy and Literature: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001.

Steiner, George. *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.

———. *On Difficulty and Other Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

———. *Real Presences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Tolstoy, Leo. *What is Art?* Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. London: Penguin Books, 1995.

Vendler, Helen. *Poets Thinking: Pope, Whitman, Dickinson, Yeats*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Walton, Kendall L. *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. New York: Methuen, 1984.

Weitz, Morris. *Philosophy in Literature: Shakespeare, Voltaire, Tolstoy and Proust*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Culture and Value*. Ed. G.H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, Trans. Peter Winch. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

———. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: Macmillan Company, 1958.

———. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness. New York: Humanities Press, 1971.

Wollheim, Richard. *Art and its Objects*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Index

About the Author

THOMAS L. COOKSEY is Professor of English and Philosophy at Armstrong Atlantic State University. His interests range from biochemistry and molecular biology to the modern reception of Dante, and his numerous articles cover such topics as Petrarchism, the Beats, Flannery O'Connor, Simone de Beauvoir, and Leibniz and Spinoza.