

The BOOKPRESS

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE LITERARY ARTS

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Making Use of Brecht

The end of the cold war has offered numerous opportunities to re-examine communist and Marxist icons. The past five years have seen popular rehabilitations of Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and even Marx himself. In the arts, few figures remain as controversial and influential as German playwright Bertolt Brecht. The centenary of his birth and this February's performance of *The Brecht Project* at the Cornell Center for Theatre Arts offer an opportunity to reflect on the post-cold war Brecht. While it seems unlikely that Brecht's Epic theater will suffer the same commercial reinstatement as the face of Che Guevara, his methods and ideas, as Michael Richardson here shows, remain both vital, and to a certain extent, subversive, even in a post-communist world. — The Editors

Brecht and Method.
Fredric Jameson.
Verso, 1998.
184 pages, \$25.00 cloth.

Michael Richardson

1998 marked the centennial of the birth of Bertolt Brecht, the German playwright, director, author, and poet who revolutionized the theater of the early twentieth-century. While perhaps best-known in the United States for his later plays, *The Good Person of Szechwan*, *Mother Courage*, and *The Life of Galileo* (which premiered in English in the United States, with Charles Laughton in the title role), Brecht made his mark some twenty years earlier, through plays such as *The Threepenny Opera*, *Drums in the Night*, *A Man is a Man*, and *St. Joan of the Stockyards*. More significantly, Brecht developed the theory of Epic theater—a challenge to the traditional concepts of the theater.

Until the early part of the century, most Western drama more or less followed certain theatrical conventions, many of which could be traced back to Aristotle's *Poetics*, and his delineation of the dramatic, as opposed to the epic and the lyric. This "dramatic" or "Aristotleian" theater, as Brecht termed it, depicted events as though they were taking place in the present, tried to maintain the illusion of reality, and presented the unfolding of events leading towards a conclusion. The central moment of this type of theater, according to Brecht, was the use of dramatic techniques to induce the audience to identify with the characters and to uncritically accept the plot as a kind of fate which the characters (and through them the audience) cannot avoid. By the beginning of the twentieth century, when Naturalism was the dominant artistic movement, theater productions were also guided by the principle of the "well-made" play—a play that engaged the audience on this emotional level, and, most importantly, maintained the illusion of reality.

While Expressionism, with its episodic narratives and often fantastic stagings was responsible for shattering this status quo (and, in the form of Georg Kaiser, for inspiring and influencing Brecht), the movement as a whole quickly spent its energy, and the theater for the most part returned to familiar productions and stagings. Brecht—together with his sometime



Jack Sherman

collaborator, the Berlin director Erwin Piscator—sought to break with the notion of identification; he felt that the illusion created by the "well-made" play, which enabled identification, was counter-productive, since it made the audience passive recipients of whatever message or ideology the piece contained. Instead, he argued for a theater which was consciously aware of its artificiality, a theater which constantly reminded the audience—by breaking through the fourth wall and addressing the audience directly, hanging giant signs over the stage reading "Don't gape so romantically!" and otherwise breaking up the flow of the play it was watching—that they were spectators not to reality, but to a stage production. He termed this disruption *Verfremdung*—estrangement—a removal from the incident or character of everything that is familiar, known, and taken for granted.

By dispelling this illusion, and by presenting characters with whom one did not (and often could not) identify, Brecht's Epic theater sought to give the audience a certain distance from events onstage, a distance which, ideally,

would allow them to objectively contemplate and consider the events of the play and the nature of the characters, and recognize that what was presented onstage occurred as a result of alterable causes. While Brecht thus called for replacing "feeling" (i.e., sympathy) with "reason," Brecht did not call for serious, hyper-intellectual productions; on the contrary, he felt that the audience must still be able to enjoy themselves at the theater—at one point he compared this new experience of the theater as being akin to watching a boxing match. But rather than being swayed by emotional considerations, the audience could reflect on this very enjoyment and eventually reach their own conclusions about what had transpired on stage and what sort of import it had for their social situation.

Brecht's artistic legacy is generally beyond dispute—whether one agrees with or disagrees with his theory of the theater, it nonetheless has had an unmistakable impact on the stage and on art in general. The most significant German playwright and director of the twentieth-century, the late Heiner Müller, was clearly an heir

to Brechtian theory and practice (though often not an uncritical one). Brecht's impact was felt not just in Germany—French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard drew on Brecht's notion of estrangement in films such as *Breathless* and *A Married Woman*, French theorist Roland Barthes introduced the concept of estrangement to French theory in his collection of observations *Mythologies*, and even contemporary American playwrights such as Tony Kushner cite Brecht as major influences. His critical reception, however, has often been complicated by his political convictions. After the success of his early plays in the 1920s, Brecht turned to Marxism and remained politically committed until his death in 1956. His impetus for developing the challenge of Epic theater was rooted in his commitment to a socialist revolution, and the political and social critiques that he saw his works offering were decidedly Marxist ones. The topics of his works also reflected his political commitment, as he tackled such themes as the exploitation of

continued on page 8

Breather in Water

1. SWIMMER IN AIR

He's the gulper of sea swimmer in air,
 dives, dives in again again
 water's water,
 air is air.
 "Water's water,
 air is air,"
 I say.
 "No," he says, "no."
 He's the breather of water,
 three-year-old refuser,
won't be taught.
 Intent, he makes his run,
 big feet slapping, loopy leap
 and sinks
 to the bottom.

Swim to him.

Water's water, I begin...
 he's red-eyed, sputtering, shaking—
 Clambers up the ladder
 to the dock
 and jumps.

Scoop and hug him close
 hold him out.

"Stroke, stroke
 inhale
 in air
 exhale in water," I say,
 "like this, Michael."
 "Breathe in air,
 swim in water."

"No," he says, "no."

Slap, slap his feet
 on the side of the dock

He breathes in water
 and swims in the air

breathes in water
 and swims in air.

2. JULY 4

"Michael, what the—"
 six-year-old, dick in hand,
 turning, his stream unbroken,
 nine feet if it's an inch,
 laughing, the kid's laughing
 as he circles

360-degrees
 hand all the time on the throttle,
 slowly, back arched

he stands
 "Dick, dink decker,
 weener, peter, pecker..." he sings
 crowd gathering

nine feet from VW rooftop
 to raging Mr. Beer-In-His-Hand.
 "Is that your kid up there?"

I should laugh,
 get up there with him,
 lead our friends in applause.

"Dick, dink decker," he sings,
 face shining, joy to the world.

Rein him in, *do something,*
Jesus K. Christ,

"Dance," I want to say, "dance
 on the roof of the German machine.

Piss on, piss all you want—
 What a stream!" I want to say.

Old fool, old scold,
 too fearful to sing
 "O Stream of Gold..."

Fucked father, fucked-up father,
 I spank him instead.

3. HOUSEBOAT

Lasqueti Island, B.C.

Washing dishes in the darkness
 with a hose,
 I spray off the few
 remnants
 of spaghetti onto the oysters

In their beds below.
 Inside the single room
 there is no running water—
 only the green hose
 on the deck of our floating home.

We secure the lines,
 bathe and sing, *We all live in a Yellow Submarine...*

I reach out in the darkness
 hearing my son brushing his teeth
 to borrow his toothbrush.

I cannot find my own:
 Tasting
 my fourteen-year-old son's
 mouth inside my mouth.
 Then we find more dishes

And, as the moon rises and the lines
 go tight,
 continue scrubbing and drying silverware

and plates,
 two dishwashers reading braille.

4. MOUNTAIN SOLITAIRE

Jerome, Arizona

i.
 He's thirty-two, my age
 when he was born.
 Haven't seen him for four years,
 estranged son of estranged wife.

Phone:
 "Please...leave...message..."
 says the machine.
 "Hey, Michael... It's Dad!"
 He won't pick up, won't call back.

I court him, send gifts:
 "Oh, boy, a cordless phone
 from, let's see now, Mr. Walk-around...
 my much-doodling daddy!"

I see him shake his head.
 And write, I write him a poem.
 Read it onto his answering machine.
 "Dick, dink, decker,
 weener, peter, pecker..."

He's away—a girlfriend
 plays back the message.
 "There's a stalker..." she tells him.
 "No, that's my father," he says,
 and calls me. He likes the poem.

Golden Gate Park

ii.
 We meet and he leads me
 to the Hall of Flowers,
 his dark hair combed forward,
 bushing out over his ears,
 single white strand glinting in the sun.

He's three, six and thirty-two;
 I'm thirty-two, thirty-eight and sixty-four.
 The prodigal father
 and the abandoned 'live alone,'
 Mr. Mountain Solitaire.

We stroll through the Garden of Fragrance,
 oasis of lakes.
 Absentee father
 fathering,

he the fathered, fatherless
 hungering

son to be a father
 father to be a father

This is the hunger.
 —San Francisco, October, 1998.

Robert Sward is the author of 14 books. These poems are from the latest, *Portrait of an L.A. Daughter.*

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The BOOKPRESS

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Dallying With Himself

The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí.

Ian Gibson.

Norton, 1998.

798 pages, \$45.00 cloth.

Gunilla Feigenbaum

I've always believed that biographers feel a deep kinship with the people they choose to portray, for example, that Gore Vidal wants to be president and that Norman Mailer occupies the same soppy emotional landscape as Marilyn Monroe. Well, I can put that fantasy to rest; there couldn't be two people more dissimilar than the outlandish, excessive, surrealist painter Salvador Dalí and his latest biographer, Ian Gibson, whose fat and meaty book, *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí*, tracks, dissects, and unravels, with commendably un-Dalíesque clarity and attention, the enigma of Dalí.

It must have been a daunting task because, as Gibson points out, Dalí created a virtual art form out of confusion. His autobiography, *My Secret Life*, is full of outright lies and so is *Diary of a Genius*. Everything he said about himself must be distrusted. In 1964 I was Dalí's model for three months and went almost daily to his and Gala's house in Port Lligat, which doesn't make me an expert on Dalí, but it does give me a frame of reference. While Meredith Etherington-Smith, in her 1993 Dalí biography, *The Persistence of Memory*, seems to have swallowed Dalí's version of himself hook, line, and sinker, Gibson doesn't accept anything that can't be verified by at least three independent sources. He is the best of fox hounds—unimpressed by the whiskers, he won't stop until he sees the blood.

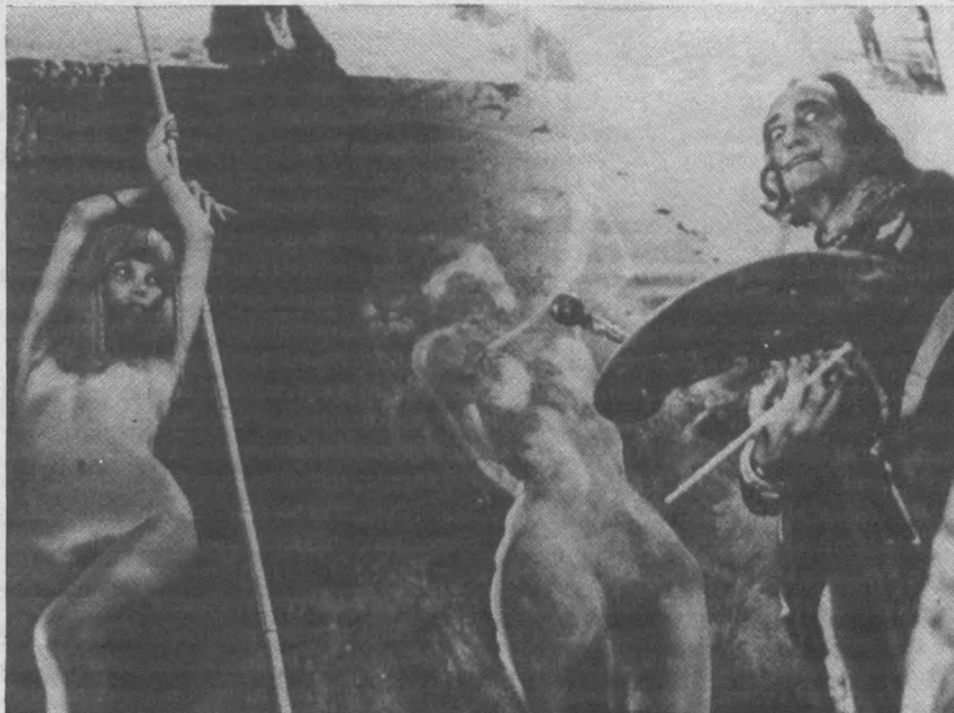
Gibson paints Dalí against the backdrop of Spanish politics and the culture of Catalonia. He tracks his ancestors and describes the geography of the landscape. We are already several chapters into the book when little Salvador is born. The son of a notary, he was the second child, born nine months after his brother (also named Salvador) died at the age of twenty-two months. The artist-to-be was a beautiful, imaginative, and willful child, spoiled rotten and given to temper tantrums. The family was well-off and well-connected, dividing their time between Barcelona, Figueras, and their summer place in Cadaques, surrounded by handsome, creative friends. Salvador showed artistic talent at a very early age and was encouraged in all his efforts—even given his own studio at the tender age of eight. By the time he was thirteen, the family had arranged an exhibition for him in their living room. Salvador was convinced he was a genius, and that assessment was shared by his nearest and dearest.

In 1922, at eighteen, Dalí was included in a prestigious group exhibition in Barcelona. His father decided that he should study at Madrid's Royal Academy Special School of Painting, Sculpture, and Engraving and packed him off to live at the *Residencia de Estudiantes*. Here Salvador was to experience what might arguably have been the best, most fertile years of his life. At the Academy, Dalí formed his friendship with Luis Buñuel and García Lorca, a constellation of three of the brightest stars in the panoply of Spanish art in this century. Back then, they were three wildly imaginative dream-boats roaming the streets and cafés at night, singing, arguing, getting drunk, and writing grand statements on art and politics. It was during this period that Dalí first read Freud, an event that set the stage for his conversion to Surrealism and his invention of images that were to be cemented into our collective consciousness, such as the melting watches.

The section describing "The Madrid Years" is the most engaging in Ian Gibson's book. Gibson's previous publication is an exhaustive biography on Lorca. I haven't read it, but I suspect that's where his heart really is. His intellect is certainly present in this book, but the only pages where he really seems to like Dalí are those describing the

years of friendship with Lorca. Those chapters are written with a warmth and compassion that is lacking in the rest of the book. It's full of particulars—what they read, where they drank, the words of the songs they recited. A girl who serves no purpose in the story except that she was once sodomized by Lorca (in lieu of Dalí, who was watching) is given a full page biography. I'm not complaining—it all makes excellent reading.

Dalí, who seems a coward for most of his life, bravely defied authority at the Academy. He was briefly arrested as an anti-monarch during a visit to the school by King Alfonso XII, and suspended and finally



Amanda Lear posing in Port Lligat for Roger Freeing Angelica, 1970

expelled over some rather minor matters that intruded on his sense of integrity—probably the only time in his life when he entertained any integrity. Already acquainted with both Freud and surrealism, he took off to Paris, where he was to meet two personalities that would shape his destiny—André Breton, the most avid literate and political promoter of Surrealism, and Helen Diakanoff Devulina, known as Gala, who was to be his wife, muse, companion, and obsession for the rest of his life.

Gibson clearly admires the surrealist paintings Dalí produced during that early part of his career. He analyses their content in detail, painting by painting, from many angles—artistically, historically, and psychologically. There are thirty-eight color reproductions and many black-and-white ones to help the reader. *Un Chien andalou*, the landmark surrealist film Dalí and Buñuel collaborated on, is described scene by scene. Gibson doesn't question Dalí's importance as an artist in that time of his life, nor does he intimate any serious qualms about his personality.

That changes as Dalí matures and ages. Gibson complains about the paintings past 1945, but he isn't overtly judgemental about Dalí, the man—he simply lets events speak for themselves. *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí* has a double meaning. Gibson tries very hard to make a case that Dalí always suffered from sexual shame over his small equipment, his obsessive masturbation, and his impotence. He brings the point forth from the very first pages of the book. He quotes Helen Merrell Lynd from *On Shame and the Search for Identity*: "...a person experiencing shame is incapable of communicating to anyone else what is taking place because the adrenaline released into the bloodstream is urging him to escape or hide. All that can be done is to 'put on a brave face,' to disguise the discomfort as best possible." If that is what Dalí did, it sure was a good disguise. Since he produces endless paintings referring to his masturbation, was the first to announce his impotence, never made a secret of his proclivity as a voyeur, and was himself the one who spoke of his "soft little penis," it's very hard to believe he felt any sexual shame at all. I

can't even believe that Gibson believes it.

When I modeled for Dalí, I was treated to the questionable privilege of having the great painter masturbate behind the canvas while I stood naked holding a rhinoceros horn. In fact, that event ended the arrangement, since I had no idea how to respond—I upended a tray of glass eyes and went running out of the house, never to return. Gibson describes the Dalí I knew—from hilarious quotations in the mangled language Dalí called English, to the peculiar blend of wit, folly, and megalomania that characterized his monologues while he held court in the Port Lligat garden. He has deepened my own understanding of Dalí—and the chilly

Gala—by putting into historical context events I witnessed but couldn't place at that time. For example, Dalí showed me a picture of what he called a hermaphrodite and said it was the most beautiful creature imaginable. The black-and-white photograph must have been doctored—the woman looked like a *Playboy* pin-up girl with a fabulously curvy body and a grand, fully erect penis. I thought he just wanted to shock me—he often made pronouncements just for shock value—but Gibson claims he was genuinely intrigued by androgyny. (Five years later he formed a long-lasting friendship with a stunning woman, Amanda Lear, who had started as Alain Tap and undergone a sex-change operation.) The rhinoceros horn I held while he masturbated was, in retrospect, a reference to androgyny. It all rings deeply true—until Gibson draws his conclusion that Dalí was ashamed of any of it.

The deeper meaning of "shameful life" is that Dalí's was a life that anyone with even the most modest standards of honor and integrity would be ashamed of. An idealistic socialist in his youth, he turned to support both Franco and the absolute monarchy. Contempuous of religion, he feigned a return to Catholicism to curry favor with the Pope. His treatment of those nearest to him was simply appalling—his once-beloved sister Anna Maria was coldly rejected, his supporters were used and discarded, his closest friends Breton and Buñuel were betrayed and humiliated. Even Lorca. If it's true that the title of *Un Chien andalou* refers to Lorca and his homosexuality, that was Dalí's first betrayal. The last one came when Dalí was told that Lorca had been murdered; he is reported to have exclaimed, "Ole!" Gibson, who I think admires Lorca too much to accept that insult, believes—or hopes—that the cheer referred to a poem Lorca wrote about the death of a bullfighter. Maybe. Maybe not. Dalí's final gesture in life was to leave his only faithful servant, Arturo Caminada, who had spent more than three decades at his side, completely penniless. Not a peseta in the will, despite previous assurances.

He certainly betrayed his audience and his collectors when, in the late 1960s, he started signing blank sheets of paper for ten dollars apiece. On these papers reproductions were

made, by craftsmen in printing shops, from previously existing artworks. Dalí had no idea what was printed with his signature on the lower right-hand corner, nor does it appear that he cared. Later they were pawned off as genuine lithographs or engravings, thus putting in question all Dalí prints done since 1969. He was capable of signing as many as one-thousand sheets an hour, creating a fraudulent art market with hundreds of thousands of inauthentic Dalís. As for the oils, he employed a theatrical scene-painter who initially plotted his larger canvases and executed some portions of them and later probably painted the entire paintings under Dalí's directions. Developments in art in the last two decades have made that less of a crime. Art no longer needs the hand of the artist, just the idea—see Jeff Koons' sculptures, for example—and thus it could be argued that Dalí was once more at the forefront of a movement. In Port Lligat I once saw him dunk a live, squiggling baby octopus in a plate of ink and leave it to crawl on a piece of paper while Gala badgered an American visitor to buy the messy result for a pile of money.

Dalí claimed to love money and he himself proudly quoted Breton's anagram of Salvador Dalí—Avida Dollars. To me, he always seemed rather indifferent to expenditures. He was as helpless as a child in the face of any kind of practical arrangements. He'd stick me a bunch of bills at the end of each modeling session and the amount would vary wildly. I don't think he ever counted what he gave me. When we went out for dinners, the chauffeur would pay. Dalí might have loved money—he loved luxury—but as for the reality of actual transactions, someone else was in charge.

Usually Gala. Gibson, along with everyone, without any known exception, feels that the day young Salvador Dalí twined his fate with Gala's, he pretty much signed a pact with the devil. When he met her, she was the wife of Paul Éluard and the mother of a small child, Cécile. She had a sexual appetite of heroic proportions, encouraged by her husband, who himself wasn't deprived of extra-marital alliances. Dalí fell in love, or in obsession, and it was to last his whole life. Naturally given to mythology, nothing came close to the mystical bond he perceived with Gala, an absolutely stone-cold woman with not a tender bone in her body (Cécile was the victim of the most astonishing maternal neglect), cruel, ill-humored, miserly, ambitious, and voracious for money. She wasn't even really pretty. Dalí adored her, revered her and feared her, and under her mean-spirited guidance set out to be the richest, most famous painter in the world. When I knew Gala, she was in her early seventies (her age was a secret) and very elegant, favoring *haute couture* silk pants and open-neck shirts with tons of extravagantly large jewelry for at-home wear. I never saw her without make-up or without the companionship of one of the two young men she kept in attendance—a Russian poet named Dimitri and William Rotlein. Gibson carefully documents a serious relationship between Gala and Rotlein which, for me, is enlightening because I was fooled back then. Bill was a beautiful and incredibly stupid American who, Dalí said (to me), he had picked up in the gutters of New York because he looked just like Dalí as a young man. Dalí showed me pictures of himself to prove the point. He claimed Bill was modeling for him. I never saw any affectionate gestures between Bill and Gala—but then Bill was stoned most of the time and even without the aid of drugs, one of the dullest, most un-emotive human beings I've ever encountered. Gala lavished attentions on Dimitri. I don't doubt Gibson's account, so I can only conclude that Dimitri was the red herring. Gibson writes that it was Gala who picked up Bill, not Dalí. Dalí happily bragged about Gala's sexual conquests so why did he lie about Bill? He must, in fact, have felt very threatened. By his own

continued on page 11

Off Campus

At The Bookery

As of January, 1999, unless otherwise noted, these events will be held in The Women's Community Building on the corner of Seneca and Cayuga Streets, across the street from the Dewitt Mall. Please check individual listings for exact times and location.

Sunday, February 14, 4:00 p.m.

Paul West

Come join us for a romantic Valentine's Day reading from *Life with Swan* by the "mandarin stylist" Paul West. Renowned for both personal history (*A Stroke of Genius*) and inventive fiction (*Terrestrials*), West turns now to the autobiographical novel. His thinly veiled subject is his wife, poet and naturalist Diane Ackerman.



Please note that Paul West's reading will take place upstairs in the atrium of the Dewitt Mall at 4:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 21, 2:00 p.m.

Women's Community Building



J. Robert Lennon

Ithacan J. Robert Lennon will read from his new novel, *The Funnies*. This, insightful, bittersweet and, at times, laugh-out-loud hilarious story revolves around a tormented family immortalized as wisecracking imps in their father's popular syndicated comic strip. Lennon is the author of the award-winning novel *The Light of Falling Stars*.

Sunday, February 28, 2:00 p.m.

Women's Community Building

Mary Caponegro

Ms. Caponegro, who is presently teaching in the Creative Writing Program at Syracuse University, will be reading from her new book, *Five Doubts*. Ms. Caponegro's latest exploration of narrative possibilities takes as a point of departure five arresting images from Italian art and culture—five images that give rise to voices haunted by desire, doubt and death.



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SANS FRONTIÈRES

Before the borders between my self
and world were drawn, I rose or
fell, one with pulsing cricket
clouds or showers of Perseid fire.
Veeries' rinsings fell from high
dark maples; leafmold breathed
out, I in, its nutty breath.

I never wanted to go indoors
unless I could emerge at dawn,
perhaps on fresh snow, to lift
and brush off that cock pheasant
a fox, scared off by dogs, had
dropped in falling flakes, and bundle
him home, bitten neck stiffening.

Darker year by year,
lines close in
everywhere.

At seventy I think with envy
of a man who sat cross-legged
once among guttering gorse
candles on Whinny-muir, holding
in his lap the head of a dying
horse. Dark nostrils already
snuffed at Brigg o' Dread; a probing
forehoof tapped at planks this side,
echoing through heads of both
horse and man.

How time must
have hung, as in childhood, then:
so many lines undrawn.

—Sheldon Flory

Sheldon Flory's poetry has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *Epoch*, *Northern Review*, and *The Bookpress*. He has published two collections of poems, *A Winter's Journey*, and *A Family Album*.

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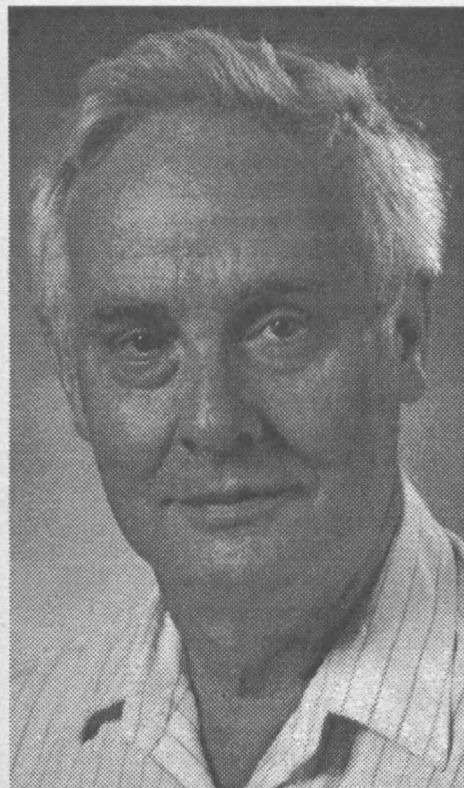
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Stories and Nations



Benedict Anderson

The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World.
Benedict Anderson.
Verso, 1998.
374 pages, \$19.00 cloth.

Stefan Senders

In his new book, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*, Benedict Anderson welcomes us with a bizarre scene. It is 1965, and the then President of Indonesia, Sukarno, is accepting an honorary degree from the University of Indonesia. Anderson finds himself whispering translation for a visiting European diplomat when Sukarno begins quoting, as his nationalist inspiration, Adolph Hitler: "Come, let us build a Third Kingdom, a *Dritte Reich*, and in this Third Reich, hey, sisters, you will live happily; hey, you German patriots, you will see Germany sitting enthroned above all peoples in this world." How clever Hitler was, brothers and sisters, in depicting these ideals! At this moment Anderson sees "his" Hitler and "his" Europe from a new perspective—"through the wrong end of a telescope." So Anderson introduces us to the "spectre of comparisons," the dizzying destabilization of centers and peripheries, originals and imitations.

Anderson is the Aaron L. Binenkorb Professor of International Studies at Cornell University, and is best known for his now "classic" work on nationalism, *Imagined Communities*, which was first published in 1983. He is unique among students of politics. His gifts are these: he embraces the interpretive breadth of anthropology while keeping his eye steadily on the political, and he writes with grace and erudition.

The Spectre of Comparisons is organized as a set of three national studies—two chapters each on Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines—set between six chapters of reflections on nationalism and internationalism.

The first chapter sets the tone for the whole book; Anderson is out to understand "the remarkable planetary spread, not merely of nationalism, but of a profoundly standardized conception of politics, in part by reflecting on the everyday practices, rooted in industrial material civilization, that have displaced the cosmos to make way for the world" (29). The collection is strikingly coherent, and it shows a continuity of thought and method that was merely suggested in *Imagined Communities*.

Why was *Imagined Communities* so popular and important? It was certainly not the first time someone had written that nations were imagined. It was, at least partially, a matter of timing. In the early 1980s many scholars in political science were turning away from state-centric forms of "realism" and toward more historically and anthropo-

logically informed approaches. At the same time, anthropology was losing its grip on "culture." Not only were there fewer and fewer natives to go around, but "cultural studies" and multiculturalism were taking over culture faster than anthropology could find it, make it, or figure out what to do with it. As anthropologists lost culture, they started turning their attention to the domain of national and international politics.

Anderson was embraced by both anthropologists and political scientists because he gave them what they needed. Anthropologists liked Anderson because he brought politics back into the realm of culture; if nations were "imagined communities" and the question for study was the "style in which they were imagined," then anthropology had real work to do. Similarly, he opened things up for political scientists, who could start writing about formerly "cultural" issues, such as memory, imagination, and identity.

In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson offered an analysis of nationalism that was idiosyncratic in its breadth and synthetic power. He connected thoughts on literature, capitalism, colonialism, ethnicity, and monumentality, to mention only a few themes, with an ease that had eluded previous writers. He seemed to tie everything together in a beautiful and complex knot. *Imagined Communities* really did change the way people thought about nationalism, but if there was a *method* hidden in the book, Anderson wasn't telling. The result has been that scholars invoke Anderson's name every time they use the word "imagination," but none have come close to Anderson's synthetic vision. The project he outlined in 1983 has turned out to be his alone; the analysis was brilliant, but it has not proved particularly portable.

The Spectre of Comparisons will probably not be as influential as *Imagined Communities*. The new book offers few catchy phrases for quick citation (although "long distance nationalism" will no doubt be picked up in short order) and the detailed country studies and historical analyses may limit, rather than expand, its appeal. But the book will be a boon to anyone hoping to learn how to think nationalism and politics in Andersonian style. It demonstrates how the work is to be done.

Anderson shows, by example, how to read and interpret the political imaginary. To begin with, Anderson turns to anthropological methods and asks us to be aware of changing forms of categorization as they are manifest in both local and global context. How, he asks, have the categories of "politics," "nationalism," and "identity" become so universally salient? And how have they taken shape at the local—for Anderson, specifically Indonesian and Southeast Asian—level? Second, following the argument he made in *Imagined Communities*, Anderson stresses the importance of the emergence of mass literatures and their

effects on people's self-understandings. Finally, at the core of Anderson's analysis is his awareness that the favorite plaything of the human imagination is time, which is most visible to us in the form of stories. Anderson reads politics and history with the eye of a literary critic.

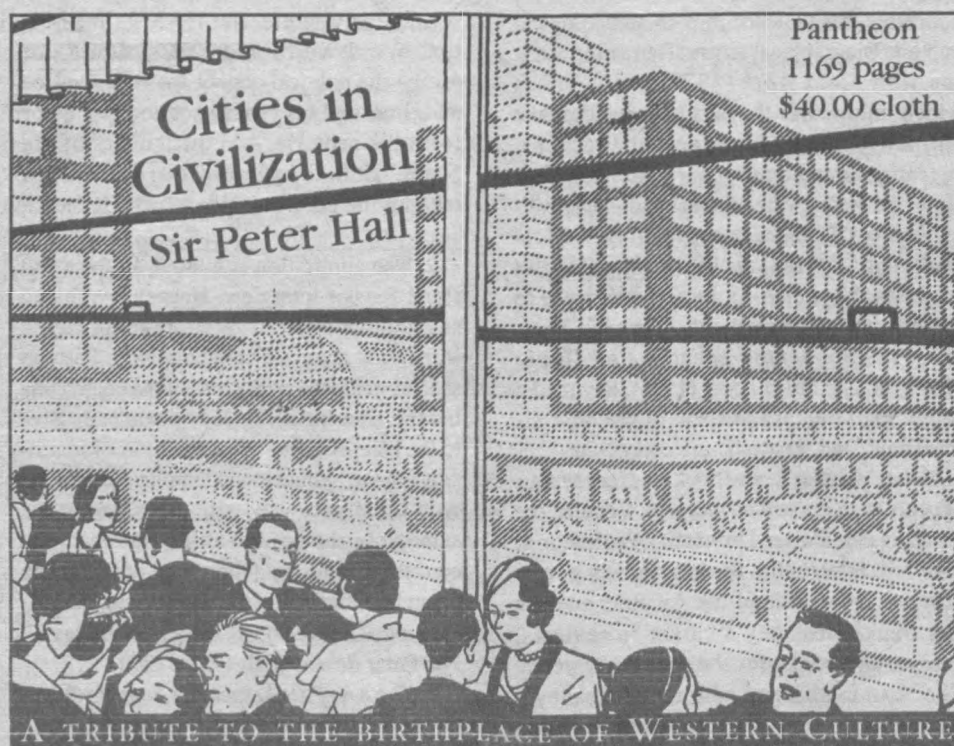
In his essay, "A Time of Darkness and a Time of Light," first published in 1979, Anderson traces a history of Indonesian nationalism through the poetry and autobiographical sketches of "a nineteen-year-old East Javanese boy called Soetmo, who eventually became one of the most prominent nationalist leaders of his generation" (80). In Soetmo's writings Anderson finds evidence of shifts in the temporal framework of Indonesian narratives of power and value. In place of "traditional" and "cyclic" notions of time, Soetmo turned first to "western," and "modern" time, a time in which he could become something new, apart, and individual. Later Soetmo resurrected older concepts of eternity, return, and perfection, but with a new twist. Soetmo's political brilliance, Anderson explains, was to craft of time a new realm of possibility, a time in which Indonesia could be both new and ancient, free and perfect.

"A Time of Darkness and a Time of Light," is one of the earliest in the collection and it is fascinating, but at the same time strangely innocent. Anderson reads metaphor simply; things mean what they appear to mean, people say what they intend to say. It's a bit naive. In later essays we get more of a sense of the development of Anderson's method and sophistication; we start hearing more irony, more complexity, and a bit less trust. Anderson's readings of sodomy, conjuring, and professionalization in "Professional Dreams," and his novel interpretation of political murder in Thailand in "Murder and Progress in Modern Siam" (it tells us that politics is finally meaningful) are complex and brilliant.

Compiling essays to form a book is a difficult task, and Anderson has done a good job. But what counts as erudition in a short piece starts to look more like elitism when repeated in a collection. The same sovereign tone that made *Imagined Communities* a thrilling read makes this collection an occasionally irritating ride. But this is a minor complaint.

Imagined Communities was a suggestive book; it pointed a direction for a truly interdisciplinary political science, and it showed us what such a science might look like. *The Spectre of Comparisons*, by contrast, is a demonstrative book; it does what *Imagined Communities* only hinted at. It remains to be seen whether the book's timing will allow it the readership it deserves.

Stefan Senders is a Peace Studies Fellow at Cornell University, where he teaches writing and anthropology.



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Seamus Heaney.
Helen Vendler.
Harvard University Press, 1998.
188 pages, \$22.95 cloth.

Kevin Murphy

In his 1995 Nobel Prize acceptance speech "Crediting Poetry," Seamus Heaney reaches for a striking analogy to recount his acute sense of the physical and familial world which surrounded him growing up on a farm in rural Northern Ireland in the 1940s. He says, "we were as susceptible and impressionable as the drinking water which stood in a bucket in our scullery: every time a passing train made the earth shake, the surface of the water used to ripple delicately, concentrically, and in utter silence." The ripples provide a deft fusion of the pastoral and industrial forcefields at play in that northern Irish landscape, an agrarian world Heaney speaks of as being "pre-sexual, ahistorical, and caught between the archaic and the modern." But, as the image also implies, the ripples from that innocent world of childhood would expand outward and onward not only into the adult world of sexuality but also into the violent world of Irish history and politics. In the speech, the image finally provides Heaney with a metaphor for "crediting poetry," an acknowledgment of the moral and intellectual coherence which poetry can bestow upon an individual life: "poetry," he says, "can make an order as true to the impact of external reality and as sensitive to the laws of the poet's being as the ripples that rippled in and rippled out across the water in that scullery bucket fifty years ago." This image (which first appears in sonnet IV of his Glanmore sequence in *Field Work* (1979) is one that Heaney returns to in a recent *Paris Review* interview. Extending the reconciliation of the private and public aspects of one's consciousness to which he referred in the Nobel speech, Heaney sees those concentric ripples providing a continuity across a lifetime of poetry. As he says to Henri Cole, "In a way no matter how wide the circumference gets, no matter how far you have rippled out from the first point, that original pulse of your being is still traveling in you and through you, so although you can talk about this period of your life and that period of it, your first self and your last self are by no means distinct."¹

With the publication of *Opened Ground: Selected Poems, 1966-1996*, one can now follow fully Heaney's expanding ripples of the past thirty years, ranging from *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) to the more recent *The Spirit Level* (1996). The collection is both ample and inclusive. The volume, as Heaney says in a brief prefatory note, contains more poems than would usually appear in a *Selected Poems* (such as the one published in 1987) but fewer than would make up a *Collected*. Unlike the 1987 collection, there is a broader range of poems selected from each of the earlier volumes, and Heaney includes several poems not previously included in book-length collections, along with a sequence of extracts from *The Cure at Troy*, Heaney's version of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. In addition, as an Afterwards to the more than 400 pages of poems, he includes the text of "Crediting Poetry," probably his most affirmative and articulate statement of his poetic intention. His reason for adding the Nobel speech seems at first a bit gratuitous, little more than a pun calling attention to the title for the book: "This seemed to make sense, since the ground covered in the lecture is ground originally opened by the poems which precede it."

As it happens, the title which Heaney has chosen for this collection has something of a complicated history. The phrase, "opened

ground," appears in "Act of Union" (*North*) and twice in the Glanmore sonnet sequence (*Field Work*), and, depending on the context, refers externally and politically to the state of violated Ireland ("the big pain/ That leaves you raw, like opened ground" in "Act of Union") or internally and aesthetically to a state of consciousness conducive to the act of writing ("Vowels ploughed into other: opened ground," in I, and then, with a slight shift in punctuation, "Vowels ploughed into other, opened ground/ Each verse returning like the plough turned round" in II). Thus, the phrase, as frequently happens in Heaney's poetry, does double duty, casting outward into the political and social context of contemporary Northern Ireland even as it plumbs the linguistic and sexual origins of poetic consciousness.

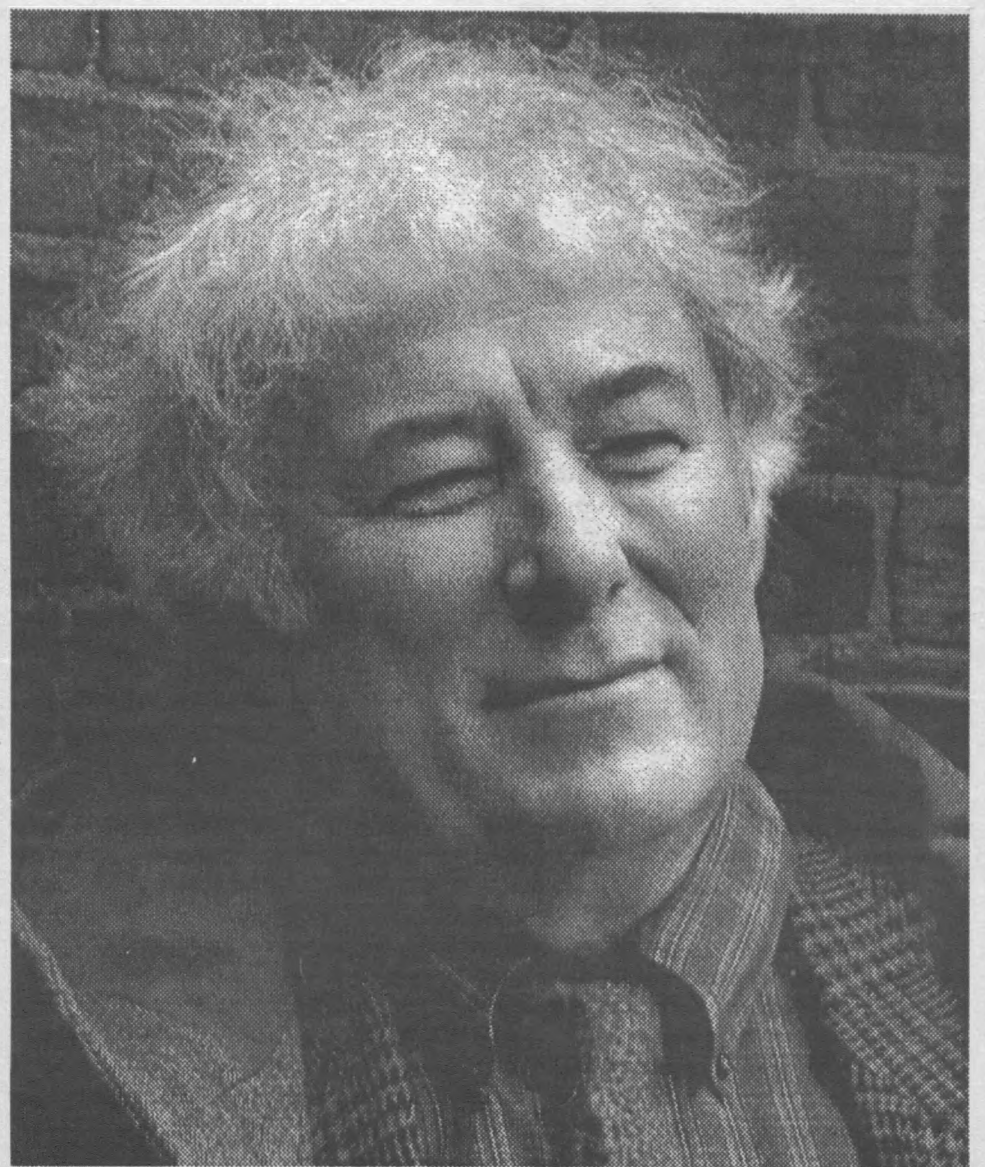
There is another element to the story, though. In 1983, Heaney published "An Open Letter," a verse letter addressed to Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion, as Pamphlet #2 in the *Field Day* pamphlet series. In it Heaney humorously objects to his inclusion in *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* which Morrison and Motion had published the year before. Aside from his objection to having his Irishness occluded by being subsumed into an anthology with such a title, he notes in the poem:

To think the title *Opened Ground*
Was the first title in your mind!
To think of where the phrase was found
Makes it far worse!
To be supplanted in the end
By British verse.

Even though the stanzaic form (and the hype of exclamation marks) should have alerted its readers to the self-parody also at play in the poem, the verse letter caused something of a brouhaha when it first appeared. Morrison had published a book praising Heaney's poetry, and, more alarmingly, in some quarters Heaney's humor seemed aggressively nationalistic. Even though Heaney has never included the poem in any of his book-length collections (including this one), from time to time, a literal-minded critic (usually British) resurrects the poem to shake a finger of reprimand at the ungrateful Heaney (cf. "Fenton's Wooden Horse," *The Bookpress* (September 1996)). On the one hand, Heaney, by once again not including the offending poem in this broadly inclusive selection, seems to demonstrate a diplomatic restraint; on the other, his choice of title for the collection, given its variegated history, reveals a subtle (and unrepentant) mischievousness.

All such subtleties aside, the poems themselves indeed cover a great deal of ground. Heaney's early volumes place him firmly in the pastoral realm of farm and family, a world which would be transformed forever with the re-emergence of the murder and violence which marked Northern Ireland from 1968 on. Heaney's *North* (1975), the volume which propelled him to international attention, addresses this violence in both archeological and autobiographical terms. Thereafter, starting with *Field Work* (1979), the volumes which follow over the next two decades take Heaney in new and unexpected directions, revealing dramatic transformations in both style and vision. The ethereal and metaphysical reach of the more recent volumes stands in stark contrast to the knuckled, earth-filled grip of the early poems. In fact, if one were to place Heaney's first volume, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), next to either *Seeing Things* (1991) or *The Spirit Level* (1995), any reader might well be hard pressed to see how his "first self" and "last self" are connected.

Helen Vendler's new book on Heaney thus appears at an opportune moment. Vendler, the A. Kingsley Porter University Professor at Harvard, is probably the best-known poetry critic on either side of the Atlantic, and she has tracked Heaney's career in reviews, essays, and books for the past thirty years. She is an unabashed admirer of Heaney's poetry, and in many ways her particular brand



Seamus Heaney

of criticism lends itself to Heaney's poems. Her principles of aesthetic and formal integrity, based on earlier New Critical models, are well suited for a poetry as formally crafted and intellectually demanding as Heaney's.²

Vendler has consciously identified herself as a student of the lyric, a kind of poetry which she distinguishes from other, more social forms of literature such as drama and the novel. For Vendler, the lyric requires a special intimate relation with a reader, embodying, as she has said elsewhere, "the performance of the mind in solitary speech." Even further, "Because lyric is intended to be voiceable by anyone reading it, in its normative form it deliberately strips away most social specification (age, regional location, sex, class, even race)."³ But this position, which critics of Vendler have characterized as elitist and isolated from the social and political context out of which art springs, seems particularly difficult to maintain with Seamus Heaney, a poet deeply embedded in the social, political, and religious milieu of Northern Ireland.

Vendler herself seems willing to acknowledge this point in her introductory remarks. As she says, "Historically, from the Greek Anthology to Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, lyric has been seen to occupy itself chiefly with the private life. But Heaney (like Milton, Wordsworth and Yeats) could not escape the political convulsions of his place and time, and his lyrics soon took on color from the centuries-old difficulties of the North." Still, in indicating that she will not take up the controversies which Heaney's

2. The admiration is mutual. In the same *Paris Review* interview, Heaney has this to say about Vendler: "Well, reading Helen Vendler is always a collaboration....She can second-guess the sixth sense of the poem. She has this amazing ability to be completely alive to the bleper going off at the heart of it, sensitive to the intimacies and implications of the words and your way with them, and at the same time she has the ability to create the acoustic conditions where you can hear the poem best, the ability to set it within a historical context and to find its literary coordinates." *The Paris Review* (Fall 1997), 129.

3. *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1-2.

poetry has generated, Vendler carefully separates the value and validation of lyric poetry from the "thematic arguments" (i.e., implied positions on gender or northern Irish politics) which the poems may or may not contain. As she says flat out, "I myself regard thematic arguments about poetry to be beside the point. Lyric poetry neither stands nor falls on its themes; it stands or falls on the accuracy of language with which it reports the author's emotional responses to life around him." Her focus, then, will be on the poems themselves, "temporal structures," as she says, "formally expressive of the symbolic theme," leaving to others the issues of political controversy, poetic forebears, and biographical influence.⁴ Despite such an abstract pronouncement, what follows is clearly the best introduction to Heaney's poetry to date, especially in the ways Vendler vividly demonstrates the continuity of the poetry over the past thirty years.

Her method is to divide Heaney's career into a series of "stepping stones," a term Vendler borrows from an early Heaney essay. Rather than imagine individual poems or even a volume of poems as definitive "position papers" (something Vendler considers a fundamental philosophical mistake), poems should be seen as "provisional symbolic structures" which will change naturally over time as a reflective poet such as Heaney attempts to incorporate his past into his present. Each stepping stone in Heaney's career should be seen, according to Vendler, as leading naturally into the next, even if such transition is not immediately evident, and one way Vendler encourages such interconnection, not only from stone to stone but also across the career, is to append a section called "Second Thoughts" to the end of each stepping stone chapter. In this section, she leaps forward or looks back across the

4. Of the many recent books on Heaney, Neil Corcoran's updated *Seamus Heaney* (1998) provides a thorough review of the critical reactions Heaney's poetry has generated, including negative ones. In terms of the poetic influences, Bernard O'Donoghue's *Seamus Heaney and the Language of Poetry* (1994) examines the influence of Irish verse forms on Heaney's early poetry and the increasing influence of Dante in shaping Heaney's vision in more recent work. Michael Parker's *Seamus Heaney: The Making of a Poet* (1993) places the poems in a detailed biographical context.

1. "Seamus Heaney: The Art of Poetry," *The Paris Review* (Fall 1997), 100.

a Poet's Mind

trajectory of Heaney's poetic *oeuvre* to illustrate the ways in which the poet has revised, or will revise, earlier understandings of his experience. What such a method requires, of course, is a complete command of Heaney's work, one which allows Vendler at will to point to a parallel or contrast across the eleven volumes of poems. But what such an approach also results in is a view of the poems as progressive and integral parts of Heaney's maturing poetic identity, as if each volume were part of a larger Heanesque Prelude, tracing the growth of this poet's mind.

In an initial chapter entitled "Anonymities" (the term is from one of the introductory poems to *North*), Vendler notes that Heaney's initial poetic voice, especially in the poems recollecting childhood, was largely an earthy but undifferentiated one identifying closely with the rural and pastoral scenes being recorded. More broadly, throughout the early volumes she sees Heaney as exploring various forms of anonymity. At times he chooses as subjects anonymous rural laborers and erects moments to the generations whose names have been lost. In this sense, Heaney should be seen as a preservationist, a poet who simultaneously acknowledges his attachment to these forms of agrarian life even as he elegiacally notes their passing. In other poems, Heaney turns to myth and legend as another form of anonymity, a form which he will return to throughout his career. Yet another way to achieve anonymity is for the poet to become what Vendler calls "wholly a perceptual observer—one with no history, no ethnicity, no religion, no family." Interestingly enough, this state, reminiscent of Emerson's egoless transparency, also achieves the condition of lyric as Vendler conceives it, stripped of all social stratification even as it appeals, in its record of sense perceptions common to the species, to a universal audience.

But another form of anonymity, a particularly macabre one, emerges in Heaney's third volume, *Wintering Out* (1972): the archeological anonymity of buried corpses which the Danish archeologist P. V. Glob recorded photographically in *The Bog People*, his study of prehistoric sacrificial victims exhumed from the bogs of Jutland. This form of anonymity haunts Heaney's famous Bog Poems, with the Iron Age murder victims providing a bleak analogy to the violence and death which had erupted in Northern Ireland. As Vendler says, "Their anonymity gave him an imaginative scope he would have been unwilling to assume in a literal retelling of local assassinations." "The Tollund Man," which appears in *Wintering Out*, is Heaney's initial exploration of this analogy, and it provides the stepping stone into *North* (1975), the volume in which Heaney, in a stunning sequence of poems, pursues this archeological analogy to its grim, deterministic conclusion. It's a book which has caused much controversy in terms of the political implications different readers have attributed to the poems, but Vendler unreservedly describes the volume as "one of the crucial poetic interventions of the twentieth century, ranking with *Prufrock* and *Harmonium* and *North of Boston* in its key role in the history of modern poetry."

Vendler, like many critics, notices the sharp shift in style after *North*, with *Field Work* (1979) making an almost complete break with both the anonymity and archeology which characterize the earlier poems. The poetic voice becomes more individual, that of a man engaged in ordinary domestic and social relations. As she says, "He is a husband, a father, a person with friends and relatives—and increasingly an elegist." Vendler sees Heaney's choice to remain on the human, everyday, and colloquial level as deliberate; and her interrogations of Heaney's experiments with this new voice prove both illuminating and persuasive. For Vendler the poetry which follows—the translation of the medieval Irish poem *Sweeney Astray* (1983), the Dantesque dream encounters in *Station Island* (1984), and most acutely, the elegies

to his mother and father in *The Haw Lantern* (1987)—all provide Heaney with the means of testing his poetic vocation and belief.

His translation of the medieval Irish epic is valuable to Heaney's developing poetic voice in that Sweeney, the mad king who is cursed by St. Ronan and transformed into a bird who roams across Ireland, provides Heaney with an alter ego of sorts. Sweeney, the marginalized outsider who has been cast beyond the bounds of both church and state, stands in sharp contrast to the young "insider" of the earlier pastoral poems. More specifically in terms of Heaney's own work, this Sweeney (rhymes with Heaney) reappears in the "Sweeney Redivivus" suite of poems which concludes *Station Island* to introduce some sardonic "second thoughts" on Heaney's earlier pastoralism. In the "Station Island" sequence of that volume, too, Vendler sees each of the ghostly revenants Heaney encounters on his imagined pilgrimage to Lough Derg as embodying alternate or opposite lives which the poet himself may have led. The revenants include writers, mentors, and victims from the sectarian violence, and each visitation clarifies further the penitent pilgrim's interrogation of his poetic vocation. The final revenant, James Joyce (*not*, Vendler notes, William Butler Yeats), sets the speaker free from both nationalist anxieties and familial inhibitions.

But perhaps the most valuable contribution of the study is Vendler's focus on the elegies of *The Haw Lantern* (1987). In the mid-1980s Heaney underwent one of the sadly inevitable crises of middle age, the death of one's parents. Heaney's poetry, from "Digging," which opens his first volume through "Sunlight," the domestic reverie which prefaces *North*, had vividly indicated the deep familial roots of his poetic identity, and his parents' deaths (his mother died in 1984, his father in 1986), as Vendler says, "caused a tear in the fabric of Heaney's verse, reflecting the way an inalterable emptiness had replaced the reality that had been his since birth."

"Clearances," the eight-sonnet sequence Heaney wrote in memory of his mother, records both the grief and the transformation that accompanied her death. On the one hand, the poems painfully depict a poet who, in the face of this death, longs for the religious consolation with which and in which he was raised. But the poet, rejecting any belief in personal immortality, must reluctantly accept the inadequate solace of memory (The heart-rending sonnet on peeling potatoes with his mother will take its place next to Patrick Kavanagh's poem on his mother in any imaginable future anthology of Irish literature). But the sonnets also record a personal, irrevocable transformation in the speaker, a changed understanding of his own identity, one which he presents with an anecdotal analogy. When Heaney was born, a chestnut tree had been planted in front of his house, and, as he grew up, it was inevitable that comparisons were made between the child and the tree, as each grew under the adult supervision of the household.⁵ Even though the tree had now long ago been cut down, it is still vividly present in the poet's mind, and both its loss and its imaginative retention, its absence and its presence, provide a restorative metamorphosis in the face of this more personal, familial loss. Here's the sonnet:

*I thought of walking round and round a space
Utterly empty, utterly a source
Where the decked chestnut tree had lost its place
In our front hedge above the wallflowers.
The white chips jumped and jumped and skated high.
I heard the hatchet's differentiated
Accurate cut, the crack, the sigh*

5. Heaney speaks at length about this chestnut tree and the increasing parallel he felt with it in "The Placeless Heaven: Another Look at Kavanagh," in *The Government of the Tongue* (1988). As he says, "the chestnut tree...was young and was watched in much the same way as the other children and myself were watched and commented upon, fondly, frankly, and unrelentingly."

*And collapse of what luxuriated
Through the shocked tips and wreckage of it all.
Deep planted and long gone, my coeval
Chestnut from a jam jar in a hole,
Its heft and hush become a bright nowhere,
A soul ramifying and forever
Silent, beyond silence listened for.*

Vendler's summary of the transformation in Heaney's vision is succinct:

But the death of his parents—natural deaths, not deaths of violence—introduce a new strain into Heaney's art. An absence, one might say, becomes realer than presence. Heaney reverses himself: his aim is now to turn the crystalline, or virtual, absent realm into a material one—to make it visible by metaphors so ordinary as to be indubitable. The outline of the chestnut tree before it was felled is all the more ineradicable for being invisible; and once the midpoint of life has passed, one is as likely, in the surrounding landscape, to 'see' the vanished as the verifiable.

Even more, these elegies, along with "The Stone Verdict," the elegy written to his father in this volume, become the stepping stone to the most recent two books. As Vendler says, "It is not too much to say, in fact, that *The Haw Lantern* is Heaney's first book of the virtual, a realm that the poet will continue to explore in *Seeing Things* and *The Spirit Level*." For Vendler, too, the allegories and parables, clearly influenced by East European writers such as Vasko Popa, Zbigniew Herbert, and Miroslav Holub, that fill out the rest of *The Haw Lantern* are an extension of this abstracting frame of mind, part of "the job of exploring the use, to a secular mind, of metaphysical, ethical and spiritual categories of reference." The parables and allegories anticipate the "squarings," poems of four pentameter tercets which will be the core of *Seeing Things*, but it is the elegiac transformation which dominates the verse to come.

In fact, *Seeing Things*, framed as it is by visits to the underworld (a translation of *The Aeneid's* passage on the golden bough, which allows one to enter into the underworld, opens the volume and a translation from *The Inferno* of Charon's refusal to allow the living Dante onto his boat crossing the Styx closes the collection), has a ghostly, spectral stance informing the entire volume. As is always the case with Heaney, the title itself carries multiple implications: "seeing things" may imply an ordinary act of perception (but with an implied egoless clarity), or a kind of delirium or hallucination, or a Wordsworthian moment of heightened vision (as in its allusion to the "Tintern Abbey" epiphany, "we see into the life of things").

For Vendler, after the previous excursions into the abstract, Heaney here returns to the phenomenal world, but from "an almost posthumous perspective." Noting that Heaney, in one of the early "squarings," recalls how Hardy in old age sometimes "imagined himself a ghost/ And circulated with that new perspective," Vendler sees Heaney replicating that angle of vision and thereby transforming the earthiness of his earlier poems into something considerably more ethereal: "The airiness of *Seeing Things* occurs because Heaney is contemplating the physical through the scrim of extinction." The poem which best illustrates for Vendler the strange new effect such a perspective has on the world of the ordinary occurs early in the "Squarings" sequence:

*The annals say: when the monks at Clonmacnoise
Were all at prayers inside the oratory
A ship appeared above them in the air*

*The anchor dragged along behind so deep
It hooked itself into the altar rails
And then, as the big hull rocked to a standstill,*

*A crewman shinned and grappled down the rope
And struggled to release it. But in vain.
"This man can't bear our life here and will drown,"*

*The abbot said, "unless we help him." So,
They did, the freed ship sailed, and the man climbed back
Out of the marvelous as he had known it.*

Just as the transcendent world of the airy ship must appear marvelous to humans, so too must the ordinary world of the real appear marvelous to the ghostly or angelic crewman. As Vendler says, what happens here is that "the transcendent and the real become defined as the obverse and reverse of a single perception." More pointedly, at least in religious terms, Vendler notices a shift in veneration: "This is to reverse the religious practice of 'lifting up' one's eyes to an idealized and transcendent space; it is to find ultimate value in what we can here behold." Again and again throughout the volume Vendler points to ways in which the poems cross back and forth between the "practical" and the "poetic," producing what she calls a series of "symbolic and indicative hieroglyphs." Given the elegiac cast of the book, though, almost each hieroglyphic "inscribes within itself its own annihilation." For Vendler, these poems, in eradicating the social specification of the poet speaker, achieve a different (one might say lyric) kind of anonymity or impersonality: "The poet sacrifices himself—as autobiographical persona, as narrator of his own era, as a person representing his class or ethnic group—in order to see things in the most basic terms of all, life symbolized and verbalized in the full knowledge of annihilation."

The *Spirit Level*, Heaney's most recent volume, is something of an Afterwards for Vendler, which she defines as "one's response in a post-catastrophic moment." Placed against the 1994 ceasefire in Ireland (which would finally culminate in last April's Good Friday Agreement), Vendler sees a kind of stoicism informing a wide range of poems, one which counterbalances the contemplated annihilation of the previous volume. The political ramifications of "the post-catastrophic moment" are explored in "Mycenae Lookout," a five-part poem all in the voice of the Watchman from Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* as he anticipates, then witnesses the bloody aftermath of Agamemnon's return from the Trojan War. In poems closer to Heaney's familial and religious milieu, the undramatic virtue of stoicism (Vendler calls it the "virtue of middle age") is at the core of a brother's fidelity in maintaining the family farm ("Keeping Going") and informs a secularized version of a saint's reverence for the cycle of life ("St. Kevin and the Blackbirds").

In the latter, St. Kevin, in response to a blackbird's laying eggs and nesting in his hands outstretched in prayer, submits to his plight and keeps his hands in place until the young are hatched and flown. In a close reading of the poem, Vendler extends the elegiac trajectory of increasing self-effacement she has been tracing throughout the later poems. By poem's end, St. Kevin, who has in his complete self-abnegation forgotten his identity, the objects of his pity, and even the name of the river in which his love has placed him, comes very close to a lyric extreme. His stoicism, says Vendler, "turns into something almost indistinguishable from lyric death." At the same time, this utter selflessness, as Heaney in referring to the poem in his Nobel speech points out, is a "glimpsed ideal," a devotion the poet asks us to admire.

In one sense, then, Vendler's entire study traces a movement from one form of anonymity, in which the speaker of the poems is completely identified with and subsumed within the social milieu in which he finds himself, to another, in which he transcends, even if momentarily, exactly those specificities of social identity which he earlier embraced. In between the two states, Vendler follows Heaney's change of voice as it develops into that of an individual man, implicated in a full range of social, familial, and marital relations. The death of his parents traumatically altered that voice, and in the recent poems Heaney experiments both technically and emotionally with a range of new perspectives, each of which can be seen, though Vendler's deft

continued on page 11

Making Use of Brecht

continued from page 1

labor (*St. Joan of the Stockyards*), what he saw as the convergence of fascism and capitalism (*The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui*, whose title character was a cross between Al Capone and Adolph Hitler), and the schizophrenia caused by the conflict between the natural instinct to be kind, generous, and loving, and the harsh necessities of survival in a competitive world (*The Good Person of Szechwan*, *Mr. Puntila and his Servant Matti*).

As a result of his Marxism, the reception of Brecht's work has been split along political lines. This split was widened and given a firm ideological underpinning in the cold war years following World War II. One of the first post-war "reviews" of his work hinted at the shape of things to come—namely his October 1947 appearance before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, where he was asked to explain his political affiliations as well as the meaning of some of his plays. Although by all accounts he blew smoke at the panel, both figuratively (despite giving no real answers to any of the questions, he was praised as a "good example" to the other witnesses) and literally (a filmed excerpt shows him almost hidden in a cloud of his own cigar smoke), he left the country the next day, and after a brief stay in Switzerland, ended up back in what was then East Berlin, as director of East Germany's Berliner Ensemble.

His English-language reception in the following years was often colored by cold war politics (Martin Esslin's noted book on Brecht was subtitled "A Choice of Two Evils"), though he was not without a number of supporters in the United States, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s when figures like Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and Ernst Bloch were taken up and critically assessed in academic journals such as *New German Critique* as alternative Marxist thinkers. This opposition was usually drawn along political lines; he was often denounced on the right for being Stalinist and dogmatic or, ironically, for not being a committed enough communist—though he lived and worked in East Germany, he had an Austrian passport and a West German publisher—with what was seen as his personal hypocrisy tainting and somehow undermining the legitimacy of his work. H.F. Garten, in *Modern German Drama*, even argued that Brecht's political commitment reflected a deep self-hatred: "Brecht's conversion to communism was not actuated by any genuine sympathy for the poor or any vision of a better future for mankind....It was born from a deep-rooted hatred of the bourgeois class from which he himself had sprung, and it was a desperate effort to escape from the total nihilism of his earlier years and accept the absolute values of a rigid, infallible party organization—even at the price of his own poetic substance." On the left, he was taken up both as a revolutionary model and a figure opposed to the dogmatism of East Germany—despite his status as a cultural and artistic icon, he frequently clashed with authorities over his stagings—the example of a better, more productive socialist critique. Naturally this demarcation was not always so clear cut; even some of his harshest critics acknowledged Brecht's artistic abilities. Nonetheless it was extremely difficult to engage in a discussion of Brecht free of political overtones, and comments such as Garten's were all too common.

With the end of the cold war and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the chance arose for Brecht scholarship to free itself once and for all from the political baggage which had long determined Brecht reception. Unfortunately, the post-cold war reception began somewhat inauspiciously with an event on par with Brecht's HUAC appearance: the 1994 publication of John Fuegi's *Brecht and Company: Sex, Politics, and the Making of the Modern Drama*, a sprawling, error-ridden account of Brecht's collaborations with various female authors, which took as its central thesis the claim that Brecht was responsible for little if any of the more than thirty plays credited to him. In addition to attempting to embroil Brecht scholarship in a Shakespeare-Bacon

authorship question, Fuegi offered a crude pop-psychology sketch of Brecht from childhood as a sadistic, whip-wielding, riding-boot-wearing tyrant who sought to control everyone and everything around him. In addition to the usual contradictory attacks on Brecht's political commitment—he is alternately not dogmatic enough or ultra-orthodox—personal attacks abound in this book, including the unsubstantiated insinuation that Brecht's old servant Mari may be the real mother of his daughter Barbara. These attacks lead up to and supposedly prove another central theme of the book: Brecht as the third person in a trioka with Hitler and Stalin, on a par with, and at times worse than the two dictators.

That Brecht was a far from ideal friend or lover, unfaithful and often misogynist, was nothing new. Nor was the fact that Brecht collaborated heavily with many of his female partners—Elisabeth Hauptmann, Ruth Berlau, Margarete Steffin—though, to be sure, Fuegi's accusations opened up an important vein in Brecht scholarship. For while Brecht himself gave prominence to his collaborators in his manuscripts and publications, as time went on and the Brecht legend grew, the need to assert his genius meant excluding others from an account of his work. It is to his credit that Fuegi engendered a wider discussion of these collaborations. All of this made it even more dismaying that Fuegi, a long-time Brecht scholar and former editor of the *Brecht Yearbook*, used his thirty years of research and experience to come up with such a shoddy and tendentious biography.

Even more dismaying was the fact that it was through these claims that Brecht finally resurfaced in the American public sphere, for while the value of such attention may be a positive side-effect, as the "scandal" faded, so did the attention.

That this scandal was able to pass so quickly speaks to the fact that Brecht's communism or lack of fidelity to it had in fact lost their centrality to the reception of his work. Rather, what has emerged as a major theme in post-cold war scholarship has been a coming to terms with what the fall of communism, and the perceived bankruptcy of Marxist thought, means for the reception of an author of Brecht's political convictions—a struggle to reinvent Brecht, somehow update him, and restore him to the prominence that he deserves. The growing sentiment that Brecht's theories had become too outdated, that his theatrical techniques—particularly the notion of *Verfremdung* [estrangement]—had become too institutionalized to be useful as critical tools, already played a part in a gradual decline in interest in him in the late 1970s. The turn towards his previously dismissed *Lehrstücke* ("teaching" or "learning" plays, sometimes, depending on the conviction of translator, rendered as "didactic" plays), instigated by Reiner Steinweg's groundbreaking 1972 study, was an attempt to find new material, new approaches in Brecht, that could be marshaled in the name of revolution and critique.

But by the end of the 1980s, with postmodern theory dismantling all master-narratives, what was to be done with a playwright who believed in the mother of all master-narratives, namely Marxism? Beginning with Rainer Nagele's 1987 article on Brecht's *Lehrstücke* and receiving its most coherent and insightful form in Elizabeth Wright's 1989 study *Post-modern Brecht: A Re-presentation*, there was an attempt to free Brecht from traditional theoretical and ideological formulations, and find an "other" Brecht, more up-to-date and ready to be utilized in a postindustrial, postmodern epoch, a Brecht whose contemporaneity lay not in specific political formulations or arguments, but rather in his complex constructions of identity and agency. These ideas, combined with the effort to free Brecht from the museum-piece productions that were being put on at the Berliner Ensemble (Brecht's heirs maintained notoriously tight control over Brecht productions, lest they be "unfaithful" to his intentions) and make him relevant again, became (and remain) the dominant themes in Brecht scholarship in the 1990s.

It is in this context that in 1998, a year which

has seen renewed interest in Brecht, thanks to the numerous celebrations and retrospectives (some of which are still going on), another major Brecht book appeared, Fredric Jameson's *Brecht and Method*. Jameson opens his book with the question of relevance, asking what it is about Brecht that could be useful, "and that not only for some uncertain or merely possible future, but right now, in a post-Cold-War market-rhetorical situation even more anti-Communist than the good old days." As a book which seeks to encompass all of Brecht's work, *Brecht and Method* could not be farther away from Fuegi's effort. For while Jameson acknowledges the inevitable pleasure we get from personal anecdotes, particularly ones that reflect negatively on Brecht, his book eschews all political and personal debates to focus on Brecht's work, more specifically what he sees as the theoretical basis for all of Brecht's work, a multilayered concept he calls Brecht's method.

While Jameson traces a number of concepts that define Brecht's method—dissonance, distance, multiplicity—he argues that these are all given meaning through contradiction, or rather, through the construction of contradictions via Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* [estrangement effect], "in which items are rearranged with deliberation in order to bring their vectors into hostile alignment and to help them act out their own unique movements in such a way that the dialectic appears to be demonstrating itself, and offering a veritable allegory of all change" (83). It is through these contradictions that Brechtian theater can present works that stimulate the audience into thinking, and thereby learning. Yet that which they learn—Brecht's "doctrine" as Jameson puts it—is not some sort of synthesis of political messages or critiques derived from individual works, but rather the method itself, the process of estrangement and contradiction. Brecht's works therefore show the audience not what to think, but how to think—how to draw their own conclusions from each play. Jameson links to this a term he borrows from André Jolles: *causus* (case), "the arguing back and forth, the attempt to specify, particularly thorny legal issues and matters of judgment." (120) In Brecht's work, rather than settling the *causus* and rendering judgment (leaving us with a simple empirical narrative), Brecht suspends judgement, and, through a presentation that challenges the very validity of norms as such, turns the *causus* into a judgment about judgment.

In his analysis of Brecht's works, Jameson foregoes the sort of chronological representation of Brecht in his various "stages" (the early Brecht, the political Brecht, the mature Brecht) that characterizes most analyses of his work, and instead asks that we recognize various layers of history, overlapping in time, not space, which ultimately constitute who we understand as "Brecht." In doing so, he seeks to avoid the inevitable teleologies through which Brecht's development are usually explained: the East German canonization of Brecht as the most complete form of socialist realism, or Brecht as having grown out of his Marxism to write the more "mature" plays such as *Galileo* or *Mother Courage*, or even Brecht as the once-radical author who is now firmly institutionalized and hopelessly outdated.

A nasty side-effect of this non-linear discussion of Brecht's method is the resulting non-linear character of the book. Depending on one's opinion, Jameson is either "the most muscular of writers," as a blurb by Geoffrey Galt Harpham on the back cover reads, or, as Bob Hullot-Kentor put it in an infamous review of Jameson's *Late Marxism*, "the tattooed man" of modern critical theory. Both are probably correct: Jameson certainly moves easily and rapidly between theorists; unfortunately if the reader does not, she is left wondering how Jameson moved from Descartes to Taylor and Ford, Lenin and Gramsci, Weber and Bergson, Adorno, and finally Lukács. While the mere invocation of an author or a work is enough for Jameson to make the connection, sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle, the reader is often left three options: faking it, spending a decade or two catching up on her

reading or sheepishly admitting she doesn't know what the heck Jameson is talking about.

The real question, however, is what are we to make of Jameson's method with respect to Brecht? His non-linear discussion of Brecht is sometimes confusing, but ultimately consistent, and true to his model of Brecht's method. Through his discussions of Brecht in relation to so many modern and postmodern theorist, writers, and poetical figures, Jameson firmly establishes his thesis that this idea "Brecht"—far from having outlived its relevance—permeates much of contemporary thought:

At this point, however, it seems most appropriate to invert the issue by asking not what Brecht's posterity ought to be, but what it has in fact been, and to excavate his now subterranean influence on contemporary thought, an influence which seems to have been forgotten, but is surely the best testimony to his contemporaneity. In other words, the framing of artificial arguments and reasons why Brecht would be good for us today and why we should go back to him in current circumstances seems hypothetical in contrast to the concrete demonstration that we have in fact 'gone back to him' and that his thought is present everywhere today without bearing his name and without our being aware of it. (171)

Jameson's characterization of Brecht's legacy recalls the way in which the German sociologist Georg Simmel theorized what form his own intellectual legacy would take: "I know that I will die without intellectual [*geistigen*] heirs (and that is as it should be). My legacy will be like cash which is distributed to many heirs, each transforming his portion into a profit that conforms to his nature: this profit will no longer reveal its derivation from my legacy." This holds true for all great thinkers and artists: the mark they leave on the world, on the realm of thought and art, goes beyond their body of works—it resonates in the works of those who follow them. This holds especially true for Brecht: the break with identification associated with his name has become fairly ubiquitous in film, theater, even, somewhat ironically, in television commercials and advertising campaigns. If one is trying to assess Brecht's relevance, what better place to start than the artworks and cultural objects which define our era?

Jameson is aware of the particular historical and political contexts in which Brecht's works were written. And he is aware of the specific themes that characterized Brecht's work in its various stages. But he is also aware that the way to assure Brecht's legacy, to continue to see him as relevant, is not to preserve him "as he was"—whether it be Brecht the communist, Brecht the anti-fascist, or Brecht the writer of the later, more widely-recognized plays. As Heiner Müller famously put it, "To use Brecht without criticizing him is betrayal." And it would be a betrayal—a not particularly useful one at that—to imagine that what Brecht means for us today can be found in a single work or period, or hidden away in some previously unexamined work. For while different aspects of Brecht's work may seem more or less relevant as time goes by and historical circumstances change, what truly defines Brecht is not a specific critique, but rather the notion of critique itself, the constant questioning and re-presentation of norms. Brecht himself was not afraid to pillage Schiller's *Maiden of Orleans* to write *St. Joan of the Stockyards*, remake Lenz's *The Tutor* or Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, turn John Gay's *Beggars Opera* into *The Threepenny Opera* or the Japanese Noh play *Taniko* into *He Who Says Yes* and *He Who Says No*—literary heritage was there to be ripped apart, estranged, examined and critiqued. And, were Brecht somehow writing today and confronted with this omnipresent idea of "Brecht", he would not hesitate to treat him the same way.

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Working Under a Cloud

Harvey Fireside

In January 1957, I returned to Harvard from my two years in Berlin as an Army Intelligence operative. I had received a Master's degree in Soviet area studies but was now drawn to the graduate program in clinical psychology. I have forgotten what motivated me to make such a disciplinary leap. In hindsight, it may have been a combination of factors. No doubt my interest in politics had cooled after being on the front lines of the cold war and getting embroiled in the reflexive game of international shadow boxing.

Then, like many other budding students of the mind, I wanted to learn how to exorcise the demons that pursued me in my nightmares. It took no great degree of insight to guess that the dark spirits sprang from my childhood in Vienna, especially after the Nazi takeover in March 1938. Perhaps I hoped that if I could coax other neurotics out of their self-induced labyrinths, I might find surcease from my own bitter memories.

In any case, it took only about a month or so before I was disabused of this dream of finding a second-hand cure for my own problems from the introductory grad courses in psychology. There was little inspiration provided by instructors rereading their dog-eared lecture notes to a somnolent classroom. The textbooks were not written in English, rather in a murky set of abstractions. I joined a so-called study group, where we took turns trying to distill some sense from chapters on theories of behaviorism and conditioning. We distributed blue-dittoed summaries to each other, as if we were law students parsing a complex case in maritime law. But, truth to tell, we were still at sea, awash in an ocean of jargon.

None of my instruction that term seems to have made a lasting imprint on my psyche. I escaped the cycle of alternating boredom and academic stress only through attending an occasional campus recital. There were also sporadic moments of inspiration from a job to which I was referred by the Employment Office at Weld Hall. This involved doing some German typing for Paul Tillich, a noted theologian who had joined the Divinity School faculty in 1955. In that time he had become one of the stellar lecturers at Harvard, linking his unique brand of Protestant existentialism to the worlds of politics and psychiatry.

Tillich was a very intense man in his seventies, with finely chiseled features and a shock of white hair. I had heard about his standing up to the Hitler regime as a professor at Frankfurt University when all around him were mechanically saluting the new barbarism. His defiance cost him his tenured position and forced him to flee abroad in 1933. Tillich appeared to be on intimate terms with God. My modest mission was to type stencils for his *Rundbriefe* (circular letters), which regaled scores of his friends with his travels and social engagements. These included encounters with a gallery of notables, such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Erich Fromm, Ruth Benedict and leaders of

diverse socialist groups. My typewriter had keys for "umlaut" vowels, but Tillich's convoluted style was difficult to follow. It was always a great relief to have the reverend doctor nod his approval after he had proofread my copy and rewarded me with a beatific smile.

By springtime I was looking for a sign from fate to direct me to a more challenging future than three years as a Cand. Phil. Psych. Could my omen be the notice tacked up on the wall of the Harvard placement office? It announced a recruiting visit by the Atomic Energy Commission. I signed up for an interview.

The AEC man was Jesse, a middle-aged southerner who promised me a productive career if I enrolled in something called "junior management training." I had read about "Atoms for Peace," a program that President Eisenhower had unveiled at the United Nations in December 1953. "Sure," Jesse said, "you sound like a great prospect for that area." How were my chances of working at the International Atomic Energy Agency, which had been established at Geneva the previous year? "Your language skills should be a great plus," Jesse said. I tried to pin him down on exactly what I would be doing. "We can't be certain of that now," Jesse confided in a conspiratorial whisper. "But once you've finished your training and have a clearance, there'll be all kinds of things we can't talk about now."

In hindsight, I must have heard what I wanted to hear. No doubt Jesse supplied ambiguous answers and hid behind all those atomic secrets. I saw myself, in short order, as a kind of roving nuclear ambassador circling the globe on high-level missions. In a purposeful flurry of activity, I withdrew from grad school, turned in my financial aid, and headed for Washington.

The AEC was located on H Street, in so-called temporary buildings, which had been erected during World War I. An eager crew of us trainees sat through endless briefings punctuated by breaks for coffee and greasy donuts. We were all impatient to engage our duties and do right by President Eisenhower, whose avuncular portrait smiled down at us from the wall.

I had filled out voluminous questionnaires. With my Army Intelligence status, it wasn't much longer before the FBI combed through my most recent past. Soon I possessed a Q clearance, which wasn't even routinely issued to Congressmen and White House staff.

I was impatient to get my assignment, but the mills of bureaucracy ground slowly. There were more bewildering training sessions, as we learned the rudiments of a variety of nuclear reactors to provide the energy of the future. Nothing was said about atomic bombs. But I got an inkling of the gargantuan effort that had gone into this top-secret wartime venture when we trainees were taken on a field trip to Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

An immense factory stretched across the verdant landscape. Miles of pipes formed a network for the "gaseous diffusion" of uranium. The lighter isotope, U-235, squeezed through membranes slightly faster than the

heavier U-236. Each week, a few precious grams of bomb-grade material could be harvested.

As the six weeks of training crept by, my life revolved entirely around the drab suite of AEC offices. With only a few dollars to my name, I had rented a furnished room on 18th Street. A midget refrigerator and hot plate sufficed for breakfast, but there was no space to entertain friends, when and if I acquired any. Office life was strictly segregated by civil service rank. The higher-ups flaunted their superior status by a government-issue umbrella stand or, in ascending order, a padded chair, personalized *objets d'art*, or a rug on the floor around their desk. Trainees had no permanent space, but we could look forward to staking out a cubicle of our own.

Lunches and dinners I generally had at the building cafeteria. For a change of pace, the nearby Pan American Union offered spicy tacos and rellenos. As the Washington weather turned steamy, I dreaded leaving the airconditioned offices for my hotbox of a room. I had no life outside the AEC. A few trainees escaped from work to their family hideaways in Alexandria or Chevy Chase. Single ones like me dragged out their work until evening. Then we braved the soupy air for a few blocks to a neonlit bar. The lurid reflections of our faces made us seem like automatons mouthing vacuous chatter. We weren't supposed to discuss the classified chores that occupied most of our waking hours. After the fourth gin and tonic, I was ready to amble home, stopping halfway at a Hot Shoppe for a cheap steatable dinner.

On our last day of training we were posted to regular positions. My illusions were shattered. There were no "Atoms for Peace" in my future. Indeed, this much-heralded program was limited to a skeleton staff. Its prime purpose seemed to be to distract the public from the overriding military mission of the AEC. I was going to the Secretariat, which had a sinister Stalinist ring to it. Once more it appeared that my shorthand skill had tipped my career scales.

I was greeted by my new boss, J.B. McCool, a bluff giant of a man, with a hearty handshake. McCool told me that I would join the Meetings Branch, which he said was full of international-relations types like me. In effect, I would become one of the glorified supersecretaries who took minutes at the weekly meetings of the five AEC commissioners. My cohort soon explained to me why we were needed. It seemed that the chairman, a deskbound admiral named Lewis Strauss (pronounced straws) ran the agency with an iron hand. One of his most outspoken critics had been Thomas E. Murray, a crusty New York Democrat who had been ousted in March 1957.

But before he yielded his seat to a more pliable commissioner, Murray scored some procedural points. He lambasted Strauss for not sharing White House information from his meetings with the National Security Council. What's more, sessions of the AEC had turned into impromptu affairs, in which matters of great moment had been decided without an agenda or a hint of parliamentary procedure.

From then on, to placate congressional critics, it was decreed that AEC meetings would be conducted strictly by Roberts Rules of Order.

Still, I witnessed jumbled proceedings when I sat in as an understudy at the next session of the five commissioners. Admiral Strauss had invited someone named General Starbird, a ramrod figure with four rows of ribbons on his chest, to present the case for augmenting the stockpile of H-bombs. Were there any questions? One of the other men around the table raised a cautionary quibble. Willard Libby, a chemist, responded to a nod from Strauss by saying there was nothing to worry about. The commissioners moved to the next item on the agenda.

How was this exchange going to appear in the official minutes? Jack, my mentor, showed me his draft. "Following a report by the chairman of the Military Applications branch, Commissioner Libby moved that the recommendations be adopted. After being discussed, a motion to that effect was seconded by Commissioner Vance and passed unanimously." In essence, that was the text formally adopted the following week. It bore little resemblance to what I had witnessed, but it certainly lent a historical cachet to a dramatic leap in the nuclear arms race.


Admiral Strauss was a formidable figure—tall and generally unsmiling as he surveyed the world through steelrimmed glasses. I soon became aware of his key role in depriving J. Robert Oppenheimer, the brilliant physicist who had headed the Manhattan Project during World War II, of a security clearance in May 1954. During off times, I was able to browse through three brimming file drawers in the Secretariat labeled Gray Board. That was the special panel headed by Gordon Gray that had heard endless testimony about Oppenheimer's life and politics. From the documents, I surmised that Strauss had thought Oppenheimer a godless fool, since he had been educated at the Fieldston School of the Ethical Cultural Society in New York. That amounted to sufficient proof of his moral blindness.

As I dipped into the files in the summer of 1957, I failed to understand why the AEC couldn't have simply canceled Oppenheimer's contract as a consultant. Why had it been necessary for Strauss to publicly humiliate him and cut him off totally from government work? The object lesson must have been to warn other potential critics to march in step, or else.

I was just an overeducated clerk at the meetings of the five commissioners. I had only an ant's-eye view of reality. But even without the big picture, I was growing palpably uncomfortable. The AEC was building and testing ever more powerful bombs. It claimed that it was merely matching the atomic weapons buildup of the Soviet Union. Yet through CIA "sniffer planes" flying over Russia at stratospheric heights, the AEC knew the laggard pace of the Kremlin. Debris from Soviet atmospheric tests yielded telltale clues to the composition of the primitive devices on the ground.

I had been a child witness of one holocaust,

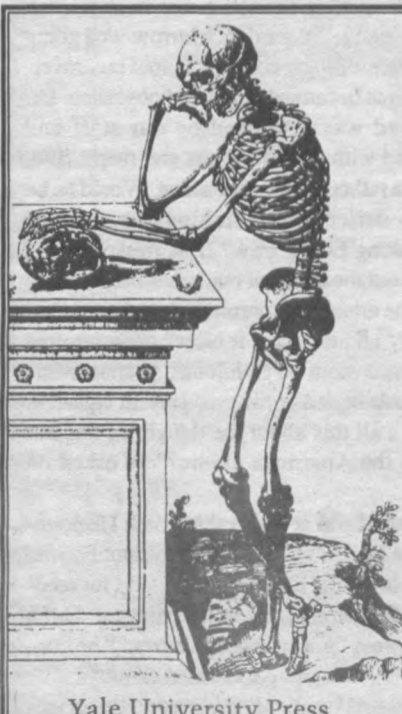
continued on page 10



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Working Under a Cloud

continued from page 9

which cost the lives of six million innocents in years of agony. Now I was a helpless observer of an arms race that could lead to millions of casualties in a few minutes. It didn't seem rational for me to walk out of the AEC after only five months, yet I was driven to escape under some pretext. My chance for reprieve came in the form of an announcement that the AEC would shortly move its offices to Germantown, Maryland.

"I'm afraid there's no easy way for me to get there," I told McCool. "I have no car."

He regarded me quizzically. "You aren't really happy here in Washington, are you? You'd rather be back in New York?" I nodded. "You do have genuine writing talent," he said. "Let's see what I can do for you."

I should never have settled for this halfruth. Yes, my life in Washington was depressing. But the real source of my frustration was the AEC and its militarist ethos. I couldn't bring myself to blurt this out. Was it just cowardice, the product of a deference to my elders learned from childhood? At the time, I rationalized that fate must have something new in store for me—perhaps a reflex inherited from my father's fatalism, or a tribal attitude of Jews who see the Book of Life closing anew each Yom Kippur, with a certain number of us doomed to violent deaths in the subsequent year. We must watch, with Spinoza, while the paper boat of our fortunes sails down the gutters headed for the sewers.

Until my transfer came through, I continued taking minutes at commission meetings. Clearly, weapons were the prime topic, yet there were also other issues. Businessmen and bankers showed up to get rich on reactors. They came from electric utilities and old boilermaking companies, like Combustion Engineering, of Windsor, Connecticut. Their trade organization was the Atomic Industrial Forum. The commissioners seemed to approve virtually every design for nuclear reactors that was submitted to them. Instead of standardizing the safest and most efficient plant, Strauss welcomed them all—the more the merrier.

In July 1957, I received my new assignment. I was going to be assistant director of information for the AEC in New York. I could enjoy concerts and the theater again. It felt good to escape Washington's cultural wasteland. But it soon turned out to be my transfer from the moral frying pan into the fires of hell.

New York City was the headquarters of something called Project Sunshine. This was the euphemistic title for the program that monitored fallout from nuclear tests around the world. The information office was supposed to reassure the media and the public that there was nothing to be afraid of.

I was quickly briefed on the party line: Fusion weapons were no more dangerous than the old fission ones. Hadn't Chairman Strauss dismissed the complaints of the 23 crew members of the Japanese fishing boat, Fukur Yu Maru, who seemed to be suffering from radioactive poisoning after sailing 85 miles east of Bikini, site of the March 1954 hydrogen bomb test? The lesions on the fishermen's skin, said Strauss, were due to "chemical activity of the converted material in the coral rather than [to] radioactivity."

When one of the fishermen died in September, Strauss explained that the real cause was "hepatitis from antiquated medical techniques." In a later announcement, he claimed that all tests up to that time had increased the average person's dose of radiation "about as much as the exposure received from one chest X-ray." Some of our information handouts compared the fallout danger to humans to that of the radium dial on a wristwatch.

Pope Pius XII warned in 1955 that radiation threatened to bring about "the horrors of monstrous offspring." AEC press releases asked disingenuously, "Who can tell whether the next mutation will result in a defective or in another Einstein?" Meanwhile, school children were being taught to scrunch under their desks in case of nuclear attack. Civil defense exercises had New Yorkers ducking on the siren's signal into cellars and subway entrances. In mid-

1956 Strauss said that the Redwing test series in the Pacific had emitted reduced fallout. Indeed, it "has produced much of importance not only from a military point of view but from a humanitarian aspect."

These were not merely exercises in denial. I came to learn later that they were part of a disinformation campaign approved by kindly President Eisenhower. It was designed to undercut the protests of antinuclear activists. Strauss had pontificated in a 1954 press release that, "The degree of risk" from nuclear explosions "must be balanced against the great importance of the test program to the security of the nation and of the free world." How was Strauss weighting the impact of deadly isotopes on growing children?

The byproducts of tests in the South Pacific included strontium-90 that found its way onto the grass eaten by cows. Next in the food chain, it turned up in the milk drunk by children whose bones became cancerous, while radioactive iodine attacked their thyroid glands. My own science education had been too sketchy to sniff out all the lies in the AEC "information materials." But I choked on some of the answers I was supposed to parrot, though none of my coworkers seemed particularly distressed.

Grace, the director of information, was baffled by my ethical dilemmas. She sat me down for a motherly lecture. My problems with authority, she suggested gently, cried out for a good psychiatrist. I began to suspect I was really going bonkers. The rotund Dr. Kalbfuss, whom she recommended, wanted to know why I couldn't seem to get along with my parents. Political qualms didn't enter his Freudian equations. I squirmed on his couch. Through my half-closed eyelids I visualized a blinding mushroom cloud and the permanent shadows left on buildings in Hiroshima by people who had been vaporized.

The tranquilizers the doctor prescribed had no noticeably soothing effect. My nightly ration of Scotch made my working life the next morning almost bearable. Still, there were moments of hilarity. A voice on the phone identified itself as "Mel, a butcher from Brooklyn." He had a modest request: "In all the studies of fallout, has the AEC found the one place in the world with the lowest readings?"

I checked this out with Grace. She snickered, "Oh, Mel. He's been pestering us for months. Maybe you'll figure out how to finally get rid of him." That afternoon I ran into Merrill Eisenbud, the affable engineer who directed Project Sunshine. He stopped and mused, "That's actually an interesting question. We've been studying this one spot—a depression in Patagonia—where the column of air is remarkably static. Even after the latest tests we couldn't get a perceptible radiation reading."

When Mel called again a week later, I passed on my news of this meteorological anomaly at the southern tip of South America. Mel thanked me profusely. He never called again. As far as I knew, he had packed up his family and moved to Patagonia. They might yet turn out to be the ultimate survivors of World War III.

Not long after, the office was in an uproar. The venerable Edward R. Murrow was going to produce a program on the fallout controversy that was becoming a national obsession. Dr. Eisenbud was rehearsed by our staff and equipped with colored charts and maps. Still, he was a rather stodgy bureaucrat. Would he be able to deflect the searching questions of muckraking Ed Murrow? If he misspoke and blurted out the truth, all our heads might roll.

On the appointed morning, we ushered Fred Friendly and the "See It Now" crew into the conference room on Columbus Avenue. Murrow strode in and lit his ever-present cigarette. "What's all this about the danger of nuclear tests to the American public?" he asked on camera.

Eisenbud was at his soothing best. He pointed at the map of test sites in the distant Pacific. He displayed the tiny blips that stood for readings of Geiger counters in the Midwest, half a world away. "A minor health hazard," he concluded, "Nothing to get alarmed about."

It dawned on me that Murrow, the prize-

winning reporter of "Harvest of Shame," a classic exposé of the miserable treatment of migrant farm workers, was over the hill. He had let himself be mollified by deceptive statistics and swallowed the analogy of fallout to exposure to a chest X-ray. Eisenbud had gotten the AEC off the hook. The audience watching this program could breathe easier.

Still, there were persistent voices that kept up the protests. On the morning of August 6, I was about to enter the Northeast regional office of the AEC. My way was barred by a lanky fellow, whose forehead was adorned by a shock of white hair. "Do you know what day this is?" he asked. I tried to stutter an answer. "It's the twelfth anniversary of the day we dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima," he said in a Midwest drawl, as he handed me a copy of *The Catholic Worker*.

I was dumbfounded. "What can we do about that now?" I protested. "You could join us this afternoon," he said, "when we go to the Empire State Building and hand a belated apology to the Japanese consul." I mumbled some excuse. He shook my hand and introduced himself as Ammon Hennecy. He hoped that in time we would become better acquainted.

Not long after, I learned more about this remarkable man. He had spent two years in Atlanta federal prison as a draft resister in World War I. In 1952, he had linked up with Dorothy Day, the dynamic organizer of the Catholic Worker movement. One of their regular actions was to assemble in City Hall park during Civil Defense drills. They had declared that it would be ridiculous to take cover during a nuclear attack, so they refused to "play at war." Their truth-telling was like that of the child in the story who insists on informing the deluded emperor that he is naked.

I saw Ammon again ten days later on the AEC's doorstep. He looked more gaunt than last time, but was no less voluble. I asked if he was all right. "Oh, I'm OK," he said. "It's my annual penance, giving up solid food." It turned out that he had been fasting annually on Hiroshima Day, adding one more day for each year since 1945. "I am getting a bit thirsty," he admitted. I went up to the office and brought down a big cup of tea with extra sugar. After he had downed it, Ammon unfurled a hand-lettered sign: "The Individual Conscience Versus the Atom Bomb? Yes. There is no Other Way."

Ammon's certainty contrasted with my own vacillation. He kept speaking the truth, even if it exposed him to periodic arrests and to heckling, mostly from rightwing Catholics. He recounted with a chuckle, "One of them asked me yesterday at the Federal building, 'Why don't you picket the Russian embassy, too?' I told him, 'Because they're not asking me to pay taxes for their bomb.'"

While he was picketing our office, Ammon handed out flyers explaining, "I am fasting not to coerce or embarrass the Atomic Energy Commission, but in penance for our sinfulness in bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki and for our continued testing of hydrogen and atomic weapons in our mad race for a supremacy that

means only death. I am fasting to awaken the consciences of those who are part of the war machine, those who are half-hearted pacifists, and those Christians who see no contradiction in following Christ and Caesar."

I was no Christian, but Ammon's words rocked me to the core. Grace shook her head over the time I was spending away from my desk, bringing cups of tea to Ammon and furtively reading his columns in *The Catholic Worker*. Dr. Kalbfuss tapped his pencil impatiently during my next session. "Why are you avoiding talking about your real problems?" he wanted to know. But for me the political had become the personal.

One night I wasn't able to sleep. Even a double dose of tranquilizers wasn't working. Except for Ammon, there was no one with whom I could share my spiritual agony. At 2 a.m., I didn't know how I got to Broadway and 70th Street, twenty blocks from my rooms. I had no idea why the fire alarm was blasting away. When a cop found me there and asked if I had turned in a false alarm, I wasn't able to answer. Meekly, I let him load me into a police car that took me to Bellevue Hospital. That night, I suppose, I was trying to do my penance.

When my case came up in court, a legal-aid lawyer explained that I had been stressed by my work for the AEC and was seeing a psychiatrist. The judge looked me over. She dismissed the case but made me promise to keep my appointments with Dr. Kalbfuss. The good doctor saw me twice a week for several years. At last he persuaded me that, despite my moral crisis, I had not been stricken with a psychosis. I just needed more realistic goals in life.

I managed to send off a letter formally resigning from the AEC. It must have sounded angrier than I realized, because for the next six years I would get an annual call from the personnel office in Germantown. They said that I was the most disgruntled person who had taken their management training program. They assured me they offered recruits more meaningful assignments now, even giving them leaves to obtain advanced degrees. Wouldn't I retract my letter?

I countered that the AEC had sold me a bill of goods. "Not even a fellowship to get my PhD would have helped," I said. "Please let my letter stand. It still expresses how I feel." They muttered something conciliatory, but the following year they would make me go through the same routine.

Four decades have passed. Concerned scientists have been resetting the hands of their Doomsday clock, now closer to noon, now a few minutes back. Most of us keep our eyes to the ground as we follow our narrow paths, but a few of us tread carefully, aware that the clock is still ticking. At times its mechanical gears threaten to drown out other sounds, even the pulse of life itself.

This is excerpted from the final chapter of Harvey Fireside's memoir, Interesting Times: Tales of a Viennese Boyhood. Two other excerpts have appeared in The Bookpress.

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Dalí

continued from page 3

testimony, Gala meant everything to him. She was both his twin soul and guiding star. He proudly claimed that Gala was as perverse as he was. As an example, he told me how once, when she was given a pet monkey, she liked it so much she had it cooked and ate it because she wanted it to be a part of her forever.

In the end, this is a morality tale about someone graced with unusual gifts who rises to power, abuses those gifts, and is duly punished. In the last chapters we come to truly pity the man who had made such a mess of his life. He was abandoned in all but name by Gala, who increasingly spent her time in the castle he bought her in 1969, entertaining a string of pretty young lovers (even well into her eighties), and running through such large amounts of money on gambling and gifts for her boy-toys as to cause serious concern. Before she died in 1982 at the age of 88, she may have actually tried to poison Dalí and he, it seems, came to hate her. He was terrified of the gun-toting thug who ran his personal affairs. He developed a tremor in his right arm and could no longer paint or write, then a speech impediment. Associates continued to rake in large sums of money of which Dalí saw little. Some few faithful friends who might have comforted him were kept away from him. Only his servant, Arturo, extended him any tenderness. Feeble, paranoid, sick, and grotesquely ugly, Salvador Dalí died a lonely death, leaving behind a messy legacy, both artistically and in fact.

It's a sad, sad story, ably and honestly told.

Gunilla Feigenbaum is an artist and writer who lives in Manhattan.

Heaney

continued from page 7

"stepping stone" and "second thoughts" format, to be part of a sustained and integrated development.

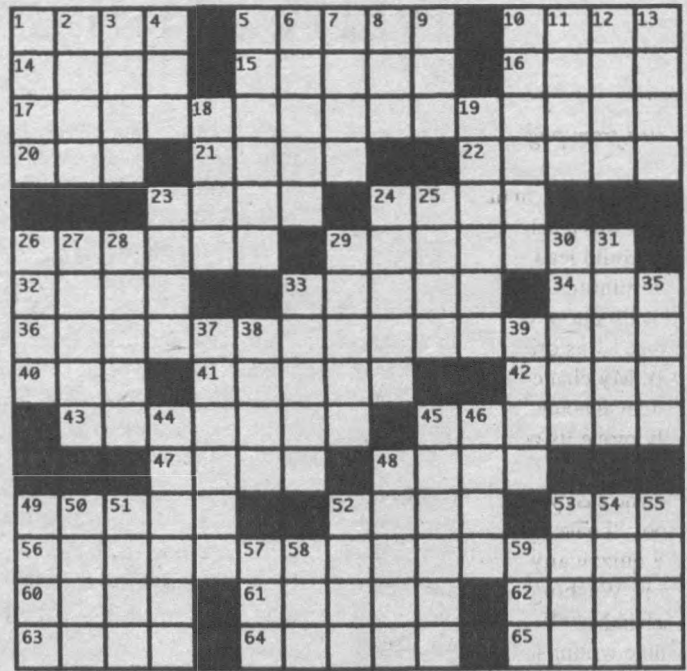
There is, however, a price to pay for this format, albeit a small one. Vendler's willingness to leap forward and back across the volumes at times all but obliterates the crafted integrity of individual books. With *North*, for example, Vendler's analysis of the archeological poems of Part I is surely very much to the point. But what about the autobiographical poems of the "Singing School" sequence in Part II, a kind of Heaneyesque *Life Studies* which gives the reader an inside-out perspective on the violence of this culture counterbalancing the outside-in view of the anonymous Bog Poems? In her strategy to establish a coherent overview of the development of Heaney's poetic voice, Vendler has to cut and paste individual poems and sections of volumes to form the larger, intellectually appealing schemata she presents.

More broadly, Vendler's rhetorical range, persuasiveness, and sense of closure are such that one might be left with the sense that she has in fact completed her description of Heaney's poetic transformation. Her final chapter on *The Spirit Level* is entitled "An Afterwards," as if she were speaking not of an almost-posthumous persona, but of the already-posthumous career of a completed poetic trajectory (From this perspective, *Opened Ground* looms ominously as a site of potential interment). Of course, given Heaney's eschatological bent in recent years, Vendler is not entirely to blame. If Heaney is talking about a "last self" in interviews and "last things" in recent poems (I'm thinking of the wonderful line in "Mint," as Heaney casts back to childhood images of mint in his backyard, "My last things will be first things slipping from me"), Vendler might be forgiven for thinking Heaney already translated. Fortunately, the poet will turn 60 (not 90) this April, and his readers, aided by this superb introduction to his poetry, have both reason and incentive to look forward to the poems to come. In gratitude and encouragement, then, I repeat the rouse Heaney raised to David Hammond 20 years ago when he wished to affirm the artistic enterprise:

*Sing it again, man.
We still believe what we hear.*

Kevin Murphy teaches English at Ithaca College.

Crossword by Adam Perl



Across

1. Come together
5. Demi ____
10. Que ____?
14. Long
15. "My name is ____ Lev"
16. More than a while
17. Part of a Greek salad
20. Future link?
21. Dolly & dolly
22. Cowboy's need
23. Gullet
24. Certain cycle
26. Atoll feature
29. Citroen's "Deux ____"
32. Composer Khachaturian
33. Lamb Chop's creator
34. Bottom line
36. Greek brew
40. Hollywood union
41. Cream
42. Clark's colleague
43. Parties
45. Spheres
47. Stand offerings
48. Weekend exclamation
49. WASP
52. Not now!
53. Hwy group
56. Greek dessert
60. Zwei doubled
61. Change
62. ERA, e.g.
63. Green Gable girl
64. Out to lunch
65. Comfort

Down

1. Kind of bar
2. Repeat
3. Tell's partner
4. Dress feature
5. Controversial Island
6. As good ____
7. "____ Gone" Hall & Oates hit
8. French seasoning
9. Afore
10. Finish
11. Cantina request
12. Group
13. On the main
18. Dynamic beginning
19. What many pursue
23. Search
24. ____ up!
25. Accused, for short
26. Stable boys
27. Deafening
28. Measure
29. One on one's
30. Blues
31. TV Heroine????
33. "Blue ____"
35. With 46 down. a child's game
37. Deceive, perhaps
38. First name in modelling
39. G or F
44. To spare
45. It may be hidden
46. See 35 down
48. "...with ____ eyes"
49. Part of TAE
50. Helmut's no
51. Feds
52. ____ bien
53. Salty cheese
54. Balancing pros?
55. Give a ticket
57. Start of a confession
58. Paramedic
59. Exploit

Answers to last month's Crossword:



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Milton's Paradise Regained

David N. DeVries

translatio imperii:

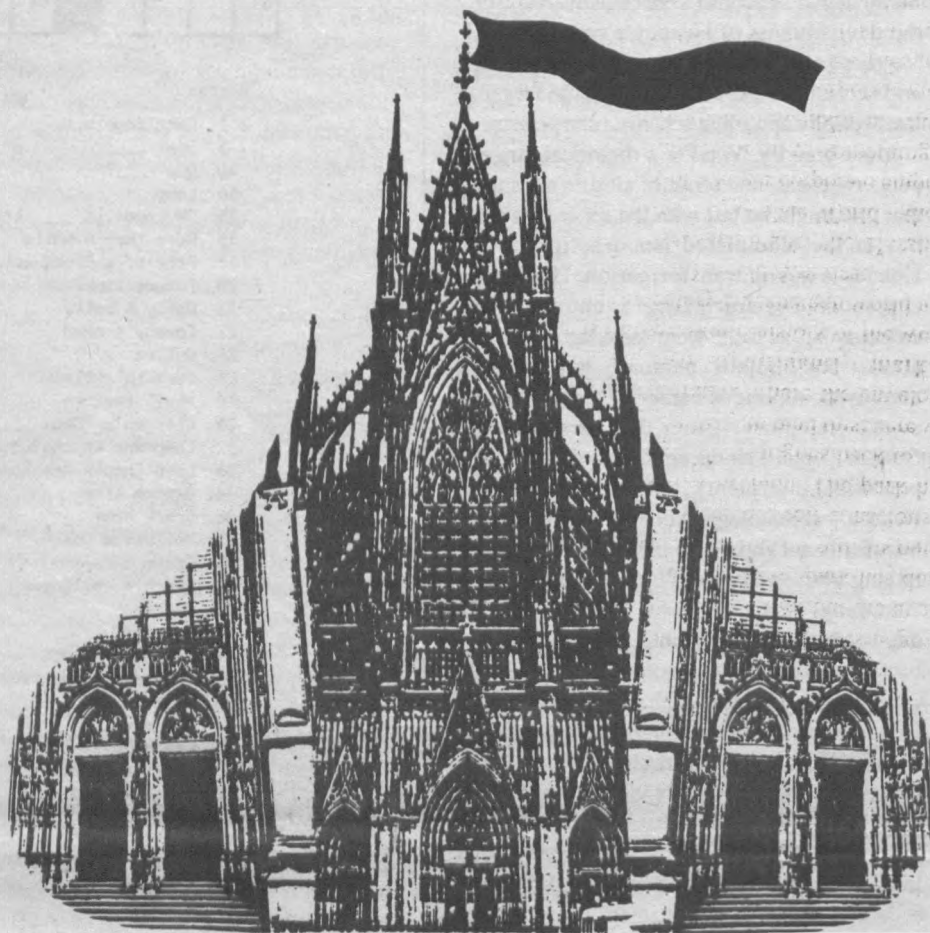
Hershey Park, Pennsylvania.
July 5-8, 1998.

How to capture the peculiarity, the essential peculiarity of this place? We have traveled here from Ithaca, New York—all four of us: Claire, me and our two sons, Philip, aged 6 and 3/4, and Lucas, aged 2 and spare change. The first thing that strikes me as we enter the town is that the welcoming sign has a picture of three candy bars sprouting legs, arms and heads with smiling mouths, eyes and ears. The next thing that strikes me is that the place is so carefully sign-marked that the traveler is never in doubt about exactly where the various 'attractions' are located. And then we find our motel, a Best Western on the western edge of the town, and I'm struck by the confluence of corporate apparatus. The Best Western's logo, in this particular western outpost of Hershey, merges with logos of Hershey's various corporate selves—Mister Goodbar, Crunch, and other chocolate products. The motel is festooned with photos, maps, legends, cartoons—all telling the story of this miracle of sweetness rising from the sweat of one man's genius, or so goes the myth the motel tells. Still, persnickety English teacher that I am, I notice that the motel's main narrative in its hagiography of Milton Hershey is marred by two significant writing errors: a sentence fragment and a misspelling. The misspelling is especially touching. It comes in the last sentence, when the writer waxes philosophical as he or she sighs that, though the saint is dead, his "philantropic" work continues. Here is an inadvertent neologism that perhaps expresses the writer's intention: a trope of love, or a lover of trope. And that is a way to consider Milton Hershey's work: he was a man who troped himself and all that surrounded him into his vision of perfection. First, after successive attempts and failures at other business ventures, he creates the perfect chocolate. Then he creates the perfect factory to produce the perfect chocolate. Then he hires the perfect workers to labor in the perfect factory to produce the perfect chocolate. Then he creates the perfect town to house the perfect workers who labor in the perfect factory to produce the perfect chocolate. In other words, Milton Hershey troped a swathe of Pennsylvania farmland into perfection, the corporate American heaven on earth.

Hershey is a town that is a metaphor. A turn of the screw and Milton Hershey could have been Wallace Stevens chasing the perfect fiction. Or, a different turn, and Milton Hershey could have been John Humphrey Noyes chasing socio-religious perfection. Just another late-nineteenth/early-twentieth-century man taking all at his disposal and working it into his vision. And so we have Hershey, Pennsylvania, a town named for the man who built the town. And now the neatly squared streets, the trim lawns and unostentatious tract houses, the carefully tended hedges and bushes and flower plots, the plane trees and maples all grown to uniform height, all are lit by streetlights in the shapes of the drops of chocolate called Hershey's Kisses: main street bedecked by the kisses of the creator, kissed by its God at regular intervals bringing light into the darkness.

And then we make it to the amusement park, Hershey Park. The park has had a recent renovation: a new entrance, new rides and a whole new section. Orderly parking lots staffed by impossibly cheery attendants (as Hershey's Website puts it, "Everyone here wears a smile—including the employees—so you'll know you've left Philadelphia far behind as you walk through the park"). No one need walk from the parking lot as numerous trams scurry back and forth and not a moment is left to silence as each tram has two hosts aboard: a driver and a guide with a microphone whose voice

booms out of speakers the length of the tram, and the guide endlessly chatters tidbits of intriguing information about all that surrounds us: Chocolate World ("It's a Hershey's Chocolate, Hershey's Chocolate, Hershey's Chocolate World"), the Hershey Arena, and in the distance, the Hershey Chocolate Factory—the "largest chocolate factory in the world!" We are deposited at "Tram Circle" where the cheery voice of the guide advises us to step lively behind the yellow line. The red-brick road winds down a slope set with blooming flowers and full bushes (and I sense that these plants defy the local climate and bloom constantly). But I am not prepared for what the red-brick road leads us to: a village square laid out



Adam Berenstein

with English Tudor brick faced shops and restaurants and there in the far end of the square is a barbed and turreted wall that marks the entrance to the park. Suddenly we are in late medieval or early modern England (though the park calls this Germanesque, the architecture is closer to English than German). And Hershey's cheery corporate song ("It's a Hershey's Chocolate, Hershey's Chocolate, Hershey's Chocolate World") has given way to Bach's Brandenburg Concerto # 2. Through the porticulated gates, within the walls, inside the castle (after parting with the better part of fifty dollars), the illusion of 1500 continues with more Tudor shops and another square and the slightly anachronistic Bach continuing. Indeed, Hershey seems to delight in anachronism. The first ride we reach is a vintage 1909 carousel. And off to its left is a vintage 1950s whirlymigating that has pretensions of spunk and the Eisenhower-era dream of space. And from here we are in what I suppose is a perfect post-modern hodge-podge. Each ride betrays its era of construction. The Comet, the earliest of the park's roller coasters, is consistent with the mid-century space theme. The newest roller coaster is the Bear—one of those terrifyingly fast contraptions wherein the victims are suspended as the rail twists and turns throwing them upside down and around in what seems to me a perversely masochistic way. All sleek, swooshing, metallic efficiency from which the only sounds to escape are the screams and squeals of the dangling feet whipping through the air.

My own philosophical wax begins to bubble at the far end of the park. Two rides in particular, another roller coaster called the Wild Cat and a Ferris Wheel, dominate. The Wild Cat is wooden, and is fronted by a huge pavilion that is classic American Vic-

toriana. The Ferris Wheel seems similarly archaic after the Bear and the Super Looper Dooper—the park's fourth roller coaster and another state-of-the-contemporary-art (in this case, late 1980s early 90s) whipping and whirling upside-down ride. There is a fifth roller coaster whose name escapes me, but it is also a whipping whirling upside-down terror and is similarly contemporary. So after all this contemporary artifacts, the Wild Cat and Ferris Wheel's quaintness, stuck out in the lonesome end of the park with only sparsely landscaped grass beyond, seems particularly old-fashioned, as if nearly forgotten out on the edge. But this is an O. Henry story, this amusement park. Because, it turns out, these quaint

rides are, in fact, the newest. This edge is not the forgotten origin point but the avant garde, the cutting edge. The park has doubled back on its chronological self. Its outer skin, its newest layers, are self-consciously and premeditatedly archaic. The park has gone back to the past as it goes back to the future. Or, another way to read this: here we have a frame narrative where the envelope consists of two significantly marked moments in the cultural history of the west: the fifteenth-century Elizabethan world and *fin-de-nineteenth-siecle* America.

Of course Hershey Park, the Hershey Chocolate Factory, Chocolate World—these are all now bits of a larger corporate empire, the Hershey Food Groups, or something to that effect. The corporate *mentalité* is written all over this. Or, rather, the corporate *mentalité* is rewriting its stories as it writes new ones. So what sends this manifestation of corporate America to Tudor England and to the beginning of the American Century? And why Bach, who comes from neither England nor America? I should add that on the second day of our time at the Park Mozart was echoing through the Tudor squares, which suggests that early modern, newly Protestant Germany does, indeed, figure in the imaginative economy of the planners of this corporate paradise. What particular recess of the corporate brain is tickled by these historical destinations? What desire is expressed here? What work is being done by these temporal dislocations?

I have hesitated describing the other salient component of the landscape, the consumers like Claire and me and the boys, who opened our wallets so eagerly to the amusements offered in this fantasy-scape. In many, many ways Claire and I and the boys were anomalous among the other happy partakers. We do not smoke cigarettes. Hershey Park seems one of the last

places in the United States where people unabashedly smoke in public. We do not sport tattoos. Nor do we wear tee-shirts emblazoned with the names of stock car races or professional baseball or football or basketball teams or other vacation destinations—though I did wear a shirt with the name of the college where I work printed across the back, and Philip wore his favorite alien paraphernalia. These are all class markers, I realize. Hershey Park, by and large, does not draw people from the Upper East or West Sides of Manhattan, or Greenwich, Connecticut, or Basking Ridge, New Jersey (not that my family hales from any of those spots either—as I mentioned, we live in Ithaca, New York). And this fact, too, needs to be read in the context of the corporate designs written across the land. Neither the corporate elite themselves, nor their managerial class, aim their vacation plans toward Hershey Park. Ultimately there is precious little difference between Disney World or Hershey Park, save size and market penetration; but Disney World clearly draws the managers as well as those of their subordinates who can afford it. And that—affordability—is perhaps the key. In leisure consumption as well as other sorts of consumption, conspicuousness is still the key.

Which is not to say that the managers ignore Hershey Park. Hershey—and the name is now a metonymy for what I cannot say—Hershey knows what makes it comfortable and what will make its customers comfortable. Little of the religiosity that was apparently so important to Milton Hershey is in evidence, though one needn't scratch very hard to find it. One of the Tudor-fronted shops displayed behind its 'antiqued' windows teeshirts of the Beatles (bespeaking, I suppose, my age group), skate-boarding figures and a teeshirt with a series of letters: WWJD. I had no idea what WWJD meant until, back at the Best Western, a man emerged from a Ford Malibu that had the fish emblem with the Greek letters for Christ on its bumper. He was wearing a teeshirt that had "Confused? Ask, WWJD" on its front and "What Would Jesus Do" on its back. The religiosity is in many ways assumed. Western Protestant Christianity is simply another sinew in this body.

And that, perhaps, is a key to the answer for the questions I asked above. The beginning of the British Empire (e.g., English imperialism stirring at the end of the 16th century: the Ulster Plantation) and of the German Protestant Reformation (contemporary and, of course, related events) and the beginning of the American Empire (e.g., American imperialism stirring at the end of the 19th century: the Spanish-American war and the occupation of the Philippines) are the linked origin points of two of the great movements of Western Christendom. Those are the moments memorialized by the frame of the narrative that is Hershey Park. In imitation of the version of the progress of history favored by the corporate elite—the version that sees the zenith of human possibility as being inaugurated by the Protestant Reformation and brought to fruition by the Protestant Work Ethic writ large on the landscape of North America—we enter Hershey's glorified paean to that history through the European Protestant dispensation and we culminate in the nineteenth-century American. And in between we bask in the glory of Western technology: faster and more compelling ways to stir our sluggish blood and bones. Thrills contained within the safe limits of our founders, embraced by the hopeful beginnings of the greatness that we still, in our deepest fantasies, believe ourselves to be. And over it all the benevolent kisses of Milton Hershey—one of the icons of the heights to which the West, in its fantasy script, can ascend.

David N. DeVries lives in Ithaca and teaches at Hobart and William Smith Colleges.