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After the Book?

George Steiner

The book as we know it has been a significant phenomenon for only a relatively short span of history—about a century and a half—only in certain areas and in certain cultures. Today, the enveloping matrix of our intellectual and emotional lives is not a reader's climate. The status of the book is changing, as is the make-up of the "language-world" we inhabit. The written word has become a caption for the visual and the musical image. Our verbal inheritance is caught between the semi-literacy of the mass market and the minutia of the specialist. The written word persists, but new forms for its circulation will bring alterations of our sensibilities and modification in our habits of discovery.

It is like us to ask such questions. They are, in several ways, symptomatic of the present climate of feeling. We are ready to ask very large and inherently destructive questions. This is radicalism in a special sense. Not Hegelian-Marxist radicalism with its implicit futurity, with its almost axiomatic presumption that we go to the root of a problem in order to solve it, and because we know that destruction, uprooting is only a necessary risk before solution. No; our going to the root of things is more ambivalent. We would do so even when we are not confident that there *is* a solution. It may be, in fact, that the aspect of demolition, the apocalyptic strain greatly tempt us. We are fascinated by "last things," by the end of cultures, of ideologies, of art forms, of modes of sensibility. We are, certainly since Nietzsche and Spengler, "terminalists." Our view of history, says Lévi-Strauss in a deep pun, is not an anthropology but an "entropology."

This makes for intellectual exhilaration and a kind of bleak nobility. It is, presumably, not every species that can meditate its own ruin, not every society that can image its own decay and possible subjection to new and alien energies. But it is a negative radicalism which carries with it an element of self-fulfilment. This is a large, intricate topic. As I have tried to show elsewhere, a good deal of the barbarism of the

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politics of our century was anticipated, dreamt of, fantasized about in the art, literature, and apocalyptic theories of the previous hundred years. It makes sense—although only in a dialectical way—to ask whether a force of prevision of the order of Kafka's does not in some manner "prepare," "prepare for" the lunacies and inhumanities which it intimates. If we ask, therefore, whether there is a future for books or what may come after the end of books, we may be doing more than pose a question. The fact that we *can* and *do* ask may be part of the process of debilitation which, presumably, we fear; and it could, conceivably, hasten it. It is a famous saying of Marx that mankind does not ask major questions until there is the objective possibility of an answer. This may be so. But there is another, more disturbing way of putting it: mankind may only ask certain questions in order to elicit a negative, predictive reply.

Obviously, however, we are not meeting in a spirit of indifferent inquiry or nihilistic play. If we pose the question of the viability of the book, it is because we find ourselves in a social, psychological, technical situation which gives this question substance. And although we hope to press the question home and to look scrupulously at the evidence, we hope also that the question will resolve itself positively; that our asking is, in Hegel's incisive terminology, an *Aufhebung*. Asking is an action, a possible bringing into view and into being of perspectives in which the question is seen to be trivial or falsely posed. Or, at the rare best, to ask is to provoke not the answer one actually fears or aims at, but the first contours of a new and better asking—which is then a first kind of answer. Bearing this in mind, let us sketch very briefly some of the historical and pragmatic grounds which make it possible and even responsible to envisage the end of the book as we have known it.

First, it is worth stressing that the "book as we have known it" has been a significant phenomenon only in certain areas and cultures, and only during a relatively short span of history. Being bookmen we tend to forget the extremely special locale and circumstances of our addiction. We lack anything like a comprehensive history of reading. It would, I think, show that reading in our sense—"with unmoving lips" —does not predate St. Augustine (who first remarked on it) by very

much. But I would narrow the range even further. The existence of the book as a common, central fact of personal life depends on economic, material, educational preconditions which hardly predate the late sixteenth century in western Europe and in those regions of the earth under direct European influence. Montaigne and Bacon are already bookmen, and profoundly conscious of the relations of their own inner life to the future of the printed form. But even they read in a way which is not entirely ours; their sense of the authority, of the layered heremeticism of the written word—from surface level to anagogical mystery—has much in common with an earlier, almost pictorial or "iconic" view of meaning. Our style of reading, the unforced currency of our business with books, is not easy to document before, say, Montesquieu. It climaxes in Mallarmé's well-known pronouncement that the true aim of the universe, of all vital impulse, is the creation of a supreme book—*le Livre*. Now the relevant time span is only about a century and a half. Yet it is undoubtedly true that Mallarmé himself marks the beginning of the questions we are asking here.

The classic age of the book depended on a number of material factors (even as we have no full history of reading, we have no sociology of reading, though there are in the criticism of Walter Benjamin and in Adorno's sociology of music numerous indications as to what is needed).

The book on the monastery lectern or in the chained university library is not the same as that of the seventeenth century. In its classic phase, the book is a privately owned object. This requires the conjunction of specific possibilities of production, marketing, and storage. The private library is far more than an architectural device. It concentrates a very complicated spectrum of social and psychological values. It requires and, in turn, determines certain allocations of space and silence which impinge on the house as a whole. In visual and tactile terms, it favours particular formats or genres—the two are intimately meshed—over others: say the bound volume over the pamphlet, the in-octavo over the folio, the *opera omnia* or set over the single title. The spiritual cannot be divorced from the physical fact. A man sitting alone in his personal library reading is at once the product and begetter of a particular social and moral order. It is a *bourgeois* order founded on certain hierarchies of literacy, of purchasing power,

of leisure, and of caste. Elsewhere in the house there is most likely a domestic who dusts the shelves of books, who enters the library when called. And there are children schooled not to make undue noise, not to burst in when their father is reading. In short, the classic act of reading—what is depicted as *la lecture* in so many eighteenth-century genre paintings and engravings—is the focus of a number of implicit power relations between the educated and the menial, between the leisured and the exhausted, between space and crowding, between silence and noise, between the sexes and the generations (it is only very gradually that women come to read in the same way and context as their husbands, brothers, and fathers).

These power relations and value-assumptions have been drastically eroded. There are few libraries now in private apartments and fewer servants to dust them or oil the book spines. Intensities of light and noise levels of an unprecedented volume crowd in on personal space, particularly in the urban home. Far more often than not, the act of reading takes place against, in direct competition with another medium—television, radio, the record player. There are almost no taboo-spaces or sacrosanct hours left in the modern family. All is free zone. Where the book shelves were, we tend to find the record cabinet and the row of l-p's (this, in itself, is one of the most important changes in the climate, in the enveloping matrix of our intellectual and emotional lives). It is only rarely in the home that the exercise of reading, in the old sense, now takes place. It is in highly specialized frameworks: mainly the university library or academic "office." We are almost back at the stage before Montaigne's famous circular reading room in the quiet tower. We read "seriously" as did the clerics, in special professional places, where books are professional tools and silence is institutional.

The modern paperback is an immediate and brilliantly efficient embodiment of the new parameters. It takes very little space. It is quasi-disposable. Its compactness declares that it can be, is almost intended to be, used "in motion," under casual and fragmented circumstances. Being quite explicitly of the same material make-up as trashfiction, the paperback—even where its content is high-brow—proclaims an easy democracy of access. It carries with it no manifest sign of economic or cultural élitism. Mickey Spillane and Plato share the same book rack in the airport lounge or drug store.

But the mainsprings of change in the status of the book lie deeper. Definite philosophic beliefs and habits of perception underlay the primacy of the book in the life of the mind from the time of Descartes to that of Thomas Mann (one of the last complete representatives of the classic stance). Having tried to make some of these points in detail in previous work, I will do no more than summarize.

In very large measure, most books are about previous books. This is true at the level of the semantic code: writing persistently refers to previous writing. Explicit or implicit citation, allusion, reference are essential means of designation and proposition. It is via this dynamism of reiteration that the past has its most palpable existence. But the process of reference is even more comprehensive. Grammar, the literary idiom, a genre such as a sonnet or a prose novel, embody a previous formalization of human experience. Thoughts, feelings, events as set down in books do not come raw; the format of expression carries with it very strong and complex, though often "subliminal," values and boundaries. In a suggestive essay, some years ago, E. H. Gombrich showed that even the most violent, spontaneous of pictorial notations —Goya's sketches of the insurrection in Madrid—are stylized by, filtered through previous work of art. So it is with books: all literature has behind it human experience of the kind which previous literature has identified as meaningful. The act of writing for the printed page as it conjoins with the reading response is intensely "axiomatized" or conventionalized, however fresh and turbulent the author's impulse. The past is strongly at his back; the current moves between bounds of established possibility.

These elements of tradition and limitation are of the essence of a classic world view. If western literature—from Homer and Ovid to *Ulysses* and *Sweeny Among the Nightingales*—has been so largely referential, each major work mirroring what has gone before and bending the light only so much out of a given focus and no more, the reason lies at the very heart of our literacy. Western and Chinese culture have been bookish in a very definite way: Western culture unfolds, by highly self-conscious modes of imitation, variation, renascence, parody, or *pastiche*, from a strikingly small set of canonic, classical texts and form-models, principally Greek. By creative "ingestion," as Ben Jonson put it, the curve of discourse tends from Homer to Virgil, from Virgil to Dante, from Dante to Milton,

Klopstock, Joyce, and the explicit retrospective of the *Cantos*. There have been fifteen *Oresteias* and a dozen *Antigones* in twentieth-century drama and opera. Archilocus points to Horace, Horace to Jonson, Jonson to Dryden and Landor, Landor to Robert Graves. The line, the experience of lament over the poet or hero who has died young is unbroken since the Greek Anthology and passes, via stages of massive cross-reference, through *Lycidas* and *Adonais* to Arnold's *Thyrsis*, Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, and Auden's elegy—built of Ovidian echoes —on the passing of Yeats. Print and the physique of books have been the enforcing framework of tradition. It is in this respect—not in any vague, undemonstrable intimation of visual-linear compulsion—that we can characterize western culture as being that of the library at Alexandria, of Gutenberg and of Caxton.

This close correlation of formal invention, of energized feeling with established genres and a framework of allusion and prepared echo has further implications. *Le Livre* is the proven talisman against death. This is the grand discovery, the proud cry, in Homer and Pindar: the words of the poet outlive the events they narrate and make the poet immortal. Rephrased by Horace and by Ovid the promise that time cannot gnaw great words to dust, that they will outlast the brass and marble on which they are incised, is the password of western literature. I die, my life may have been a shamble of error and non-recognition, but if my book has truth and beauty enough, it will endure. There are those as yet unborn who shall read it, as I read the classic on my table. This is the secret of Demodocus, the minstrel in the *Odyssey*, and, two and a half millennia later, of Paul Éluard when he states *le dur désir de durer*.

The gamble on immortality can only come off if language itself holds. There is nothing mystical about this notion. It is a traditional trope of western literature, particularly poetry, that words are inadequate to the needs of personal expression, that available language falls drastically short of the poet's inner vision. But this trope is itself linguistically articulated. The anguish of unattainable precision or radiance is real enough, but it is also conventional and is itself a means of eloquence. The Petrarchian sonnet springs constantly and with confident elaboration from a basic complaint about its own insufficiency to state the uniqueness, the vehemence of the poet's love. Mystical writings, such as the *Canciones* of St. John of the Cross come

nearest the limit; but we know this just because they communicate to us in words of great precision and clarity their sense of the neighbourhood of the inexpressible.

Here again, the complex of the book and of its reader stands in a specific Judaic-Hellenic descent. It is from these two antique sources, so oddly, so intensely literary and bookish in their self-definition, that we derive our view of the eminent worth and stability of speech. These two civilizations tell us that the word—the *logos*—is central to man's religion, to his *log*ic, to his mytho*log*ies. They tell us that the relations of descriptive adequacy between human language and the "outside world" may be epistemologically opaque, that there are deep problems about meaning what we say and saying what we mean, about understanding one another and about denoting objects or sense-data unambiguously. Nonetheless, this very opaqueness can only be diagnosed and registered in words, linguistically. We inhabit a language-world, and if it is the source of perplexing but marginal dilemmas, it is also the root of our conscious being and mastery over nature.

This conviction, of which books are the active incarnation, prevails with only eccentric challenges from the time of the great oral epics at least to that of Rimbaud and Surrealism.

Each of these philosophic tenets and the psychological attitudes which accompany them have come under severe attack. (Perhaps one ought to have realized earlier how fragile the fabric of western literacy was, how delicate and probably unique were the historical, moral raw materials which went into its making.)

The basis of referential recognition on which our poetry and prose have operated from Chaucer to T. S. Eliot, from the *Roman de la rose* to Valéry, has become the increasingly fictive possession of a mandarin few. The organized amnesia of American schooling—and much of Europe is following suit—ensures that the alphabet of scriptural, mythological, historical allusion in our literature has become a hieroglyphic. Footnotes lengthen on the page as rudimentary identifications and paraphrase are needed. Off balance on top of these explanatory stilts, the poem itself becomes strange and blurred. More and more of our verbal inheritance is caught between the semi-literacy of the mass market and the Byzantine minutiae of the specialist.

In the glass case of the academic storehouse verse, drama, fiction which was once a common presence now leads an immaculate but factitious life. Authority—and authority is the core, the wellspring of formal tradition—is itself highly suspect. Ezra Pound's "make it new" was, in fact, a call for renovation in the renaissance sense. The cry of the new millenarians against the classic, against eloquence, against that which is difficult of access, is something entirely different. It goes back to the terrorist insight of Dada that the literate past must be destroyed, dynamited if history is to enter a phase of radical innocence.

The aim of survival, of glory in the pantheon, is equally suspect. It speaks of hierarchy and academicism. We seem to be involved in a revolution of time-values. *Now* is everything, and the young regard as hypocrisy, opportunism, or worse, the traditional strategy of the poet or thinker sacrificing his present life to future eminence. This equivocation, self-evident to Milton, to Keats, to Hölderlin, now has a ring of hallow bathos. To the radical generation there is obscenity in Mallarmé's belief that a supreme masterpiece, *le Livre*, is the goal and validation of human affairs. Today Pisarev's slogan, "a pair of boots outweighs Shakespeare and Pushkin," has come into its own.

The doubts about language have more varied and respectable sources. Again, I have dealt with this theme at length previously and will only summarize here. In the period from Rimbaud and Mallarmé to Dada and Surrealism an "anti-language" movement springs up from inside literature. Bored by the oppressive eloquence and perfections of the past, the new iconoclasts and experimenters sought to recreate the word, to find in new verbal and syntactic forms intact resources of exactitude, of magic, of sub-conscious energy. The Dada demand for "an end to the word" is at once nihilistic—man cannot be renewed if he keeps his worn skin of speech—and aesthetic. It calls for the discovery of hitherto unexploited phonetic, iconic, and semiological means. A second current of doubt is that which stems from formal logic and the work of logical positivism and of Wittgenstein. It is one of the major effects of modern philosophy, from Moore to Austin and Quine, to have made language look messier, more fragile, less comfortably concordant with our needs, than before. The confidence in the medium which animates earlier philosophic monuments —those of Kant, of Hegel, of Schopenhauer, of Bergson—is simply no longer available. A third impulse to linguistic scepticism comes from

the enormous expansion of the exact sciences. An ever-increasing portion of sensory and conceptual reality has passed into the keeping of the non-verbal semantic systems of mathematics. A modern writer can deal precisely, and in the relevant idiom, with far less of natural fact and intellectual analysis than could Shakespeare, Milton, or Pope. The fourth aspect is that first investigated by Karl Kraus and George Orwell: the cheapening, the dehumanization, the muddling of words through the mass media and through the lies of barbarism of modern politics. This brutalization and profanation of the word is very probably one of the main causes for the tide of self-destruction, either through self-imposed silence or actual suicide, which has come over western literature from the time of Nerval and Rimbaud to that of Sylvia Plath, Paul Celan, and John Berryman. The words in my mouth, says Ionesco, have gone dead.

Taken together, these attacks on traditional literacy, on the transcendental view of the artist's and thinker's enterprise, and on the validity of language constitute a fundamental critique of the book. It is not so much a "counter-culture" which is being developed, but a "post-culture."

But once we have made this analysis, the factual question arises: *are* people reading less, is there an empirically demonstrable decline in the vitality of printed books?

The evidence is very difficult to come by. Robert Escarpit's *La Révolution du livre* (1966) is the only full-scale study I know of, and it is at best, preliminary. What we find are fragments of information, isolated statistics, guesses of every kind. I hesitate even to adduce these in the presence of experts.

A survey conducted in 1970 indicates that on average a French man or woman will read no more than *one* book a year. The figure for Italy is thought to be even less as there are extensive pockets of sub-literacy. In Germany, on the other hand, the ratio is rather better. The number of bookstores in the United States—i.e., of stores primarily or exclusively devoted to the sale of serious books and able to keep a representative selection in stock—has diminished drastically over the past twenty years (I have heard the figure of closures of "hybridizations" put as high as 75%). The turn-over rate has accelerated formidably, especially in regard to fiction. If it is not immediately

successful, a new novel will remain only very briefly in the bookstore. The ratio of remaindered prose fiction to what is kept in stock from among the estimated thirty or forty novels published weekly in the English language is, obviously, dramatic. The economics of serious hard-cover publishing have become fairly lunatic. Prices have trebled and often quadrupled between successive volumes in the same work or series. In numerous cases publication would not be feasible at all were it not for complex, often hidden schemes of subsidization or for immediate tie-ups with the paperback market. It is, currently, no more than a sober platitude that the whole future of the commercial production and distribution of hard-cover books with only a limited circulation is in doubt. The wild circus of personnel changes among American publishing houses, the spate of take-overs, the febrile vulgarization of once-great lists, are only the external symptom of a deep malaise in the whole book-world.

To these facts I would add one or two personal observations, obviously subjective and very limited in scope. Paperbacks do *not* make for the collection of a library. Among the very many students I have met and taught in several countries over the past two decades, fewer and fewer are book collectors, fewer and fewer reject the pre-packaged selectivity of the paperback in order to own *complete* works of an author. Among these same young people there appears to be a marked decline in habits of solitary, exclusive reading. They know less and less of literature *by heart*. They read against a musical background or in company. Almost instinctively, they resent the solipsism, the egotistical claims on space and silence implicit in the classic act of reading. They wish to shut no one out from the empathic tide of their consciousness. Being something we can listen to personally yet share fully with others at the same moment and in the same place, music, far more than books, meets the present ideal of participatory response. It is not the "dog-eared volume" we find in the walker's pocket, but the transistor. And because it allows access at so many levels—ranging from technical insight to the vague wash of semi-conscious echo—music allows that democracy of emotion which literature, particularly difficult literature, denies. In brief: so far as I can make out, the prime requisites of concentrated reading in the old sense—aloneness, silence, contextual recognitions—are growing rare in the very milieu in which we would most crucially look for them—that of the under-graduate.

These are, I repeat, *ad hoc* and piecemeal impressions. They are nearly impossible to quantify. We are too close to these new tendencies and problems to have more than a very indistinct view. My observations would, I suspect, not be true of the Soviet Union, which is in a phase of centrally determined, almost Victorian literacy. They are only partly true of those countries of eastern Europe in which reading is often the best way of showing opposition to the regime, and in which competing electronic media remain underdeveloped. Nevertheless, and with regard to our own setting, I would say that the world of the bookman is much diminished.

Hence one's readiness to speculate—it can be no more than that—on what may come after the book or what may happen to books in a period of cultural transition.

It is now a commonplace that audio-visual means of communication are taking over wide areas of information, persuasion, entertainment which were, formerly, the domain of print. At a time of global increase in semi- or rudimentary literacy (true literacy is, as I have tried to suggest, in fact decreasing), it is very probable that audio-visual "culture packages," i.e. in the guise of casettes, will play a crucial role. It is already, I think, fair to say that a major portion of print, as it is emitted daily, is, at least in the broad sense of the term, a caption. It accompanies, it surrounds, it draws attention to material which is essentially pictorial. When uttered on the radio and, to a far greater degree, when spoken on television, language has a specialized, perhaps ancillary status. The phenomenon can be exaggerated: contrary to McLuhan's expectations, radio is holding its own, particularly in such hyper-verbal genres as discussion or drama. It is nonetheless obvious that a great part of humanity now receives its main informational and evocative stimuli in the form of images and illustrative signal-codes. The astonishing fact is not that this should be so, but that the word in the old sense should still be so vital. We touch here on an extremely puzzling phenomenon. Even the most superb of movies can only be seen a very limited number of times (say five or six) before it goes stale, before an impression of utter inertness takes over. Why should this be? In what way is a piece of print—a poem, a chapter in a novel, a scene from a play—any less "fixed," static, unchanging than a film frame? Yet we can read the same poem a hundred times over in

our lives and it will literally be new to us. Where does the difference lie? What is there about purely visual material which does not have the inherent repeatability, the sameness with change which is the attribute of the written word? So far as I know, neither aesthetics nor psychology have come up with an answer. But the evidence is, I believe, unmistakable, and it entails a power of survival for printed speech which no competing medium has.

The more radical, though less visible changes, are those occurring not in the communication of material but in its storage and analytic treatment. Information storage and retrieval by means of data banks and computers are far more than technical devices. They constitute little less than a new way of organizing human knowledge and the relations of present inquiry to past work. All taxonomies are, in essense, philosophical. Any library system, whether by size or Dewey, enacts a formalized vision of how the world is put together, of what are the optimal sight-lines between the human mind and phenomenological totality. Electronic indexing and memorization, the instant provision of information according to various grids and semantic markers, will profoundly alter not only the physical structure of libraries, but our proceedings in them. The key concepts of referential relevance and of context (the books further down the shelf, the one we needed most but did not know we were looking for) will change. Data banks are not for browsing. In many disciplines, moreover, the cut-off point of chronological utility will be codified and institutionalized. One will not be expected to cite, to be aware of material earlier than a very recent point on the index tape. It will thus become ever more difficult to resist the illusion—and it *is* an illusion, certainly so far as most humanities go—that insight is cumulative, that there is a necessary progress and teleology in the statement of feelings and ideas. The "programming" of knowledge in the electronically managed libraries of the future will, I think, bring on alterations of sensibility, modifications in our habits of discovery, as significant as any since the invention of moveable type. The formula is one that makes for the minimalization of hazard, of waste, of spill-over. Yet it is these counter-utilitarian aspects of traditional reading which have determined much of the best in our culture.

What of the more immediate prospects for the printed book? In the presence of some of those most competent in the field, it is perhaps

foolhardy to conjecture. But some lines of change are already clear. There will be fewer books published. The current rate of over-production, notably in fiction, has triggered an absurd, ultimately self-defeating spiral of small printings, mounting overheads and the inability to amortize costs at anything near the rate regarded as indispensable in other industries. There will be fewer publishers, and it looks as if the edition and production of books, in both England and America, is passing into the hands of a small number of large consortia, often allied with, financed by other industries or capital holdings. What seems to be emerging is a pattern of giants together with a few small, specialized houses whose actual structure resembles that of the "little magazine" in relation to the mass media. The search for a technological break through in regard to production costs will intensify. The restrictive and inflationary practices in the printing trades plainly reflect a luddite, terminal mood. The industry feels that its days are numbered. Whether some radical new photoprocess will emerge, whether the electric typewriter points the way, is uncertain. But increasingly, the hard-cover book printed (let alone illustrated) by traditional manual-mechanical means, is an anachronism. It is viable only in very large editions, which are of course limited to a small percentage of the annual list.

Even more significantly, there will, I expect, be a frank polarization in our understanding of books and of what is meant by *reading*. A firmer distinction than has been current hitherto will emerge as between the immense iceberg bulk of semi-attentive reading—ranging from the advertisement billboard to the pulp novel—and genuine "full" reading. The latter will, more and more, become the craft and pursuit of a minority trained to do the job and who themselves probably hope to write a book. It is precisely the disaster of mass education in the United States, but also in other over-developed consumer technocracies, to have blurred this vital difference. A large majority of those who passed through the primary and secondary school system can "read" but not *read*. Theirs is a pseudo-literacy. Various measurements are possible. It has been estimated that the vocabulary and grammatical comprehension possessed by a considerable majority of American adults has stabilized around the age level of twelve or thirteen. An estimated eighty per cent of adult readers find it difficult to apprehend a dependent clause

(a fact long familiar to the copy editors of advertisement agencies, magazines, trash fictions, and federal or state regulations). Because it is no longer a natural, immediate part of our schooling, reading in the full sense of referential recognition, of grammatical confidence, of focused attention will have to be taught as a particular art. Anyone who has tried to teach literature or history or philosophy to the average high school graduate will testify that this is what the job is all about. It can well be argued that reading in the full sense was always the prerogative of an élite, that our pictures of a lost literacy are idealized and never applied to more than an educated minority. But this does not infirm the case. That minority held the centers of power and of example; its criteria were those of the culture as a whole. This is no longer true. It is far more honest and far more productive to admit that the standards and ideals of a full literacy are not self-evident, that they are not applicable to the majority in a populist society, that they represent a special skill. We do not, after all, demand that all citizens be trapeze artists. What we must try to see to, is that those who *want* to learn to read fully can do so and that they be allowed the critical space and freedom from competing noise in which to practise their passion. In our fantastically noisy, distracted milieu this minimal room for private response is not easily come by.

These guesses and provisional suggestions may seem pessimistic. They are not meant to be. There is a strong element of health in our diminutions. Too much has been printed; too much made glossily available. Lincoln or Carlyle tramping miles to read and to excerpt a book provide an image to think about; as does Edwin Muir, new from the world of the crofters, chancing at an Edinburgh book-stall on the worn copy of *Zarathustra* which was to transform his inner and outer life. Because it has been made so easy, our sense of the act of reading has often grown facile. At the very outset of the centuries of high literacy, Erasmus tells of stooping in a muddy way to snatch up a torn piece of print, and of his cry of wonder and good fortune at the event. Tomorrow's bookmen may, perhaps, find themselves in a like condition. This would not be, altogether, a bad thing.

Books in the Running Brooks

Some thoughts on the uses of cultural adversity

John Valentine Brain

Had I been told a year ago that I should today be taking the side of the moderns against the ancients in a new battle of the books, I should have been shocked and incredulous. I have spent many words in defense of an allusive rather than a naive approach to the arts, and my own writings are so loaded with allusion that they seem at times to be addressed more to the dead than to the living. It is perhaps because my basic attitude to these things is so similar to George Steiner's that I am able to rehearse the arguments that a scurrilous alter ego has leveled against my own classic posture.

Steiner's examination of the viability of books in the modern world falls under two heads, what he identifies as "the historical and pragmatic grounds that make it possible . . . to envisage the end of the book as we have known it." I do not find either his historical or his pragmatic grounds convincing; they do not carry the edifice he erects upon them.

George Steiner's article was given as an address to the Ferguson Seminar in Publishing at The College of William and Mary, March 23, 1972. On this and the following pages are four replies to Dr. Steiner's address by other participants in the 1972 Seminar.

The Ferguson Seminars were conceived by William Cross Ferguson, former president of World Book Company and director and treasurer of the American Textbook Publishers Institute, who before his death in 1967 set in motion the establishment of an endowment for "a seminar in publishing . . . devoted to the writing, editing, designing, printing, and marketing of books. . . ."

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To begin with, we should always be suspicious of those perennial Jeremiahs who never cease to tell us that our age is one of cultural, moral, or spiritual decay. In fact, every age has seemingly believed itself to be in cultural decline, forgetful of the glories of its past, its poets and painters mere pigmies riding on the shoulders of the heroes of old. It is inevitable that we should see all around us the failures of culture that constitute the "noise" of life, rather than the significant signals that will impress future ages. Or, to switch from a technical to a literary metaphor, the snows of yesteryear always look whiter from the top of an ivory tower. If we may descend to statistics, it should be pointed out that there have never been more students of literature in the world than there are today. There are also more scholars—or card-carrying Ph.D.'s who pass for scholars—extant today than in any age heretofore. But admittedly this is less evidence of the love of learning than of the economic viability of university teaching as a clean, undemanding, and gentlemanly profession.

Whether there has been any decline in serious reading is open to question. Librarians tell us that more serious books are being borrowed than ever before, and that television appears to stimulate rather than to replace reading. All forms of communication widen horizons and stimulate curiosity, and books—which are the informational resource most available on individual demand—are the prime beneficiary.

There is little merit to the argument that modern man has no time to read. Working hours are little more than half what they were a century ago. We have time to spare if we would make use of it. Of course, a lot of people prefer the circus to the cloister, the active to the contemplative life, but then they always have. It is not the reading habits of the majority that are significant, but whether the intelligent minority can satisfy their lust for learning. Popular education has increased the number of semi-literate persons—which is, after all, an absolute good—but it has not done much either to help or to harm the true philosophers, except perhaps to create a somewhat more favorable climate for intellectual activities.

The real culture-villian is not popular education but pseudo-scholarship. Rather than read thoroughly and inwardly digest a comparatively few important writers, the student of today is encouraged to pick at thousands of "sources" out of which he constructs

his term papers and ultimately his doctoral dissertation. Matthew Arnold's concept of a loved and sustaining body of classical writings and culture cannot survive the joyless chewing of this army of scholarly termites.

Of paperback books it should be said that most purchasers do not regard them as disposable. So-called "quality" paperbacks are simply clothbound books in soft covers, an economic expedient, not an inferior species. Now that paperbound editions of complete classical works are available, students are assigned them in preference to the clothbound collection of predigested readings assigned to the preceding generation. Facsimiles of original texts are being used now in some schools in preference to modern editions. Today even scholars are turning increasingly to paperbound books for their libraries, and this shows that they would prefer to own the inward substance of three paperbacks than the outward appearance of one clothbound book, however elegant its exterior. Plato would surely have approved of this trend, for it is not essentially of cloth and paper that books are made.

So much for pragmatics. The most important part of Steiner's paper concerns the decline of the classical world view and the consequent—or perhaps the determinant—loss to poets and readers of the allusive organism. The first thing to note is that this organism, though dormant, is not dead. The echoes of the past are all around us, even if the amplification system is temporarily out of action. Moreover, for most young poets, the problem is not too little tradition, but too much. Many must feel, as I did twenty years ago, the oppressive burden of the past, which seems to make independent thought and feeling virtually impossible. It is necessary to have a periodic revolution, a revulsion of feeling that clears the ground and makes new growth possible. While such revolutions—such gear shiftings in the cultural engine—are taking place, traditionalists will denounce the new trend as nihilistic and anticultural. But the mutations of culture are achieved by means of death and birth; it is not through modification of a single organism but through the succession of generations that change and necessary adaptation occur. Admittedly, Dada and Futurism were regressions to an infantile mode, anticultural in intention if not in effect. But cultural scavengers are necessary. I would not equate Mussolini with Michelangelo, but a man who could say,

"When I hear the word 'culture,' I reach for my revolver," could not be all bad.

Lamenting the passing of the past is a lot of fun and always an excellent academic exercise, but before we utter the last Alas! with weeping and gnashing of teeth, we might ask ourselves why our age does not feel the same need, as have past ages, to explore and exploit our cultural heritage. The quick answer is that the writings and models of the past are no longer relevant to the conditions of modern life. And though humanists may sputter, it is undeniable that most of our problems cannot be solved by references to the writings of Plato or Aristotle—or of comparatively recent philosophers like Kant or Mill. Wittgenstein once described modern philosophers as having hauled up the ladder once they had climbed aboard; henceforward they will discuss semantics with other philosophers, if they are on speaking terms. Meanwhile the ship of life is threatened with huge storms, and in the moment of crisis the cry goes up to jettison the lumber of the past.

But the more interesting question to ask is why past ages have felt the need for their systems of classical reference. Basically, it seems to me, these traditional systems reflect a desire to justify and dignify the present—to lend to novel ideas a measure of authority and apparent continuity, even if these claims to authority and continuity are specious. Interpreting the present in terms of the accepted values of the past—or, to be more precise, in terms of the values assumed to have been accepted by the past—is as evident in the history of cultures as it is in that of individuals. Thus, some more or less mythical history is an integral part of all religions, and their bibles and classical texts supply continuity and a rationale for present beliefs. The same is true of legal and constitutional history. New ideas—however revolutionary—are customarily dressed in the language and precedents of the past. In this way the unfamiliar appears in the guise of the familiar, and conservative reaction is disarmed. Perhaps the ultimate in classical rationalization is Milton's defense of divorce by elaborate reference to Christian and Judaic tradition. Cultural antecedents, then, form a lustrous, insulating pearl around the grit of some sharp new irritant in the social consciousness. And even if there were no specific cultural reaction to contend with, most innovators would prefer to place their contributions in a distinguished genealogy

of ideas and to recognize themselves as "heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time."

Sidney's *The Defense of Poesy* is, of course, in the tradition of historical rationalization that I am discussing, but whereas Sidney's argument is, in essence, that literature is moral and socially desirable, my point is that, irrespective of morality, the past will be used expediently to support the arguments of the present—much as a bird will build a nest out of twigs and fragments of once-living things. Anyone contemplating Philadelphia town hall—that monstrous pile of classical debris—will appreciate the nestbuilding analogy.

Needless to say, when a convenient past does not exist, it can be invented, and this is the poet's mythopoeic role.

During the Renaissance—the prime example of classical allusiveness in our culture—the classical past was discovered (a true *renovatio* or *renascità*), even if not exactly in the way that is usually imagined. Tillyard and others have shown that much of the classical heritage was available to the late middle ages. What changed was not so much the availability of the past as the uses to which it was put, and this reinterpretation—largely religious and political—was achieved through the agency of the humanistic publicists of the time and the printing press. As a result, new doors were opened, and alternatives to the restrictive scholasticism of the middle ages abounded in fantastic profusion. I realize that I am oversimplyfying and overstating my case here, and that the ideas of the Renaissance to a large extent *created* the attitudes of mind that made them relevant; the chicken and the egg are not always distinguishable. My point is that a classical heritage is influential while it is being discovered and explored, as a novelty and not on account of its antiquity, and that once it becomes known and accepted, once it does not represent an intellectual liberation from the bonds of the present, its value as a cultural stimulus declines. It becomes effete, like late medieval scholasticism or eighteenth-century classicism, ripe for a new invasion of "barbarian" feeling that offers novel alternatives for thought and action.

It should also be mentioned that a classical education was for many centuries the exclusive hallmark of a social élite, its bases not "liberal" at all but constrictive and discriminatory. Thus, ironically, the main social function of the liberal arts was to distinguish the lettered from the unlettered and serve—like lace and ruffles—as a

conspicuous frill that the poor could not afford. Such a form of discrimination is better far than big cars and expensive suits, but the fact is that it is once again the few "true philosophers" of an age who are of cultural importance, not the many who learned Greek who might just as well have memorised logarithms as an exercise in social irrelevance.

If the once-rich mines of allusion that fueled western civilization for many centuries are no longer producing, it is not only because their mythologies are exhausted, but also because the engines of today run on different fuels. When I think of the sources of stimulation that have most affected me, I think not only of the western tradition, but of the ideas and religions of the east and the even more important ideas generated in the sciences and social sciences. To some extent the ideas of the sciences and social sciences *are* our mythology, providing the basic metaphors and models that shape our apprehension of the world, even if we do not understand them in their entirety. For the real "breakthroughs" of the twentieth century have not been literary or philosophical *ideas*, but historical and scientific *events*; it is the facts of our time, not its artifacts, that have most affected us.

It is a truism that we live in an atomic age, an age of moon rockets and supersonic travel, of television and communications, of immensely complicated machines that have profoundly modified our conception of human nature. Think only of the cultural impact of the atomic bomb (which has overshadowed our generation like a prophesy of doom), of the automobile, of the population explosion and contraception, and of the social impact of psychoanalysis and behaviorism, not to mention drugs and the psychedelic way of life. If Sophocles is less read today (and this is by no means certain), it may be because he has less to say to our condition than Skinner or Szasz. I personally don't think so, but we can always go back to Sophocles, whereas the ideas of Skinner and Szasz must be dealt with now.

It is partly the extreme rate of social and technological change that our species is undergoing that has relegated the mythical structures of the past to the museum and the icebox. We have only a limited attention span, every happening on earth is instantly flashed on our screens, and the classical past is but a petty sideshow compared with

the three-ring circus performing in the world arena. But the ideas of science and technology, and to a lesser extent those of the social sciences, are very perishable; they are useful for a few years and are then discarded in favor of new models, like old cars. This process does not lend itself to comprehensive humanistic synthesis. The arts today show more evidence of the fragmentation of ideas than of their assimilation into a new totality that includes elements of the past and the present.

The use of any commodity—whether it be a natural or a cultural resource—will depend on how necessary it is, and on its availability at acceptable cost. Our traditional western culture has never been more available. The libraries are stuffed with it, and barring some world cataclysm, it will probably survive indefinitely. If we are no longer relating to it, it is because it seems less relevant to us. But the stabilization of our society that must come about before long—if the world ecology is to be brought into balance—will send innovative thinkers once again to mine the resources of the past. Until then, the high priests of culture, like Professor Steiner, may be relied upon to guard our heritage, celebrating their secret mysteries in lonely splendour. But one day the trumpet shall sound, the doors of the British Museum will open, and Poly-Olbion shall once again be proclaimed in the streets.

Some of us may yet live to see this new renaissance. And when it comes, I am willing to wager that the book as we know it will still be extant.

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A Reply to George Steiner

Norman S. Fiering

George Steiner's address touches on vital and complex modern developments, many of which have little to do with the book. It is at least half concerned with the general symptoms of the cultural crisis of our time, a crisis in which the fate of the book is only one problematic element. Nowhere else, however, have I seen so sharply and concisely defined the character and the virtues of the literary world of the past four hundred years. Steiner has given us an historical construct which can be worked with and pondered. What does the end of nineteenth-century "book culture" portend for society and the individual? How profoundly does the book as such underlay our civilization? In order to find our bearings in this crisis, as in any revolution, it is necessary to define carefully what is threatened and then to assess whether or not it is essential. Only after that can we know where it is safe to give way and where the line must be held against destructive change. I leave out here altogether the obvious but very meaningful considerations that the book as we know it is sometimes beautiful, usually convenient, and often affords unique pleasures to its votaries.

It may be a mistake, however, to invest the physical book with more symbolic value than is appropriate within a wide perspective on western civilization. For this physical object with many of its cultural supports and accoutrements is to some extent expendable, and the very intellectual and spiritual health of our civilization may require not the book's demise but at least its chastening. The book serves as a useful symbol for learning, for language, for humane culture, for respect for intellectual tradition, for the passion of scholarship, for literary art. Hence "book-burning" and book censorship in certain forms, have for centuries been rightly identified with barbarism,

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philistinism, and anti-intellectualism. But these repugnant historical phenomena are assaults on much more than books. They represent nihilistic forces, or political vendettas, or uncontrolled commercial materialism which threaten the venture of learning and humane culture in all forms, including oral teaching and listening, religious expression, free art and free song, microform storage, and computer data banks. These destructive forces are always objectionable and are not properly at issue here. Everything that threatens the supremacy of the book is not of their nature. Nor has the preservation of book culture been effective insurance against barbarism. In his superb *Language and Silence* (1967) Steiner has himself observed in moving passages on the Nazi death camps the union in the case of some Germans of both book culture and bestial criminality.

To put these propositions in different form, we do well not to over-estimate the dependence of our culture on the present book world, for the deepest roots of western civilization are sunk in predominantly oral cultures—the Hebraic, the Greco-Roman, and the Medieval. Since the publication of Father Walter Ong's fundamental Terry Lectures, *The Presence of the Word* (1967), this fact and its consequences are immeasurably clearer. It is also clear now—after the work of Walter Ong, George Steiner, and others—as even twenty years ago it was not, that the typographic age in which book culture has flourished, is passing.[1] The expansion of technology serving the transmission of knowledge and information to the ear rather than to the eye has been extraordinary in the twentieth century. In addition to obvious inventions like telephone, radio, phonograph, tape recording, and television (when it brings us persons speaking rather than pictures), the automobile, and the jet airplane have vastly multiplied opportunities for the personal conference. "We inhabit a language world," Steiner says. This is undeniably true, but language begins with speech, not print, and amidst the signs of cultural decay and nihilism there are also many indications that the spoken word is

1. To the wealth of data supporting this conclusion which one may find in the work of Steiner, Ong, and Marshall McLuhan, I can add only this item. I have recently heard that it is now extremely difficult to get replacement parts for Linotype machines, a problem which is virtually forcing letterpress printers to turn to cold-type composition, especially in the United States where Monotype has never flourished.

being revitalized. In existential philosophy "speech-thinkers" like Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Martin Buber, who began their work after the first World War when the crisis in the book world was apparent to only a few, are now recognized as prophetic. Here we are talking not about analytic language philosophers of the English school, but about men who have been intent on revealing the sacredness of speech.

If the book culture of the last four hundred years is dying (this does not mean, of course, that we could possibly ever do again without mountains of mere print), we should recognize, too, that this is in part because it is diseased. To some degree the revival of a more oral world is a salutary corrective to a number of distortions and corruptions in the body of high culture. The era of typography and book culture promoted intellectual individualism, the thinker in isolation in his library, the belief that language was a rather poor tool for the poet to have to suffer with; and the highest premium was put on originality, novelty, and even sensationalism. In this context, it has often been considered more important to be startling than to be right, sound, or responsible. Steiner has emphasized in his paper the conservative or centralizing side of book culture, with its structure of allusion, reference, and tradition. But centrifugal pressures seem also to be built into it and have become more and more in evidence as the inherent unity of oral and manuscript culture has retreated farther into the past. There have always been great intellectual figures in the west who have instinctively distrusted this centrifugal and ultimately deadening tendency in book culture, from at least the time when St. Bernard of Clairvaux suppressed that proto-bookman, Peter Abelard. Paradoxically, the vacuousness in so much of higher education in America today, which Steiner has nicely capsuled as "organized amnesia," is partly the result of a cancer intrinsic to the book world. We see today in higher education the proliferation of many titles for no other reason than material profit or career advancement, a case of publishers and scholars serving each other in a scandalous and chaotic fashion. No scholar with a family to feed can be entirely unsympathetic or rejecting to this commercial system, but it is disturbing to consider that academicians have themselves unwittingly contributed to the degradation of the book to a commodity, have betrayed the book world from within. Exessive departmentalization is also part of

this disease syndrome in the book world, for career advancement takes place within one's special discipline almost exclusively. One consequence of departmentalization is that at most colleges it is almost impossible to find anyone who will teach the great (and uncategorizable) books at all, or they will be taught only from the narrow standpoint of one's discipline. And at the same time a plethora of mediocre individualistic books buries the central tradition and all thought of a coherent circle of knowledge. There is probably some connection between the flourishing of book culture and a particular condition of modern man that Nietzsche already observed one hundred years ago, that he "carries inside him an enormous heap of indigestible knowledge—stones that occasionally rattle together in his body."[2]

Even at the level of infant education there is typographic madness. Parents today are exposed to frequent pressure to lower the age at which their children are taught to read. The advocates of these plans —sometimes disinterested but often with something to sell—are oblivious to the irretrievable opportunity the child has in his first six or seven years to be immersed exclusively in a realm of the sounded word which will be the basis of later abilities to obey, to listen, to sing, and to play.[3]

I think I am in agreement with Steiner on nearly all points of significance. What I have stressed outside of his tremendously useful statement are some strains in the pathology of the book world. This potentiality for sickness was once more brought home to me only recently with great force when I came upon that most terrifying depiction of book madness in modern literature, the character of Professor Kien in Elias Canetti's great novel, *Auto-da-fe*.[4] With Steiner, I think the question, "After the book, what?" is timely as never before. We agree, too, that a straitening and irreversible cor-

2. *The Use and Abuse of History*, trans. by Adrian Collins (Indianapolis, 1949), p. 23.
3. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Bibliography/Biography, Including a Mediation . . . entitled: Biblionomics* (New York, 1959), privately printed. See p. 23, "Man is reverberating the Word. How can he do this if he runs away from the first periods of life, in which he should acquire forever the resounding qualities of obedience, of listening, of singing and of playing?"
4. Trans. by C. V. Wedgwood (New York, 1946), from the German *Die Blendung* (1936).

rective in the book world is occurring which can be beneficial. Steiner himself exemplifies in his work a moral discrimination and a personal wholeness that points to a strong future. Who does not join with him in his concern for the perpetuation of "*full reading*," one of the great arts in the history of the "transformations of the word."[5]

5. I owe this phrase to the work of Walter Ong.

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A Reply to George Steiner

John Freeman

It is a difficult and frustrating situation when the questions raised by George Steiner are so basic while their answers must be so tentative. I think that the purpose of such an address is stimulation of thought, and to this end Steiner has been excitingly successful. Since there can be no concrete, empirically proven answer to these abstract problems, it is of course necessary to investigate all possible approaches, and with this in mind I hope that my comments will be seen as complementary to Steiner's projections rather than critical of them. The main subject at hand is the future of the book, but Steiner raises far more sweeping questions with the idea that the end of the book heralds the end of western culture; I am left somewhat dissatisfied with his insistence on the dependency of our culture on the book.

That we are fascinated with "last things" is a basic human characteristic. Because we are mortal and because we think, it is inevitable that we direct our facility (our power of thought) to our greatest problem (our mortality). Steiner's implication seems to be that this is a characteristic of the twentieth century, that it is a new problem caused in part by "the barbarism of modern politics" and "first investigated by Karl Kraus and George Orwell." But the classical world offers numerous examples of political barbarism unsurpassed in the twentieth century, that of ancient Athens' crucifixion of Melos (as related in detail by Thukydides), or of Rome's simultaneous destruction of helpless Corinth and Carthage, an act which stands out in a long tradition of Roman political barbarism. And I think there are adequate examples of literature which both commented upon and previewed the "lunacies and inanities" of their times as Kafka did his. In short, I do not agree that our concern with "last things" is a problem uniquely related to our century and

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its politics (in a broad sense), but has been of the greatest concern throughout the history of western culture.

Very close to this question of historical perspective is the idea of books being the "enforcing framework of tradition," "that we can characterize western culture as being that of Gutenberg and Caxton." We have had 2,800 years of unbroken western culture, if I may use as the beginning an approximate date of the ninth century B.C. for the first written *Iliad*. Even in the so-called "Dark Ages" the tradition moved forward unbroken, from the early Anglo-Saxon elegies, "The Ruin" or "The Wanderer," or *Beowulf* through such manifestations of the Middle Ages as the great cathedrals and universities. During the more than 2,000 years before Caxton there was no familiar "print and . . . physique of books" to control the tradition of western culture—there must have been something else. Perhaps it was the idea of the immortality of *le Livre*, as Steiner suggests in such an interesting way in a somewhat different context. The idea of *le Livre* may well have been the bond of continuity from Pindar and Homer, but its form did not exist in our modern sense, as Steiner says, until Gutenberg and Caxton. Looking at history from this point of view, I do not think that the development of the book signified the development of western culture, nor that its possible passing *necessarily* means the passing of the culture which it represents.

In the same context of the long tradition of western culture, there is another problem raised by Steiner. I certainly agree that language is "the root of our conscious being and mastery over nature," and that it is presently under attack, but should this and other attacks discussed by Steiner be taken to remind us of "how fragile the construct of western literacy was?" One might rather conclude from the 2,800 years of that literacy that its construct was magically strong. The threats of the twentieth century—mass semi-literacy, visual media, the vast overproduction of books, the world wars, and all the rest—may not exceed some of the historical threats which would have shattered the fragile. The end of Rome and invasion by the "barbarians" during the first millenium would be one such gigantic threat, and the Plague (destroyer of at least a third of Europe's population) or the Thirty Years' War (destroyer of seven to eight million people within the Empire alone) would be a few more among many. I do not mean to make light of the threats of our

century. They do present a very great danger, but we might gain confidence in our efforts to save our literacy if we could have more confidence in it as an ally with an innate strength of its own.

One final question about which I feel a different historical perspective from Steiner is that of the modern library. There is today the possibility that the combination of present overproduction of written material with improved technological collection devices will increase libraries' holdings to the extent that they will become practically unusable, that one will not "be aware of material earlier than a very recent point on the index tape." But is this so different from some of the great libraries of history, particularly the Alexandrian? The ancient *scholiast* was the product of such libraries and was little different, I think, from the modern scholar who is being forced to over-specialize by the same sort of overproduction and tremendous collection of material. What Steiner calls "the byzantine minutiae of the specialist" is of course a phrase given its significance by history, by the specialist's concern with the minute which was characteristic of the art and scholarship of the Byzantines. And the Byzantines kept and fostered a culture which was passed on both to Russia and the West to make large contributions to the present character of western culture.

I agree with Steiner that the book is under serious attack and its future uncertain, and so by association is the tradition of reading. But the book is only one manifestation of western culture, and that culture may grow out of the book just as it grew into it with Caxton and Gutenberg; it may carry through the twentieth century as it has through other centuries. I do not mean to imply that history always repeats itself or that we should simply wait with a self-satisfied complacency for our culture to continue unsupported. But I do think that what we have to work with is basically as strong as it has been, and that the threats which we face are similar in their power to destroy culture to those faced and overcome by our ancestors.

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A Reply to George Steiner

Leland E. Warren

Listening to George Steiner declaim his answer to our query on the book, I found it difficult not to agree with him completely. He is obviously a man of wide learning, a man who loves books, and a man who passionately deplores the evident debasement of the word that we all see about us daily. Further, Mr. Steiner effectively drew me into his world and made me see as he sees. It is pleasant to hearken back to a "classical age of the book," to imagine a world of clear hierarchies and faith in language. And what could the booklover desire more than an heroic clinging to his mad habit of reading as books grow fewer and fewer? I became a new Erasmus standing on the dim shore of some future classical age.

It seems necessary first to ask exactly what Steiner envisions. Is it the demise of the book? Language? Civilization? No doubt there is an intimate connection between the three, but equally certain, they are not the same. I will not attempt to imagine a civilization without language, and books are an "active incarnation" of language. It is not, though, difficult to point to civilizations without books, without reading in the "old sense." Indeed, Steiner is at pains to point out the fragility of a civilization based upon books and reading. Great civilizations predated the book (the Judaic and Hellenic civilizations were bookless), and it is not difficult to imagine future eras without books. If then it is merely the demise of the book and even of a "spectrum of social and psychological values" associated with it that is envisioned, one wonders whether the histrionics and the heroic pose are warranted.

Of course this is not all that Steiner suggests. Our asking about the end of the book is associated with a fascination for "the end of culture, of ideologies . . . of modes of sensibility." Books are seen as the

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embodiment of the western tradition, a tradition which underlies and enforces a system of hierarchies offering a stability and a recognizable framework of values. Antagonism toward—or rather indifference to —the book is seen as a rejection of authority and, indeed, of rationality. After the book, the flood?

I would not wish to deny that such a view is a reasonable one, but I would like to pose two questions. First, is there not a degree of equivocation in speaking of the brief history of the book and of the limited range of references upon which books depend, and at the same time appealing to a "basis of recognition" extending "from the time of the great oral epics at least to that of Rimbaud and Surrealism"? A writer, or any artist, no doubt depends upon a range of recognitions in his audience, but has this range been so uniform for so long, as Steiner suggests? The phrase "a basis of" can excuse a lot, but isn't it too easy to glare at the spate of footnotes to a textbook edition of a poem and declare that this basis is disappearing? In short, doesn't Steiner describe a somewhat idealized past and compare it with the worst of the present?

But I do not wish to be unfair to Steiner. He did not raise these questions by himself. We all sense much truth in his appraisal. This leads, though, to my second question. If things are as bad with the book as they appear in our darkest moments, is an assertion of élitism, a declaration that books and reading always have been and always must be for the few, the proper response to this situation? Should those of us who feel something of the passion Steiner holds for books despise attempts to bring the masses into the fold? Should we abhor paperbacks and give up mass education as a bad job?

It is here that I face the greatest difficulty. I certainly wish to be "honest" and "to admit that the standards and ideals of a full literacy are not self-evident." One does not have to teach many survey courses in English literature to realize that most of the students confronted will never be fully literate and that the mere act of getting through a semester almost requires a cheapening of the works read. But is it only a necessary illusion to think that some students do take the first step toward literacy in such courses and that some of these students might never have discovered true reading othersise? Certainly forcing every human to look at a certain number of poems, essays, and novels in the hope of catching the chosen few is an

irrational procedure. One may, however, express a doubt as to whether it is more rational to close our library doors and admit only those who know our password.

But Steiner is ahead of me again. He does not speak of what we should do, but rather of what might be forced upon us. In my darker moments I can find a certain satisfaction in this bleakness; the image of Erasmus is compelling. Most of the time, though, while I cannot deny that Steiner's prophecies may come true, neither can I look toward such a future with optimism.

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From Mistress to Master: The Origins of Polyphonic Music as a Visible Language

Gordon K. Greene

Music is affected by the notation in which it is recorded. The system of notation devised between 900 and 1200 A.D. in the West allowed composers to be analytical about simultaneous sounds; subsequent development of vocal and instrumental art music is a direct outgrowth of that medieval interest in harmony and the notation that allowed its studious investigation. That notation employs principles familiar today. A system for specifying rhythmic values was introduced in the twelfth century, with the result that separate voice parts could be distributed on an expensive parchment page more economically. Score arrangement returned with the mass production of paper. A vast increase in the number of rhythmic signs around 1325 led composers to explore the limits of their notation, with the result that much of the late fourteenth-century repertory was written in an extremely complex manner; composers became interested in the visual appearance of a composition and designed staff lines in the shape of a harp, a heart, a circle, etc.

Prior to the year A.D. 1000 musicians in the monastic orders of the Christian Church had begun experimenting with part singing. The monophonic chant (one melodic line only), codified by Pope Gregory early in the seventh century, provided a ready source of melody on which to impose additional parts. As a necessary adjunct to singing the new polyphony (two or more melodies performed simultaneously), the monks devised a system of written signs to indicate pitch and simultaneity. In the twelfth century a reasonably specific rhythmic notation was added. Musicians were now able to "compose." They could record their ideas and analyze them independent of a live performance. Western music was thereby set on a course of development that continued until the fifth decade of the twentieth century when composers of electronic music found the traditional notation unsuitable for their purposes. The fact that Christian monks in the eighth century cultivated an interest in simultaneously sounding melodies and were sufficiently scholastic by nature to want to record their musical experiences in a visible language is of the utmost

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importance to art music in the West. Musical practice in the Orient was in no sense inferior to that in Europe at this time, but the interest of Eastern musicians focused on the refinement of one melody rather than combining several. The resulting notation includes signs for quarter-tone intervals, for example, but shows little concern for harmonic structures. Thus, the art music of the Western world legitimately claims the chant of the Christian Church as its mother; the inventors of the system of notation were the mid-wives and nurses without whom the refined polyphony that characterizes that art would never have matured. It is the purpose of this study to identify the main problems that were encountered in devising a notational system, to observe the various solutions that were tried, and to assess the influence of these solutions on the development of Western music in the Medieval period. Before addressing these points directly, let us compare music notation with the words of a literary text.

As visible symbols, a musical score and a printed book are fundamentally different. In music the notes give instructions to performers, essentially, whereas the words of a verbal text symbolize concepts that are conveyed by the eye to the brain. An able score reader may "hear" a musical composition mentally by imagining what the sound will be in performance, but this is not at all like reading a novel, or even a play. The ideas expressed in a play can be gleaned, at least in skeletal form, by reading the printed page; the actors add flesh to the bones. A musical score cannot be read in any comparable way, the notes being not symbols for concepts but merely signs which are to produce actions, i.e., the expulsion of air from the lungs, the movement of fingers on keys or strings at specific times and in particular ways. The score is primarily a communication between the composer and the performer, the end result of which is the audible, ordered sound we call music. The most able score readers will often argue that no live performance can fully reproduce everything that is found in a score, that the imagined sound is superior to the one that is heard, and therefore, the musical composition is more accurately revealed by reading the notation. Those who argue this way see a parallel between the notes of music and the words of language, the one being symbols of musical ideas, the other of discursive ideas. If this were the case, music schools would have abandoned performance in favor of score-reading long ago, and composers would not play their new works on

the piano for fellow musicians as Wagner did for Liszt and Debussy did for Stravinsky. For our present purpose it is important to view early notation as a tool that records a pre-existent musical practice in the same sense that written language evolved from speech, but with the essential difference that words symbolize mental concepts whereas music notation directs the performer.

Notation of Pitch and Simultaneity

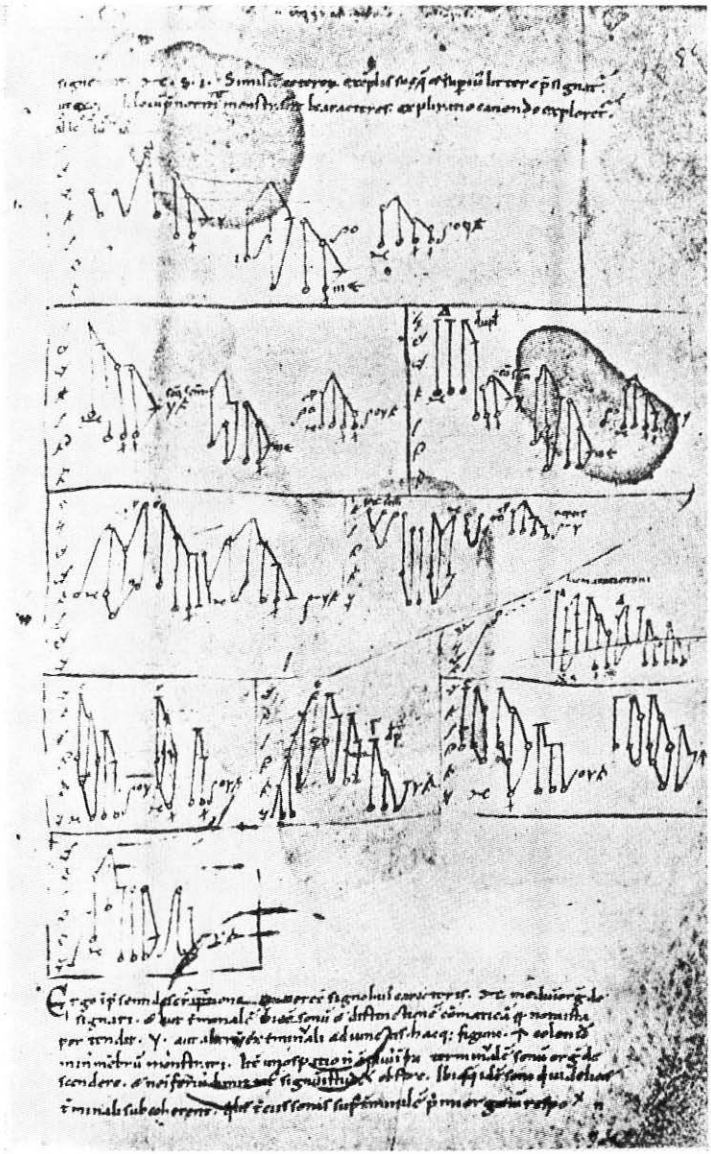
The earliest extant music manuscript, *Musica Enchiriadis*, dates from about A.D. 900. Two voice parts are involved in the compositions in Figure 1, the lower part being a borrowed melody from Gregorian chant called the *vox principalis*. The upper part or *vox organalis* was composed according to rather strict rules.

Since there are three units in Aristotle's concept of perfection—beginning, middle, and end—and, since the Holy Trinity exemplified perfection of the highest order to the Medieval mind, it was natural for music theorists to view the three perfect intervals identified by Pythagoras as another manifestation of a natural law. The intervals of the octave, fifth, and fourth—those musical combinations whose frequencies have the most simple ratios, i.e., 1 : 2, 2 : 3, and 3 : 4—are employed almost exclusively in these compositions from *Musica Enchiriadis*. Where intervals of the second and third are found, they are justified on the grounds that they are necessary in order to progress from the unison to the fourth or fifth. Much of the time, the two parts in Figure 1 are moving in parallel fourths or fifths. Pitches can be determined with reasonable accuracy by referring to the symbols of Dasian notation which run vertically up the left-hand side of the page. No staff lines are employed, but the small dots—representing notes to be sung—are positioned on imaginary staff lines running parallel across the page. The Dasian notation, which pre-dates the experiments with part singing by several centuries, consists of signs for specific pitches. This system proved to be too cumbersome to notate music sung in more than one part.

Though note shapes are not employed in this source, the familiar concept of high and low pitches moving up and down on the page is apparent. Text underlay has not been attempted, but we may assume that the text at the bottom of the page was to be sung. Lines connecting the various small circles indicate those pitches that are to be sung

together, and, though no rhythmic values are yet evident, it is conceivable that the well-known borrowed melody provided the metric flow of the composition. The so-called "score arrangement" seen here, in which parts to be performed together lie in close vertical proximity to one another, was abandoned in the twelfth century for five hundred years. It was discarded in favor of an arrangement that

Figure 1. A page from the earliest manuscript of polyphonic music, *Musica Enchiriadis*, Paris, Bibl. Nat. 7202, folio 56r.



did not occupy so much space on an expensive parchment page, and then was employed again only after paper became readily available.

The normal notational system used to remind singers of the melody of particular chants is apparent in Figure 1a. No effort is made in this early eleventh-century Austrian Gradual to write a second part, and specific pitch indication has not been attempted. The neumes are

Figure 1a. Neumatic notation of a Gregorian melody in an early eleventh-century Gradual. Cleveland Museum of Art, No. 33.447 (folio 5 of Trier Codex 151).

written with care and the variety of their shapes is profuse, but the notation serves as little more than an uncertain guide. If singers had not developed an interest in part-singing, this neumatic notation would probably have been in use for a much longer period. Efforts to notate pitch and rhythm with sufficient exactness to allow unequivocal singing in parts made the notation seen in Figure 1a obsolete by the twelfth century.

The appearance of horizontal staff lines coincides with an ingenious pedagogical scheme for teaching students to sing. Guido d'Arezzo (*c.* 990–1050) assigned the vocal syllables ut, re, mi, fah, soh, etc., to the five fingers of his extended hand and taught his pupils to sing intervals as he pointed to positions on one finger and then another. His extended fingers seem to have found their way to the page as staff lines. A small c was placed on one of the lines to identify the pitch middle c. In Figure 2 an excerpt of the traditional Christmas gradual, "Viderunt emmanuel," is seen in a two-part version. The staff lines are divided by a heavy line which separates the two parts. The two lower lines are sufficient to notate the traditional melody, while four lines are required to accommodate the more active added part. The c and g clef signs can be seen at the beginning of the upper staff. Only c appears on the second line from the bottom after the decorative initial letter V. An obvious attempt has been made to group the notes in the upper part with those in the less-active lower voice. Note shapes certainly indicate time values of some kind, though their exact relationships to one another cannot be spelled out definitively. The text is presumably employed for both parts. The uneconomical use of space begins to be apparent in this example of score arrangement. The notes of the lower part could be written more closely together if vertical alignment with the text and the upper voice were not necessary.

Rhythmic Notation

In Figure 3, the liturgical chant "Benedicamus domino" has been embellished with a very active, wide-ranging upper part in which notes appear to have specific shapes and meaningful groupings. A profusion of square and diamond-shaped notes has been employed in the upper part to indicate rhythmic relationships. All these notes are easily produced with a quill pen. In some cases several notes have

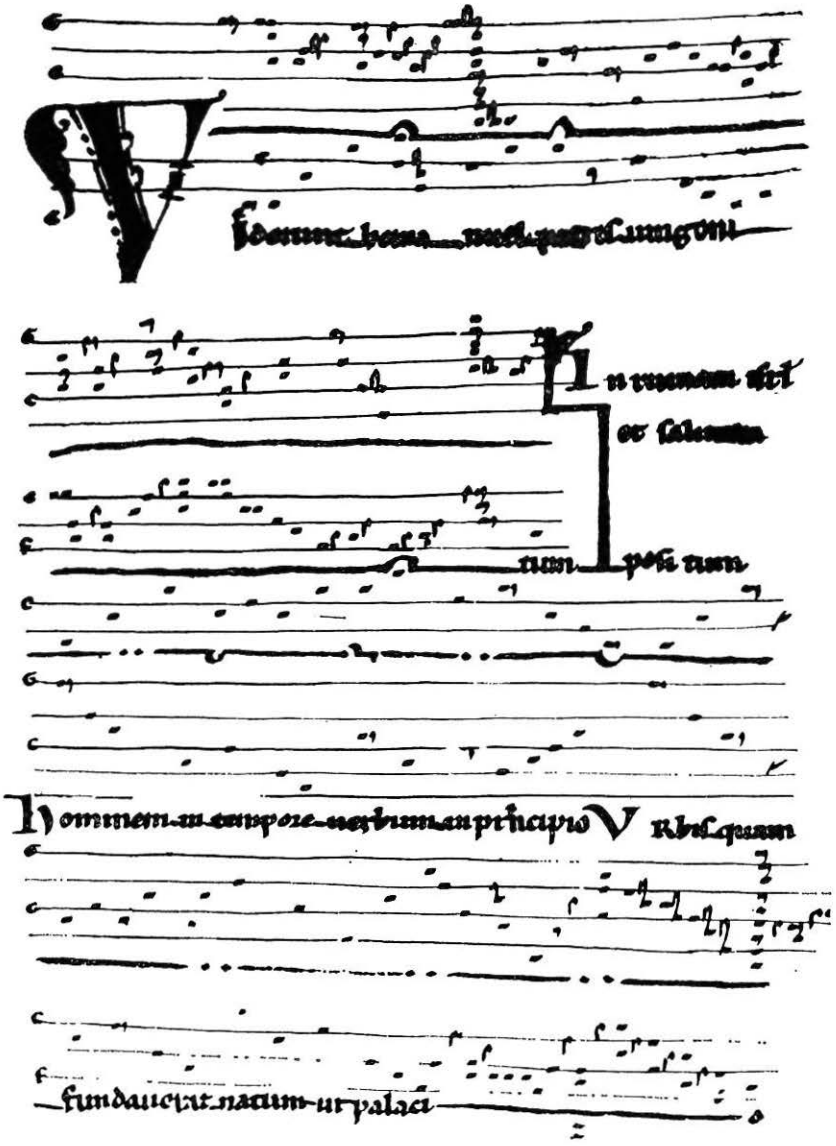


Figure 2. Vertical alignment of text and music in a two-part composition from the manuscript, Paris, Bibl. Nat. *lat.* 3549, folio 151v–152.

been written without removing the pen from the page. This "duplum notation" of the early twelfth century, so-called because it was used only for upper or duplum parts, forms a transition to a more precise rhythmic notation which was developed within two or three decades. The traditional melody for "Benedicamus domino" has been spaced out over $5\frac{1}{2}$ lines in order that vertical concordance will indicate how much of the duplum is to go with each note of the tenor. Text underlay, which follows the traditional Gregorian chant usage, demonstrates dramatically the space that is wasted in this notation when the tenor notes are sustained while many notes in the added part are sung. This economic factor undoubtedly spurred the development of a more precise rhythmic notation.

One particular feature of this "Benedicamus domino" requires special attention because of the influence it had on future composition. At the end of the fourth pair of staff lines beginning with the text "domino" and continuing to the end of the piece, we notice that many notes in the tenor part are sung to the syllable "do." In the original chant this long melodic passage, called a "melisma," is associated with the same syllable, though its rhythm is not known from any liturgical source. (Incidentally, an f clef is used in the tenor part.) The composer of this piece has assigned rhythmic values to the chant melisma on "do," and has divided it into units by using short vertical lines on the staff indicating rests. The rhythmic flow of texted sections remained untouchable at this time because of the respect that had to be accorded the liturgical text. A long melodic melisma like the one found on the syllable "do" could be set to a rhythm, apparently without incurring the displeasure of the protectors of the liturgy. It was these untexted melismatic passages that were lifted out of their liturgical context to become the first examples of genuine polyphonic composition in Western music.

Score arrangement is still employed in Figure 4. This page from a late twelfth-century source has the end of a two-part piece, a complete work on the tenor syllable "go," and the beginning of another composition on the tenor "Flos filius." The piece that is complete uses the melismatic passage on the syllable "go" in the psalm verse "Vir-go Dei." The illuminated letter "G" partially obscures the opening three-note group (ligature) in the tenor, but if we compare these beginning notes with the second ligature in the

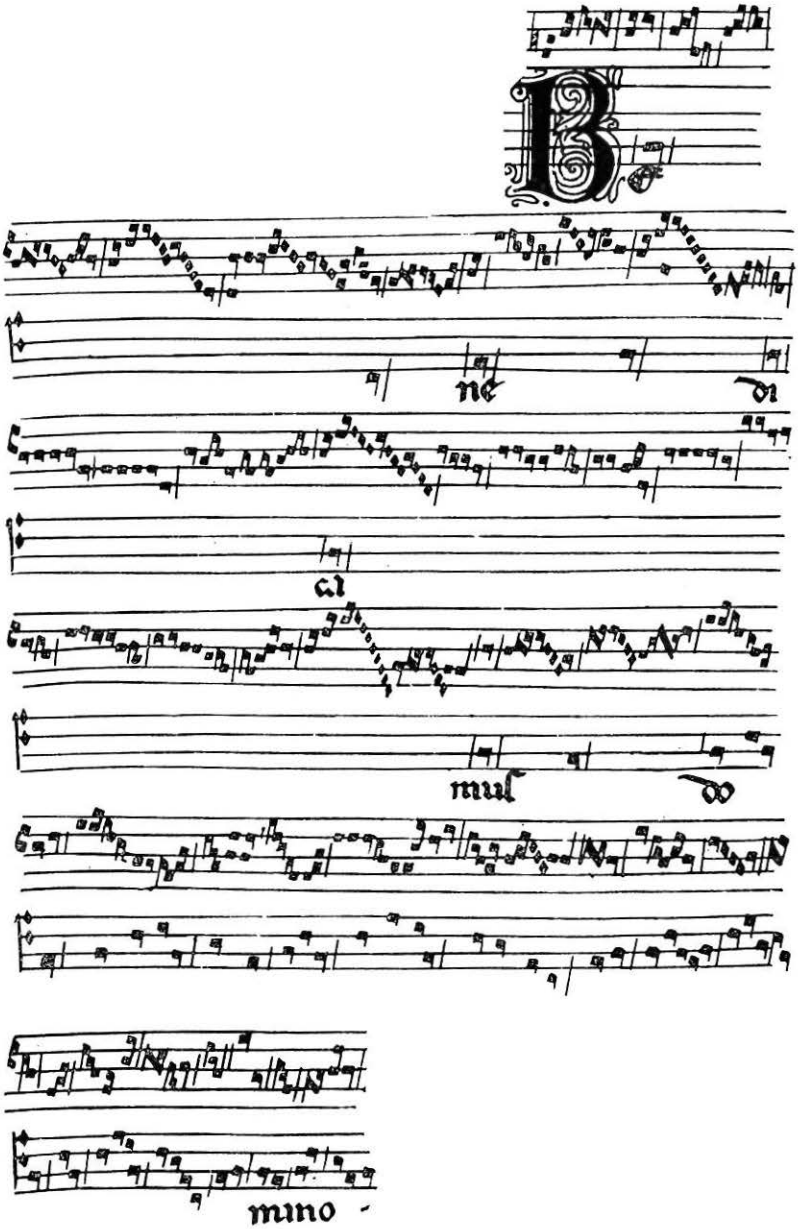
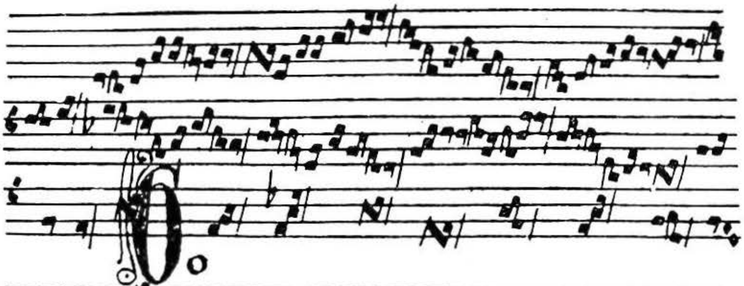
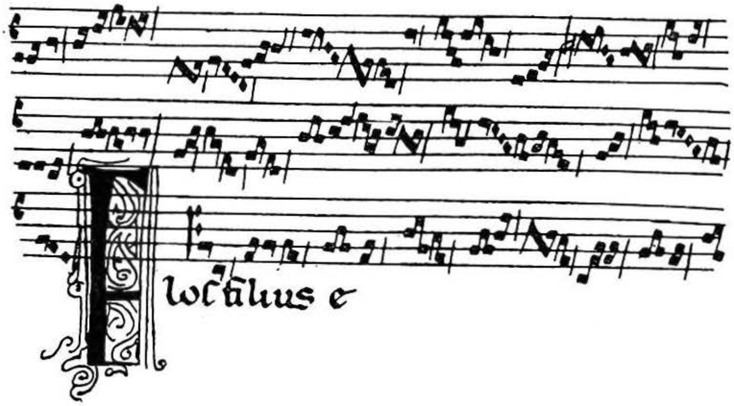
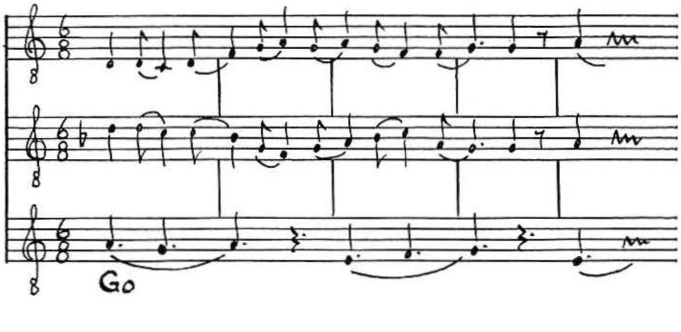


Figure 3. "Benedicamus domino" from Florence, Bibl. Laurenziana *plut.* 29.1, folio 87^{v}.


Do


Flosfilius e


Go

sixth line, we notice that the tenor melody is repeated in this piece. There would be no liturgical justification for a repeat. Musical composition has therefore freed itself of liturgical servitude by the middle of the twelfth century.

There is much more involved in the tidier form of writing in Figure 4 than merely a careful copyist's hand. The system for notating rhythms has been perfected to the point that specific time values are written in a clearly readable fashion. Only two rhythmic units are involved: a longa and a brevis. The diamond-shaped notes that played a prominent role in the duplum notation of Figure 3 have been abandoned (except for two or three very short passages in the upper parts) in favor of a more limited but precise system. By restricting rhythmic values to the longa and brevis, and by altering the order of these, six "rhythmic modes" were codified which agree with the poetic feet of ancient Greek poetry: 1. trochaic (long, short/long, short); 2. iambic (short, long/short, long); 3. dactylic (long, short, long/long, short, long); 4. anapestic (short, long, long/short, long, long); 5. spondaic (long, long, long); and 6. tribrachic (short, short, short). The top and middle parts (triplum and duplum) in Figure 4 are in trochaic meter or first mode, while the tenor is in spondaic or fifth mode. The musicians who were identified with Notre Dame in Paris around 1160 were thus able to specify rhythms with sufficient exactness that vertical concordance of parts was no longer necessary even though it is maintained with reasonable accuracy in this example. A transcription of the opening portion of the facsimile above will allow the reader to see how the notation of the School of Notre Dame is deciphered (Fig. 5).

The musical form known as the motet evolved naturally from compositions like the one in Figure 4. By adding a non-liturgical poetic text to the duplum or triplum or both, vocal performance was made easier. "Motet" was derived from the French "mot" meaning

Figure 4 (top). A complete three-part piece on the syllable "Go" and the beginning of another on "Flos filius e-" from Florence, Bibl. Laurenziana *plut.* 29.1, folio 11.

Figure 5. Transcription of the opening section of the composition in Figure 4. The first notes in the facsimile (about 1 inch) are the end of a previous two-part piece.

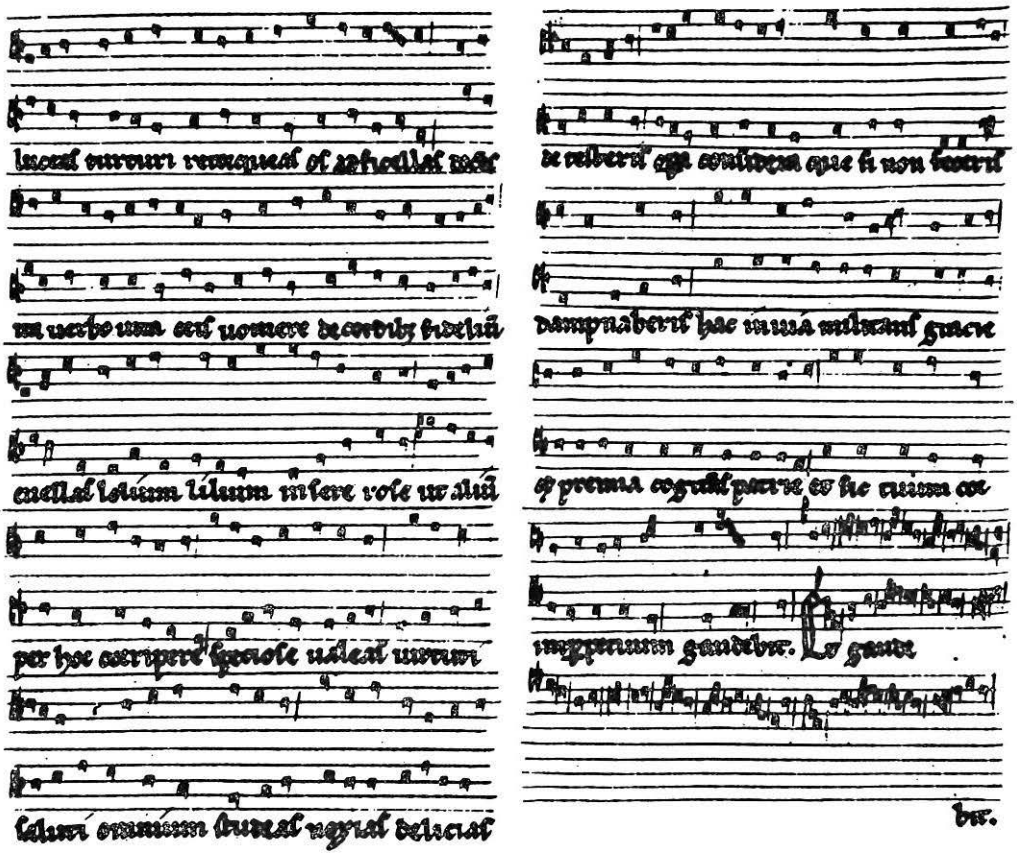


Figure 6. Two facing pages of a three-part piece from Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibl. 1206, folio 127v–128. The tenor part, at the bottom of the right-hand page, is separated from the two texted upper parts.

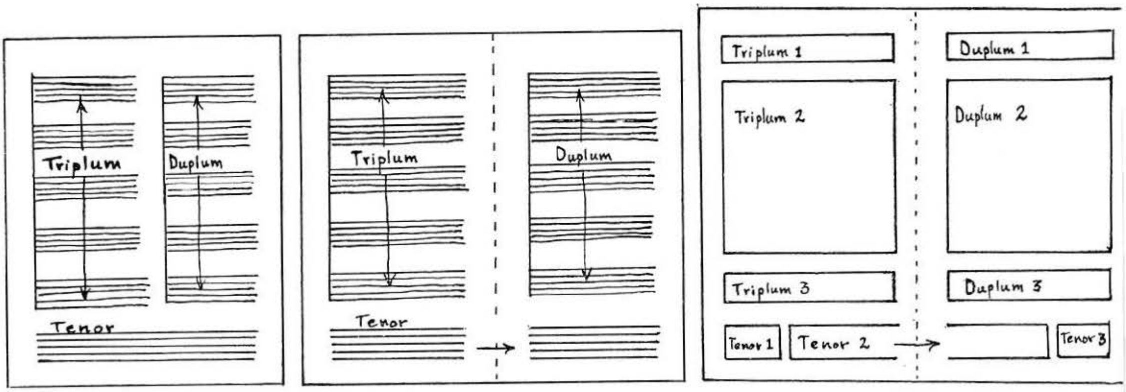
word or text. In Figure 6, a significant step away from score arrangement has been taken. Two upper parts are aligned above non-liturgical words, and the untexted tenor has been written in a confined space at the bottom of the right-hand page. We say the tenor is untexted even though the words "Et gaudebit" appear at the beginning and end of the part. This *incipit* was appended merely to identify the source of the borrowed tenor as in Figure 4.

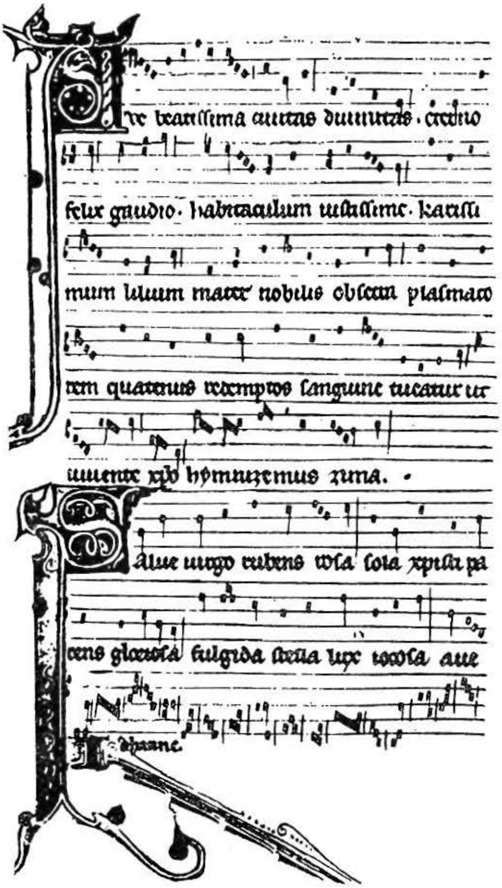
The tenor part begins in the middle of the seventh staff on the recto page, continues in line eight, and concludes in the ninth staff line.

The tenth is vacant, though the last syllable of "gaudebit" appears below the tenth line. The text was obviously added to the manuscript before the music, and the copyist expected that the tenor would occupy the last line on the page. When more evidence of this kind has been observed, questions concerning text underlay and the sequence of events in the preparation of a manuscript will be discussed. The complete composition in Figure 6 occupies the two facing pages shown, plus a portion of the page before. No thought seems to have been given to the problem of performing the opening section from page 127 recto with the tenor which is recorded on page 128 recto. The space that is saved in writing the tenor closely together at the bottom of the page is considerable, but visual problems remain to be solved. The solution to these problems was the next step in the preparation of music manuscripts.

Part Arrangement

As we turn to the thirteenth century, the normal number of voices increases from two to three, and the parts show an increased rhythmical as well as textual independence. This independence, as well as an increase in the length of all parts, led to new methods of allocating them on the page. Score arrangement was abandoned in favor of "part arrangement" in which each melodic voice appears on successive staff lines. The diagrams in Figure 7 show the typical arrangements on one page, and on two facing pages. In most thirteenth-century compositions in three parts, the triplum and duplum have separate texts, and the tenor remains untexted except for the *incipit* syllable which still identifies the liturgical source from which it is borrowed. The accuracy with which the rhythms could be read is demonstrated dramatically in this scattering of parts on the page. A tactus or beat was established and each performer read his own part without referring to the others. If a page turn was required, all parts were co-ordinated so that performers arrived simultaneously at the end of their parts on each page. By careful planning, part arrangement allowed compositions to run consecutively through a manuscript without leaving blank staff lines (see Fig. 7c). In Figure 8—from the famous Montpellier Codex, one of the most important sources of thirteenth century motets—we find one complete composition on two facing pages, and the beginning of another. Illuminated


Triplum
Duplum
Tenor
Triplum
Duplum
Tenor
Triplum 1
Duplum 1
Triplum 2
Duplum 2
Triplum 3
Duplum 3
Tenor 1
Tenor 2
Tenor 3



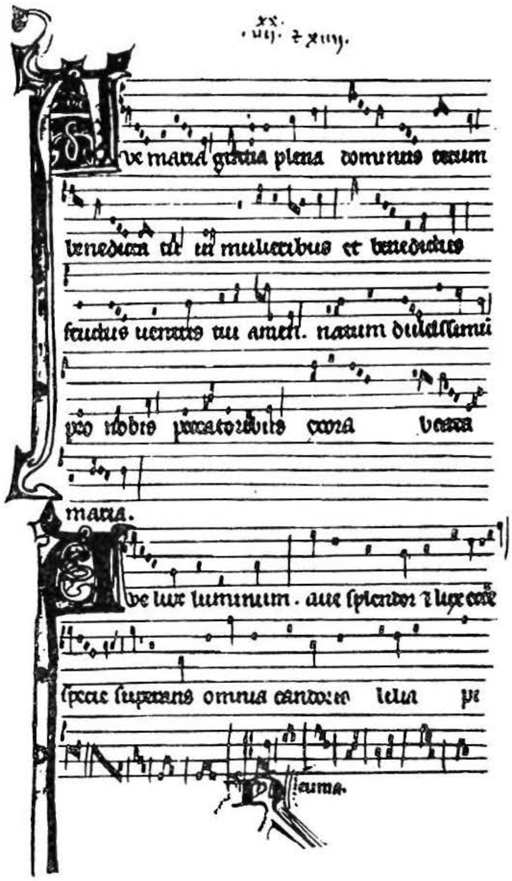


Figure 7 (top). Distribution of voices in part arrangement: (a) three parts on one page, (b) three parts on two facing pages, (c) two facing pages containing the end of piece No. 1, all of No. 2 and the beginning of No. 3.

Figure 8. Two facing pages of a three-part work and the beginning of another. Triplum parts are on the left-hand page, duplum on the right-hand and the tenor occupies the lowest line on each page; Montpellier, Faculté des Médecins *H* 196, folio 93v–94.

letters show clearly where parts begin. The tenor *incipits* "Johanne" and "Neuma" at the bottom of the page identify the lower voice of each motet; the triplum voices are on the left-hand page, the duplum on the right. Incidentally, the pagination appearing at the top of the recto page provides conclusive evidence that the manuscript is of French origin. Only in France would page 94 be written

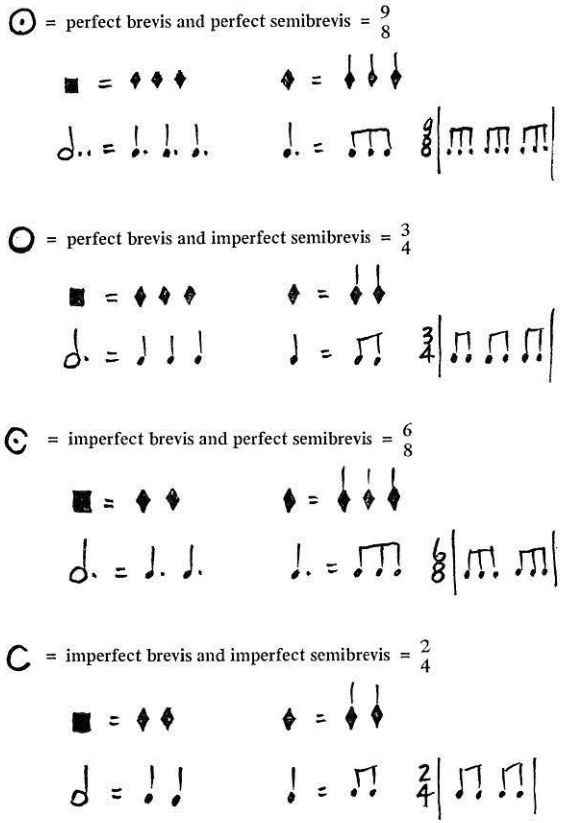
xx
·IIII + xIIII, or 20 × 4 + 14.

Part arrangement had a subtle but profound effect on compositional practice at this time and throughout the fourteenth century. The rules for combining voices were established earlier when one ornamental or complementary part was written against a liturgical tenor. If score arrangement had been employed for three-part pieces, composers would have given much more consideration to vertical sonorities. With the parts distributed on the page it was plausible to use the proven rules of two-part writing and to compose the duplum and the triplum independently against the tenor. This process of composition is called "successive counterpoint," and it accounts for the harsh intervals of seconds and sevenths that often occur between the two upper parts. In every case the sonorities between the duplum and the tenor or the triplum and the tenor are logical, explainable. Not until the late fourteenth century do we find composers giving careful consideration to the contrapuntal relationship between the duplum and triplum. Part arrangement undoubtedly deterred composers and performers from hearing clashes in harmony because these clashes were not visible to the eye.

During the latter part of the thirteenth century, at a time when composers were finding the rhythmic modes too confining, a new concept of rhythmic values and metric relationships was developed by Franco of Cologne while he worked in Paris. Though he added only

one additional note value (the semibrevis) to the existing longa and brevis, the concept of perfection and imperfection which he proposed greatly expanded rhythmic possibilities. A longa could be perfect, in which case it was equal to three breves, or it could be imperfect and equal to only two breves. The same holds for the brevis in its relationship to the semibrevis. Within a few years a smaller value, the minima, was devised and again the semibrevis was either perfect or imperfect and therefore equal to three or two minims respectively. Signs indicating these metric relationships came more or less into general use around 1350. Table I shows the circles or semicircles and dots that acted as time signatures, and their present-day equivalents.

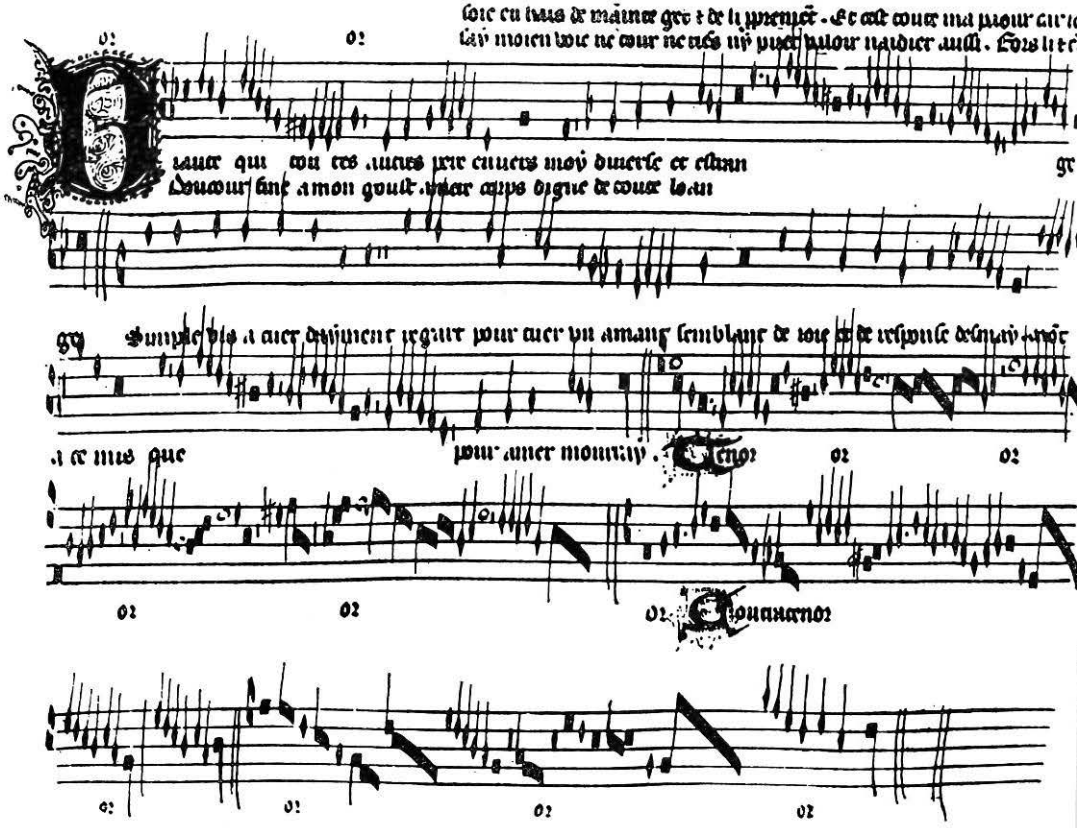
Table I. Metric Relationships.



A new secular role for polyphonic music was proclaimed in a treatise, *Ars Nova*, by Phillipe de Vitry about 1325. He argued that imperfect meters were as respectable as the traditional perfect meters even though Aristotelean logicians and Church theologians could not agree; he asserted the independence of tenor parts from liturgical melodies and championed the use of vernacular texts and the poetic forms of the troubadours in scholarly polyphonic music. The growing humanistic impulse is evident in fourteenth-century manuscripts in discreet ways: composers' names begin to appear, whereas before it was thought to be arrogant and sacreligious to try to bring glory to oneself by signing a composition. It must be remembered that the twelfth- and thirteenth-century troubadour repertory was confined to one melodic line. The scholarly, analytical attitude that produced the polyphonic music seen in the facsimiles above was cultivated only among the servants of the Church who were reminded in their daily prayers of their nothingness before God.

The secular ballades, virelais, and rondeaux of the fourteenth-century *Ars Nova* period have a very different appearance from the motets. The poetic text was assigned to an active upper voice called the "cantus." A tenor part was composed rather than borrowed from some portion of chant, and the third voice—written as a kind of foil to the tenor—was called "contratenor." In Figure 9 the three-part ballade "Biaute qui toutes autres" displays in the tenor part one of the earliest uses of the circle and semicircle rhythmic signs. The words "Tenor" and "Contratenor" are now provided to indicate the beginning of these parts. An interesting feature of this source is the extension of the final syllable "or" in the tenor and contratenor. Iconographic sources show instruments participating in nearly every musical ensemble, but many scholars argue that even untexted parts were vocalized. Their case is strengthened by this continuance of the syllable "or."

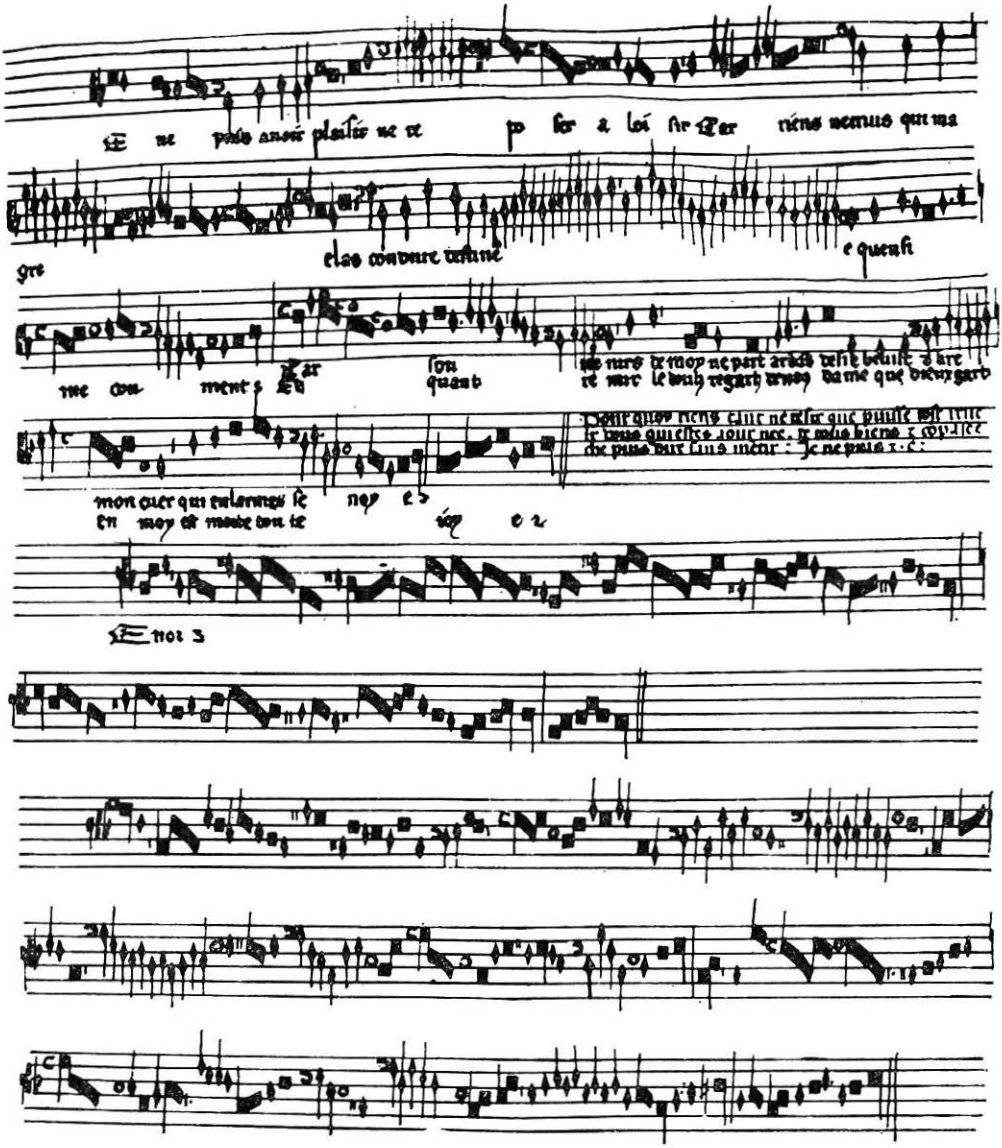
A detailed explanation of the new notational signs need not occupy us here. A profusion of them may be seen in Figure 10. The Chantilly manuscript, from which this virelai "Je ne puis avoir plaisir" is taken, contains a hundred similar secular works with rhythmic intricacies that are more complex than at any other time in the history of music. In many instances the visual signs are more complicated than they need to be, indicating that musicians treated the notation as an



end in itself, as an extra-musical dimension that in some way catered to a climate of intellectual sophistry. In this folio manuscript, which is large enough to allow several performers to read from it, compositions are complete on one page except for two pairs of very short rondeaux that share a page. In most cases the tenor and contratenor parts are clearly identified. In this particular composition the contratenor, occupying the last three lines, has not been named. An extra verse of text has been inserted in spaces of the staff at the end of line four. Performers would have understood the form of a virelai in which the first half, with one line of text underlaid, becomes a refrain that begins and ends a poetic verse and a musical performance. The last portion

Figure 9 (opposite). A texted cantus part and identified tenor and contratenor parts from the manuscript, Paris, Bibl. Nat. frç. 9221, folio 152^{v}.

Figure 10. A three-part virelai from Chantilly, Musée Condé 564 (*olim.* 1047), folio 24.



of music is always repeated but with separate words for the repeat. If the two sections of music are symbolized as *ab*, and if capital letters are used to indicate repeated text lines, the form of a virelai may be stated, *AbbA*. We see two lines of text corresponding to *bb* in Figure 10, beginning in line 3 and continuing to the end of the cantus. The extra verse at the end of line 4 is meant to serve only this last section of music and therefore the complete form of this virelai is *AbbAbbA*. The final repeat of *A* is signified at the end of the extra verse by the words "Je ne puis, etc."

The first and second endings of *b* may be seen at the conclusion of the cantus in line 4. One vertical stroke through the entire staff signifies the first ending; the short passage, with its own text "joye" serves as a second ending and the text is underlaid to correspond with this short concluding phrase. Similar first and second endings may be found at the conclusion of the tenor and contratenor parts. A major difficulty for performers is often evident in second endings. No sign was devised to tell the performer when his eye should jump to the final phrase. The notation is explicit in most details; it seems incongruous that a small matter such as this should have been neglected.

The steps in the preparation of a manuscript of the kind seen in Figure 10 become abundantly clear when a few minor details are observed. In the middle of the third line the downward stems of some notes overlap the text. Notice also that a space has been reserved at the beginning of the first and fifth lines for ornate initial letters that were never added. In the original manuscript a very lightly pencilled "j" and "t" (not visible in the facsimile), signify that the opening words on these two lines are "Je" and "Tenor." The pencilled letters were to act as a guide to the artist-illuminator. It has already been pointed out that in Figure 6 the final syllable of the tenor *incipit* "gaudebit" lies below the bottom staff line but the music ends one line above. Obviously the text copyist performed his duties first and assumed that the music would occupy the complete bottom line. The steps that were undertaken after a manuscript was bound may therefore be reconstructed as follows:

1. the staff lines were drawn throughout the manuscript according to a pre-determined plan—in the case of Figure 10, six-line staves run completely across the page; 2. the text, including extra stanzas, was added one page at a time according to a mock-up that showed

roughly the space required for each part and the correlation between text and music; 3. using the mock-up, the music was copied; 4. when the entire repertory had been inserted, the manuscript was handed to an artist-illuminator for the final decorative touches on the initial letters. Only two of the one hundred secular works in the Chantilly manuscript (Fig. 10) received this final illumination, suggesting either that the text or music copyist undertook to decorate the initial letter, or that an artist was close at hand at the time these two pieces were copied. The compositions involved are No. 27 and No. 53. If an artist had been assigned to decorate the entire manuscript, he would hardly have dipped inside to these widely separated pieces to begin his work.

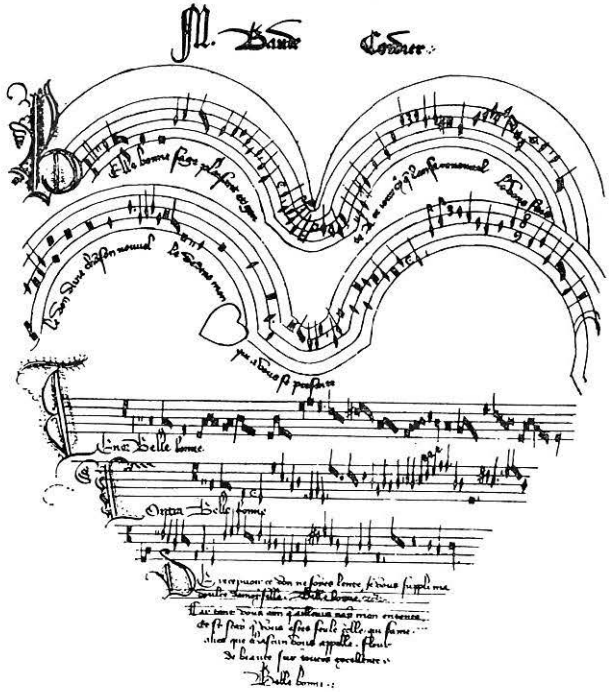
Not all of the clues to manuscript preparation can be observed on one page. By comparing problems of layout throughout the Chantilly manuscript, it would seem, for example, that all recto pages were copied first. In one instance, a very long composition overflows from the left-hand page to the bottom line of the facing recto page. That space would hardly have been claimed in advance of the recto page being copied. Several other manuscripts of this period are less sumptuous, more crowded, and have two or more compositions crammed on a single page. Since a composition in these sources often begins on the verso side and continues at the top of the facing recto page or has parts distributed on both facing pages, it is obvious that the copyist filled each sheet successively through these manuscripts.

French compositions of the late fourteenth century are often described as belonging to a mannerist school. The mannerisms referred to are in the complex notation in which the writing is sometimes more complicated than it need be. Some pieces cannot be read without referring to a "canon" or instruction that appears either at the bottom of the page or in the text itself. In other instances the work is given a visual shape that relates to the text. "La harpe de mellodie," for example, is notated in the shape of a harp in one source; a famous love song (Fig. 11) has staff lines curved in the shape of a heart; the chanson on the text "Tout par compas" (Fig. 12) employs concentric circles for the staff lines, and additional text is given in four circles at the corners of the page. Only two parts are notated in this rondeaux, the outer circle being the cantus and the center one the tenor. We learn, however, in lines 8 and 9 of the text that a third part can be

derived from the cantus. The text "Trois temps entiers par toy posés chacer me pues joyeusement" may be translated "After three perfect beats you can chase me joyously." Two cantus parts are therefore designed as a strict canon or round with one part waiting a full measure before beginning. The tenor also has an instruction indicating that the first two notes must be used to conclude the piece: "Tenor cuius finis est .2a. nota." Only three lines of a thirteen-line rondeau are underlaid with the cantus music. The remainder of the poem is in the upper left-hand corner of the page. The texts in the other corners, commenting on the wide reputation of the composer, Monsieur Baude Cordier, do not fit well with the form of the music, but since the composition is an infinite canon which repeats on itself *ad infinitum*, perhaps all available lines could be sung.

"Tout par compas" is an early fifteenth-century composition that was bound into the Chantilly manuscript, along with the heart-

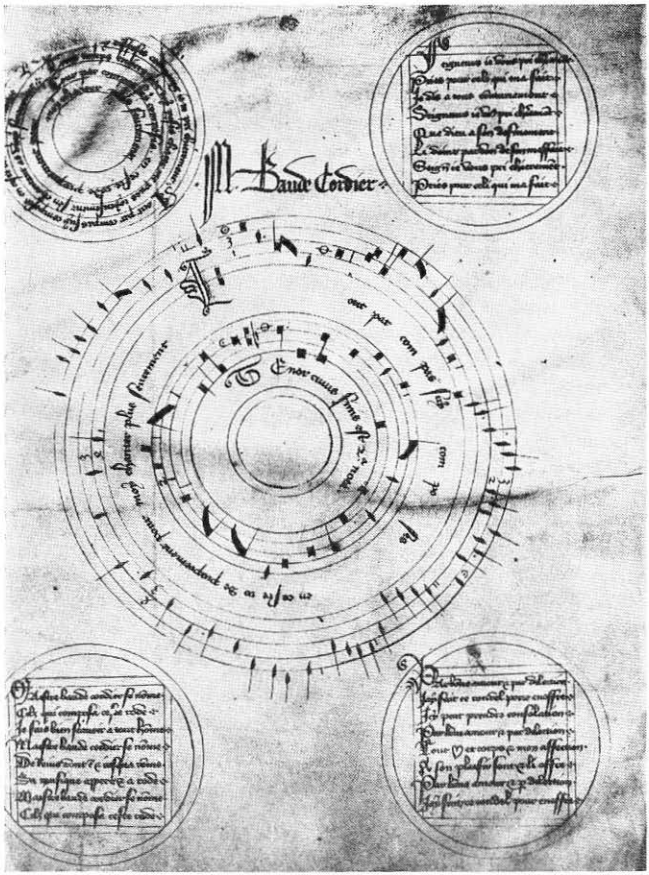
Figure 11. An early fifteenth-century composition notated in the shape of a heart; from the Chantilly manuscript (see Fig. 10).



shaped piece (Fig. 11), after the first 12 pages of the original book were lost. It stands at the high point in notational mannerism. The next generation of composers turned their attention to the development of a suave harmonic vocabulary and never again until the present century do we find composers or copyists as concerned for the visual effect of the notation. Initial letters continued to be illuminated, and those manuscripts that were prepared with the most care became models for the early music printers, but after Baude Cordier the notation returns to the role of servant, its only purpose being to direct performers in the presentation of the music.

The interest that late fourteenth-century composers took in the visual appearance of a page and in exploring the limits of their notational system was a natural outgrowth of the six hundred years of experimentation with visual symbols that we have observed. The profusion of musical signs and the high level of intellectual activity that

Figure 12. "Tout par compas" from the Chantilly manuscript (see Fig. 10).



characterizes the musical climate of the late fourteenth century encouraged composers to attempt remarkable feats of notational sophistry. Though the music of this period contains much that is listenable and interesting to perform, there is no doubt that the harmonic vocabulary—the sound itself—received less attention than it would have if the notation had been simpler. In trying to devise a precise notation, composers were drawn to the notes themselves; in solving problems of layout they were captivated by the visual appearance of their works. It is little wonder that fifteenth-century composers reacted by writing music in which sonorities are of prime importance.

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Visual Language in the Old English *Cædmonian Genesis*

Thomas H. Ohlgren

Although considerable scholarly attention has been focused on the narrative as a literary form in medieval literature, literary scholars have generally ignored the extensive cycles of illuminations, or pictorial narratives, which accompany some of these texts. This paper considers the ways in which the artist of one biblical narrative, the Old English *Cædmonian Genesis* (Bodleian Library, *MS Junius 11*), successfully created a consecutive series of visual episodes which correspond to the narrative sequence of the poetic text. The artist and the poet formulated a progressive chain of incidents, organized to tell a story. The illustrations, furthermore, reveal the artist's awareness of the poem's content, theme, and style. The drawings not only approximate visually the iconography of the poem and highlight the poem's theme, but they simulate in a visual language the rhetorical structure and stylistic features of the poem itself. Emphasis will be placed on the artist's creation of visual type-scenes and a symbolic color code. The paper begins with a consideration of three types of literary criticism through art.

In the development of book arts in the Western world, we must remember that only one-third of the book has been typographic. From the Egyptian papyrus rolls to the late medieval illuminated manuscript, the book was a scribal product. The inspiration to illustrate written texts was almost as old as writing itself.[1] Illustrations in the form of diagrams and scenic illustrations were invented to improve the reader's understanding by helping him to remember important ideas and concepts in the text. The illustrations were not mere embellishments, but had a didactic purpose: to describe and explain through pictorial language the written text. The Latin verb *illustrare* means literally "to light up"; in one sense, then, to illustrate means to elucidate or to make clear by examples. The artist's task was to translate aspects of the verbal content into a visual language. By "visual language" is meant the pictorial approximation of verbal content and style. A visual translation of a verbal text, however, is only an approximation. It is imperative that differences in medium as

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well as differences in historical and cultural development be taken into account. There are certain elements of written language—such as meter, rime, and syntax—that cannot be reduced to visual terms; just as line, color, and shadowing have no exact counterpart in literature.

Before attempting to assess the relationships between a specific medieval literary text (the early eleventh-century *Cædmonian Genesis* [Bodleian Library, *MS Junius 11*]) and its intercalated drawings, it must first be pointed out that the conditions under which texts were illustrated varied greatly, and consequently, the kinds of critical statements we can make vary according to the circumstances. I will show that the artist of the *Cædmonian Genesis* succeeded in translating the verbal content as well as certain structural and stylistic features of the poetic text into a visual language. The artist, as we will see, has formulated a visual rhetoric which reflects and intensifies the verbal rhetoric of the poetic text.

Relationships between Art and Literature

When authors—such as William Blake, William Thackeray, or Edward Lear—illustrated their own works, we might assume they attempted to achieve a liaison between words and pictures; that is, the illustrations were intended to be an extension and repetition of important thematic elements in the text. William Blake, in fact, did not make a distinction between his poetry, painting, and printing—they were fused in what he called "Illuminated Painting." "Painting" for Blake was the result of the combination of "Painter and Poet."[2] David Bland reinforces this idea when he says, "Not only do his designs match his text to perfection but the text itself was inscribed by him, so that physically it matches his designs."[3] René Wellek, by contrast, asserts that even when the author and artist are identical, a comparison of the poetry and painting will show that their character is "very different even divergent."[4] He specifically cites Blake's "Tyger! Tyger! Burning Bright," and concludes that the figure of the Tyger is simply grotesque and has no relation to the text of the poem. Although another critic, Geoffrey Keynes, admits that the Tyger of the poem appears in the illustration as a "mild and foolish-looking beast, more like a tame cat than the terror of the forests," he attempts to resolve the discrepancy by explaining how Blake was attempting in his "Illuminated Painting" to pose the question "of how one God

could have created the Tyger of cruelty and materialism at the same time as the Lamb of love and imagination." Keynes finds great relevance in that the illustration represents the defeated Tyrant who has finally been prepared to lie down with the Lamb.[5] If we admit this interpretation, the illustration would seem to aid our reading of Blake's enigmatic poem.

Another situation that governs the significance of the relationship between art and literature is one in which an art object, such as ornamented metalwork or a painting (which are not connected to a text), are used in the interpretation of a literary work. Behind this approach is the assumption that a common cultural and intellectual background mutually influences the arts. Such a *Zeitgeist* approach is employed by John Leyerle, who, in "The Interlace Structure of Beowulf," demonstrates that the structure of the Old English poem, *Beowulf* "is a poetic analogue of the interlace designs common in Anglo-Saxon art of the seventh and eighth centuries."[6] Leyerle points out that there are thousands of interlace designs surviving in manuscript illuminations, in bone, ivory, and stone carvings, and in metal work for jewelry and weapons which provide a useful aid to the reassessment of early English literature because they are "an important reminder that the society was capable of artistic achievements of a high order which can be looked for in the poetry as well."[7] Using art not connected with a text in order to interpret a literary work, however, can have severe limitations. Helmet Hatzfeld, for instance, attempted to explicate Arthur Rimbaud's poem "Mystique" by means of Paul Gauguin's painting *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*. Hatzfeld contends that the painting clarifies sections of the "absolutely dark, cryptic, and incomprehensible" poem.[8] He concludes that "the literary text gets its final explanation, its essential, decisive, clarifying interpretation, through art and exclusively through art."[9] This study not only ignores essential differences in artistic media—each one possessing a separate and unique historical and cultural development—but, more importantly, it violates the artistic integrity of Rimbaud's poem.

The third situation which governs the relationship between art and literature is also one in which the artist and author are different persons. A distinction can be made between an artist who illustrates a certain text under the direction of the author, as in the instance of

Dickens and Phiz, or an artist who illustrates an earlier text, such as *The Canterbury Tales*, *Paradise Lost*, or the Bible. If the literary work has been illustrated variously over a period of decades or centuries, a study of these illustrations reveals a range of opinions about the work. David Lenfest, in his dissertation on *Gulliver's Travels*, demonstrates that the series of plates etched over a period of about one hundred years provides a visual interpretation and criticism of the text of Swift's work.[10] He notes that illustrators in different decades emphasized different aspects of the adventures of Gulliver. By comparing different sets of plates, Lenfest uncovers a number of attitudes toward the text. More importantly, he demonstrates that the illustrations help the reader to realize the importance of the comic background. A consideration of the etchings, in short, increased the literary significance of the literary work.

In a variation of this situation, an artist confronted himself not only with a previously-written text but with one that is a substantially rearranged version of a basic text with a rich tradition of illustration —the Book of Genesis. The Old English version of the first book of the Bible, the *Cædmonian Genesis*, is a poetic amplification, with profound modifications, of the story of the fall of the angels and of Adam and Eve. The major deviations from the biblical account include the spectacular rise of Lucifer, the titanic battle in heaven, the detailed accounts of the horrors of hell, the defiant speeches of Satan, and a different sequence of the temptation wherein Adam is tempted first. The text of this unusual poem was copied from another manuscript, now lost, about the year 1000 by a Benedictine scribe, who carefully left spaces for an extensive series of outline drawings. The artist, when confronted with the unusual portions of the poem, which had not been illustrated before, could not refer to the Genesis artistic tradition for models to emulate. He must have, in part, depended upon a personal reading of the text. Under these conditions, the critical statements we can make about the text and drawings are limited to statements about the artist's interpretation of the text through his illustrations. Since the actual date of composition (estimates range from A.D. 670 to 750) is much earlier than the date of transcription and illustration, the manuscript, in theory, cannot be considered unified in the same way that Blake's "Illuminated Paintings" were unified. The manuscript, however, may be unified in the sense that

the artist, perceiving the poet's intentions, attempted to furnish illustrations that whenever possible complemented the text. An artist, according to David Bland, when confronted with a text to illustrate, may approach his job in one of two ways: he may attempt to efface himself behind the author or he may assert himself at the author's expense. But if the artist asserts his individuality too far, he runs the risk of not illustrating the text at all: the drawings may not have any real connection with the text.[11] With very few exceptions, the artist of the *Cædmonian Genesis* succeeded in translating the verbal content of the poetic text into visual language.[12] The 54 drawings interpolated into the poem reveal the artist's nearly wholesale assimilation of the poem's content and style.

Correlations between the Text and Illustrations

On the level of content, there seem to be at least three categories of correlations between the text and drawings. In the first category, the illustration is a close visual approximation of the poetic text. Although minor differences may appear, the artist was able to illustrate the text closely because the poem at these points is quite faithful to the account in Genesis. The artist in these situations was not faced with treating unorthodox material, and he simply copied from accepted models in the Genesis artistic tradition. The drawing on page 49 (Fig. 1),[13] which depicts five episodes in the story of Cain and Abel, for instance, is virtually a translation of Genesis IV 2–10.

In the second category, the poetic text and drawings correspond closely, but the artist had to deviate from the biblical account in order to accommodate the unusual portions of the text. The poem's very striking independence of outlook must have caused considerable problems for the artist. The illustration on page 20 (Fig. 2), for instance, is a typical example of the artist's attempt to illustrate a textual account that has little or no patristic or literary precedent. The lower half shows Satan, fettered hand and foot over the fires of hell, addressing a smaller fiend who holds his lord's hand. The drawing corresponds to lines 371–388 and 409–421 of the text, which describe in vivid detail not only the horrors of hell but Satan's plea for a volunteer to go to Eden in his place. Since he is incarcerated, he cannot personally defeat God, but he can seek vengeance by having his surrogate cause the downfall of Adam and Eve. The poet proceeds

Figure 1. Page 49 from *MS Junis 11*. Five consecutive scenes from the story of Cain and Abel, exemplifying the technique of progressive narration and the transitory effect. In the upper left, Adam and Cain labor with spades in the field; below, Abel tends his sheep; in the upper right, Cain and Abel make offerings to the Lord; in the lower right, Cain, holding a club over his head, strikes and kills Abel; in the lower left, the blood of Abel cries out to the Lord. Note (at top) that the scribe has made economical use of the vellum by writing the poetic lines 1032–1035 as prose, the poetic half-lines being separated from each other by dots.

Figure 2. Page 20 from *MS Junius 11*. In the lower level, Satan, bound hand and foot, touches the hands of another devil, who has received instructions from his master to cause the downfall of Adam and Eve. The emissary-devil, flying through the gates of hell, emerges in the upper level as a serpent in the Tree of Death, next to which Eve stands, restraining her arm. On the upper right, Adam and Eve reinforce God's prohibition by pointing to the forbidden tree. Two points are noteworthy: first, the drawing exhibits the symbolic color code—the upper level is drawn entirely in red ink, the lower in brown; second, the figure of the emissary-devil is repeated, contributing to the "transitory effect."

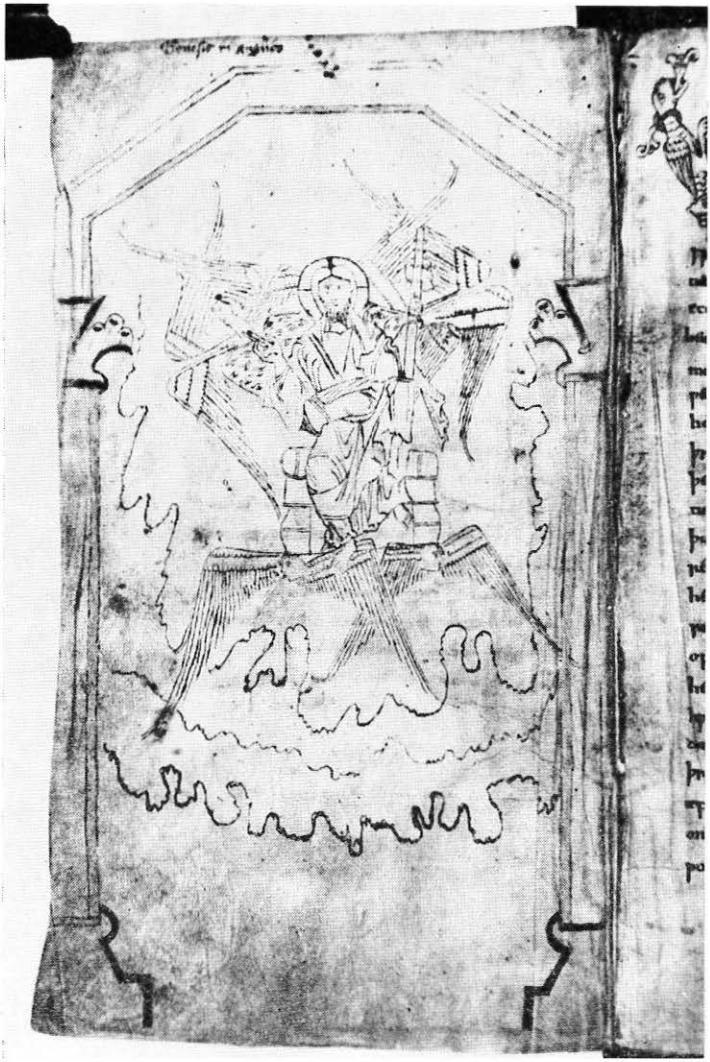


Figure 3. Frontispiece from *MS Junius 11*. Constitutes the first narremic unit of the Fall-of-the-Angels type-scene: the harmony in heaven before the rebellion. The drawing is a visualization of lines 1–18a of the poetic text. The outline drawing of the enthroned Christ-Logos, flanked by six-winged cherubim, also contains typological references to the Apocalypse, which widen the theological implications of the poem. Note the serpentine initial "U" which marks the beginning of the poem; these initials, as well as the small capitals, have a structural and rhetorical function.

to describe the arming of the emissary-tempter, who places a helmet upon his head. The fiend's main weapon, however, is his knowledge of craft and wicked deeds. His avowed purpose is to deceive, mislead, and pervert. The success of his temptation, as I have shown elsewhere, lies in his intellectual and "phantasmic" deception of Adam and Eve.[14] The artist has attempted to approximate this deceitfulness by showing the fiend ascend through the doors of hell as a beautiful angel. The beauty of the emissary-devil is reinforced by the drawings on pages 24 and 28, which also depict the disguised devil as a tall, graceful figure dressed in angelic robes. On page 31 (Fig. 9), after the temptation has been successfully completed, the deceitful angel is shown in partial transformation back to a naked, grizzly-haired demon. These examples demonstrate that the artist succeeded in translating an unusual and unorthodox textual account into visual language. It is apparent that he did not simply copy from models in the Genesis artistic tradition; he either had to adapt them from other sources or to invent them.

In the third category, the illustrations correspond to the poetic text, but significant details have been added to the drawing that help to increase or widen the reader's appreciation of the poem. The drawings may function as visual glosses on the poetic text, and like the patristic commentaries, they may reveal the artist's close reading of the text as well as his knowledge of extrinsic but closely related matters, such as textual parallels in the Bible and special meanings of a typological nature, which might be useful to the reader. In addition to reinforcing the opening fourteen-line section of the *Cædmonian Genesis*, the frontispiece (Fig. 3), which depicts the enthroned Deity surrounded by four angels, functions as a visual gloss by introducing certain details that widen the theological implications of the poem. The most apparent biblical parallels are found in Isaiah VI 1–3 and Revelations IV 2 and V 1. The account of the enthroned Deity is part of Isaiah's prophetic vision of God's plan, a plan that extends from creation to the redemption. The allusions to Revelations (the throne motif, the eyes in the wings of the Cherubim, the scroll containing the fixed purposes of God), in addition, are significant because they remind the reader that the entire biblical message of redemption, beginning in Genesis, is focused towards the Apocalypse.

Pictorial and Verbal Narrative

Christian art, according to Otto Pächt, should have been deeply interested in the genre of pictorial story-telling, considering that the basic text of Christianity—the Gospel story of Christ's life—was an intrinsically narrative one. But, as Pächt points out, "it was not in the treatment of the epic of Christ that the more potent and genuine forms of medieval narrative were evolved, but in Old Testament illustrations."[15] Vast cycles of Old Testament illustrations, Pächt continues, developed in Judaeo-Christian societies of Oriental rather than Classical character, and they were "conceived as simple and even naive illustrations of biblical stories and apocryphal Jewish legends, designed in the spirit of popular picture chronicles."[16] These cycles provided, in part, the models for the later epitomized cycles of illustrations as found in the vernacular versions of Old Testament literature in England in the tenth and eleventh centuries. And as the relation between pictorial representation and works of literature became closer, pictorial representation adopted from literature "a fundamental principle which in the earlier centuries apparently had been contradictory to those of the fine arts, namely that of progressive narration."[17] The technique of progressive narration in art, Weitzmann continues, can develop only at a time when there is a literary production of high rank and a demand for close pictorial accompaniment. Such a time is to be found in England in the tenth and eleventh centuries, especially in the artistic centers at Winchester and Canterbury. "We have here," Pächt concludes, "the unique phenomenon of an artistic imagination developing a so-to-speak national style of narration in verbal and visual form simultaneously."[18]

The principle of progressive narration is clearly seen in the cyclic illustrations of the *Cædmonian Genesis*; the artist attempted to conceive each changing situation of the text as an independent picture, "repeating the actors in each and so observing at the same time the rules of the unity of time and place."[19] The advantages of this method are two-fold: first, there is a substantial increase in iconographic subject matter as every action in the literary text is now adaptable for visualization; second, the drawings become still more intimately connected with the text by adopting the "transitory element." Kurt Weitzmann continues by drawing an apt analogy between the reading and viewing experiences:

As the eye in reading a text moves from one writing column to another, so it moves now from one picture to the next, reading them, so to speak, and the beholder visualizes in his mind the changes which took place between the consecutive scenes. In other words, the single scene in a sequence contains elements which stimulate in the beholder a certain creativeness in imagining those actions which lie between the painted scenes, since these never follow each other as closely as the shots of a motion picture camera. But as the number of scenes increases there is a clearly recognizable tendency to treat each single one in a more economical way and to confine it to the most essential figures in order to counter-balance to some extent the numerical expansion of iconographic units.[20]

Cyclic illustrations, which constitute the progressive narration, expand a textual episode into a number of iconographic units, which represent consecutively the various actions of the story. These illustrations must have iconographic coherence and should be dependent upon a uniform textual source. The cycle of pictures, in sum, can be read as a narrative, like the poem from which they were derived.

In the *Cædmonian Genesis* there are 54 pages of drawings, totalling some 96 separate iconographic units. The drawings reveal a density of consecutive moments: there is approximately one iconographic unit for every 23 lines of text. Lines 965 to 1054, for instance, narrate the major events in the story of Cain and Abel: their birth, their occupations, their offerings to God, Cain's murder of Abel, and the banishment of Cain by God. The drawings on pages 47, 49, and 51, which constitute eight iconographic units, narrate visually this 89-line portion of the poem. The drawing on page 49 (Fig. 1) contains five of these episodes: in the upper left, Adam and Cain labor with spades in the field; below, Abel tends his sheep; in the upper right, Cain and Abel make offerings to the Lord; in the lower right, Cain, holding a club over his head, strikes and kills Abel; in the lower left, the blood of Abel cries out to the Lord. In this five-part illustration and in the ones on pages 47 and 51, the figure of Abel is repeated six times, that of Cain five times. Although there are gaps in the visual narrative, the impression is one of movement from one major scene to the next. The lack of frames for the scenes and the economy of line also contribute to this "transitory effect." This sequence of drawings reveals that the artist succeeded in approximating not only the consecutive iconographic units of the poetic text but the transitory element itself. Due to

the density of visual units, the illustrations can be "read" like the poem.

Another framework for discussing pictorial narrative is provided by Eugene Dorfman's functional analysis of literary narrative structure. In his book, *The Narreme in the Medieval Romance Epic*, Dorfman isolates the two main units of narrative structure: central or core incidents and marginal incidents. Core incidents, or "narremes," are important episodes, "whose function is to serve as the central focus or core of a larger episode." The organically-linked narremes, which leap over the marginal episodes to form a series of internally related units, constitute the "substructure" of the narrative. Marginal episodes, by contrast, form a chain of undifferentiated story incidents in absolute linear progression.[21] The application of Dorfman's functional analysis to the *Cædmonian Genesis* reveals not only the existence of core and marginal textual incidents, but, more significantly, the presence of corresponding core pictorial episodes, which, to continue Dorfman's linguistic analogy, could be called "iconographemes." Thus, in pictorial narrative, each illustration, like a single textual unit, has a place in the linear progression of the story. And as in literary narrative, each pictorial unit forms a structural unit in the progressive narration; depending upon its functional importance, the iconographic unit may either be central or marginal.

Of all the episodes in the *Cædmonian Genesis*, the account of the rebellion in heaven and the subsequent fall of the rebel angels, developed initially in lines 12b to 69b, stands out as a structurally and thematically important episode. This episode fulfills Dorfman's criteria for a functionally significant narreme: its omission would undoubtedly disrupt the continuity of the poem. The fall-of-the-angels episode (or type-scene) is the organic consequence of a preceding narreme (Lucifer's disobedience) and the effective cause of two following narremes (God's creation of Adam and Eve, and Satan's revenge). The incidents surrounding the fall of the angels are as follows: (1) God and the blessed angels live harmoniously in heaven (11. 1–18a); until (2) Lucifer, through his pride, establishes a rival throne in heaven (11. 22a–34). God, upon hearing of the rebellion, (3) becomes angry and wrathful (11. 34b–36a), (4) creates hell (11. 36b–46b), and (5) drives the rebel host into hell (11. 47a–76b). These five core narrative units, or narremes, are visually approxi-

mated by the artist on the frontispiece, page 2, and page 3. The full-page frontispiece (Fig. 3) corresponds to the first narrative unit—the harmony in heaven before the revolt of Lucifer. The Deity is depicted sitting on the throne of heaven, surrounded by four angels. He holds in his left hand a scepter and His right hand is raised with the palm outward. He is bearded and cross-nimbed, and the cloudy arc of heaven is indicated beneath His feet by wavy lines. The drawing seems to reinforce the opening lines of the poem by symbolic significance rather than by explicit parallelism. The visual counterpart of lines 7–12 is the heavenly throne:

ac he bið a rice
ofer heofenstolas. Heagum þrymmum
soðfæst and swiðfeorm sweglbosmas heold,
þa wæron gesette wide and side
þurh geweald godes wuldres bearnum,
gasta weardum.[22]

(but He is always powerful
over thrones of heaven. With exalted majesty,
just and most vigorous, He ruled the heavens,
which were placed far and wide
through God's power for the children of glory,
the protectors of spirits.)

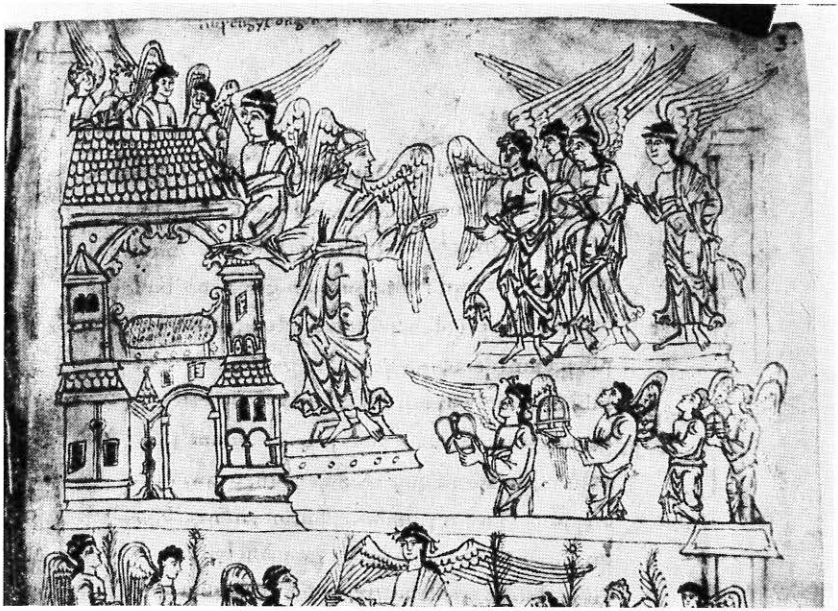
The textual emphasis on the Deity's might, 11. 3–5, is signified in the frontispiece by the scroll, which is emblematic of the Deity's authority and fixed purposes. Furthermore, the account of the angels' adoration of God, in lines 12b–18, corresponds to the visual representation of the four angels surrounding and supporting the throne of heaven. The balanced placement of the four angels around the throne may have been intended to represent the harmony of the blessed angels in heaven before the rebellion.

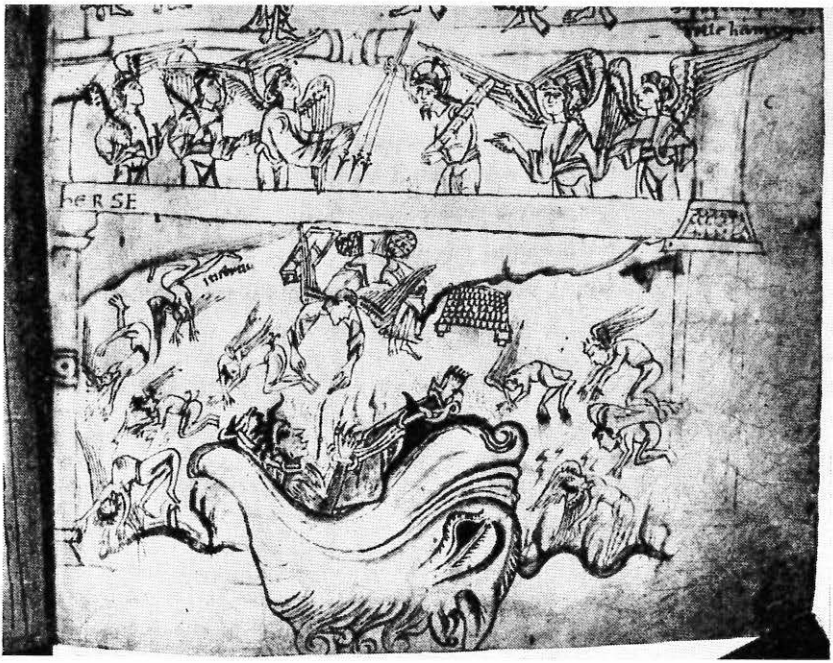
The drawing on page 2 (Fig. 4) and the upper two units on page 3 (Fig. 5a) constitute the artist's visualization of the second narrative unit, the pride of Lucifer, which is recounted in lines 22a–34 of the poem. The drawing on page 2 (Fig. 4) depicts an interview scene between Lucifer, who presumably has just announced his plans to establish a rival throne in heaven, and the Deity, who appears to have an astonished look on His face. The upper two levels of the full-page, four level drawing on page 3 (Fig. 5a) complete the visualization

Figure 4 (below). Page 2 from *MS Junius 11*. Constitutes the second narremic unit of the Fall-of-the-Angels type-scene: the pride of Lucifer. Christ-Logos sits upon cushioned throne, flanked by cherubim. Small angel standing on groundline is probably Lucifer, who is announcing his rebellion against God. The scribe has written "hælendes hehseld" (the throne of Christ) in the margin—an instruction the artist apparently did not follow.

Figure 5a (opposite). Upper levels of page 3 from *MS Junius 11*. Completion of the second narremic unit: the pride of Lucifer. The rebel angel, crowned and holding a scepter, points to the palace containing his throne. On the left, two tiers of angels praise him and offer crowns. In the second level, Lucifer receives palms of glory from six vassal angels. In both scenes, Lucifer in drawn in red ink.

Figure 5b (opposite). Lower levels of page 3 from *MS Junius 11*. Constitute the third, fourth, and fifth narremic units of the Fall-of-the-Angels type-scene: the wrath of God, the creation of hell, and the fall of the angels. The upper level represents the wrathful deity thrusting three javelins at Lucifer and the rebel angels, who are shown falling, with the pieces of the rival throne, into hell. The gaping mouth of the Leviathan, in which Satan lies bound, is a generalized vision of hell. The hell scene is drawn in brown ink, and provides a visual contrast to the scenes in heaven, which are drawn in red.

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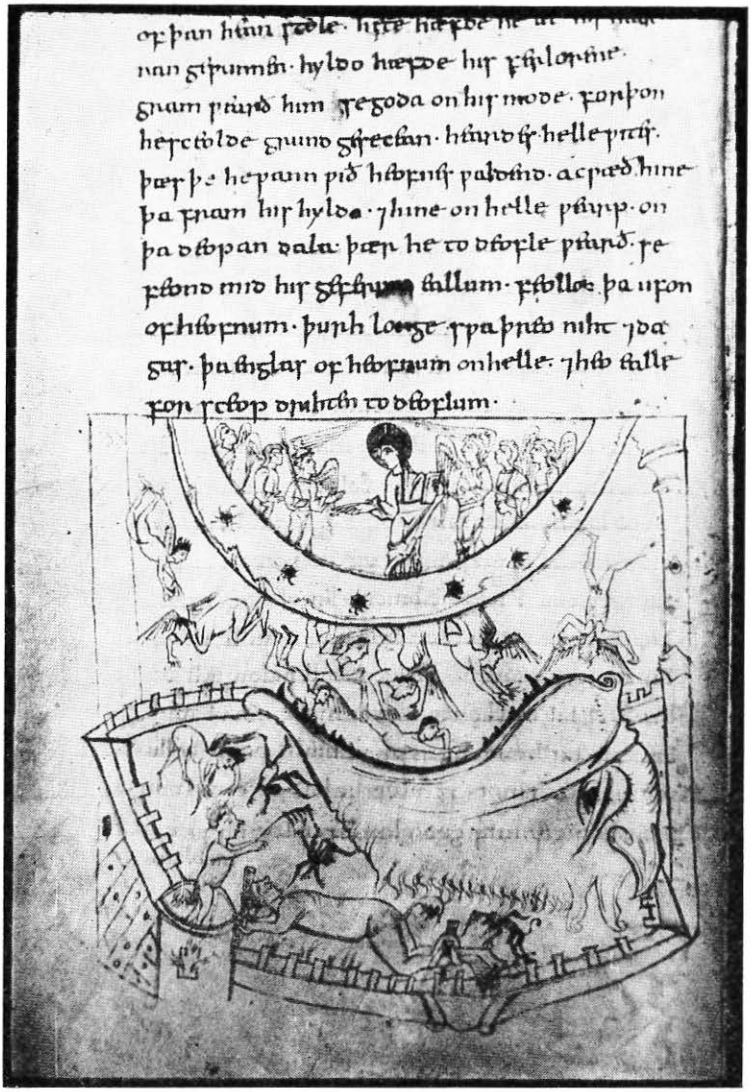

Figure 6. Page 16 from *MS Junius 11*. Constitutes with page 17 the second visualization of the Fall-of-the-Angels type-scene. In the upper half, the deity addresses the rebel angels, the first of whom wears a crown and bears a palm. In the lower half, the rebel angels fall into hell, depicted as the huge mouth of the Leviathan surrounded by crenelated walls and towers. The photograph clearly shows how the illustrations were interpolated into the poetic text. Both text and drawings, it should be noted, employ a delicate calligraphic line. As in the drawing on page 3, the upper scene in heaven is drawn in red ink, the lower scene in brown.

of Lucifer's rise to power. The rebel angel, in the upper level, is shown crowned and carrying a scepter, with his adherents, and pointing to a citadel containing the rival throne of heaven. Four angels on the lower right offer Lucifer crowns, while on the second level, he is shown in a triumphal frontal pose, surrounded by his admirers, who offer him palms of glory. The third narrative unit, God's wrath, which is described in lines 34b–36a, is suggested in the third level (Fig. 5b) by the figure of the Deity, shown hurling spears at the rebel angels. The fourth and fifth narrative units, the fall of the angels and the creation of hell, appear in the lower level. Lucifer, his throne now in pieces, and the rebel angels fall into the fires of hell. The loss of heavenly bliss and beauty, described in lines 69b–77, is clearly suggested by the grotesque, hunched-over, figures of the angels-turned-devils, and the once beautiful form of Lucifer is now a dark, clawed figure enfettered in the gaping mouth of the Leviathan. In this initial treatment of the fall-of-the-angels type-scene, the poet and the artist have created an exciting and dramatic verbal and visual contrast between two states of spiritual life, one blessed and the other damned.

That the fall-of-the-angels type-scene is structurally and thematically important is reinforced by the fact that the poet and the artist repeat it twice more in the *Cædmonian Genesis*. The first repetition of the episode occurs in lines 246 to 441 and in the drawings on pages 13, 16, 17, and 20. As in the first rendition, the five narremic units are developed poetically, but with each iteration certain details are varied, expanded, or omitted in a manner that emphasizes different aspects of the same situation. The third, fourth, and fifth narrative units, beginning with God's wrath and ending with the casting of the rebel angels into hell, for instance, were strongly stressed by the poet in the first repetition. These elements are, in fact, repeated in variation eight times in 42 lines. The poet employed in this short section very effective use of one of the most important rhetorical figures of Old English—variation. The use of poetic variation tends to restrain the pace of the narrative as well as to raise into high relief the theme of the fall of the angels. The repetition of the same idea eight times in 42 lines would probably be redundant in the hands of an inferior poet, but the poet of the *Cædmonian Genesis* never repeats himself in exactly the same manner; each iteration emphasizes new details or different aspects of the same scene.

Like the poet, the artist on pages 16 (Fig. 6) and 17 (Fig. 7) repeats the episode of the fall of the angels. This second pictorial account restates essentially the same details of the initial pictorial development in the frontispiece, and pages two and three, but does it in a manner that emphasizes the punishment of Lucifer rather than his spectacular rise to power. The drawings on pages 16 and 17 employ variation, contrast, and ironic juxtaposition in order to dramatize the consequences of Lucifer's act of disobedience. In the drawing on page 16 (Fig. 6), the angels are shown falling from heaven into the grotesque mouth of the Leviathan. In hell itself, Satan, tied hand and foot to stakes, is being harrassed by a devil with a flail. The most impressive aspect of this drawing is the vivid contrast between the blessed and the damned angels. Above in heaven, the loyal angels are depicted as beautiful creatures with wavy hair, majestic robes, and full wings; below in hell, the damned angels are small, dark, ugly creatures with unkempt hair, squat bodies and exposed genitalia. An even more striking visual contrast is seen in the drawing on page 17 (Fig. 7). The illustration depicts two monarchs, both enthroned and surrounded by their faithful retainers, but with significant differences. The monarch of heaven sits upon His cushioned throne, flanked by majestic Cherubim, while the monarch of hell, sits upon hard ground, flanked by ugly fiends who hold symbols of sovereignty over his crowned head. The artist, by employing ironic juxtaposition of the two monarchs, intensifies the theme set forth by the poet in lines 320b and 329a:

Heoldon englas forð
heofonrices hehðe, þe ær godes hyldo gelæston.
Lagon þa oðre fynd on ðam fyre, þe ær swa feala hæfdon
gewinnes wið heora waldend. Wite þoliað,
hatne heaðowelm helle tomiddes,
brand and brade ligas, swilce eac þa biteran recas,
þrosm and þystro, forþon hie þegnscipe
godes forgymdon. Hie hyra gal beswac,
engles oferhygd, noldon alwaldan
word weorþian.

(The angels continued to hold
the summit of heaven's kingdom, those who formerly God's
pleasure performed. The others lay fiends in the fire,
who before had had so much strive with their Lord.
Torment they suffer, burning heat intense, in midst of hell,
fire and broad flames, so also the bitter reeks
smoke and darkness, for that they the duty
of God neglected. Them their folly deceived
the angel's pride, they would not the All-powerful's
word revere.)

The account of the fall of the angels is repeated a second time in lines 733b and 763a, but now it is told from the viewpoint of the emissary-devil, who has just caused the downfall of Adam and Eve. His triumphant speech, according to J. M. Evans, is important because it "both relieves the almost unbearable tension of the situation and prepares the way for the contrast, already sharpened by the juxtaposition of Satan's rebellion and Adam's disobedience, between angelic and human falls upon which the structure of the poem rests."[23] Each of the five narremic units is succinctly recounted by the emissary-devil in lines 740a–750a. Through this account and the matter of lines 726a–740a, wherein the fiend boasts that Adam and Eve will go to hell, the fiend intends to console Satan, who, lying enchained in hell, awaits the arrival of the fallen couple. By readily admitting their guilt and seeking God's pardon, however, Adam and Eve have taken important steps towards salvation, thus robbing Satan of his victory over God. In the illustration on page 36 (Fig. 8), the artist ironically juxtaposes the return of the fiend to hell with the immediate repentance of Adam and Eve. Below in hell, the faithful retainer stands gesturing before the immobilized Devil; he is recounting his victory. Above in Eden, Adam and Eve stand in a pose of contrition: they cover their pudenda and their faces with their hands. The two-level drawing, then, depicts two fallen spiritual states, one human and the other demonic. Eventual salvation is suggested for man, however, as Adam and Eve repent immediately after their transgression. The juxtaposition of these two scenes reinforces the partial vitiation of the victory of Satan, whose envy is set against man's repentance.

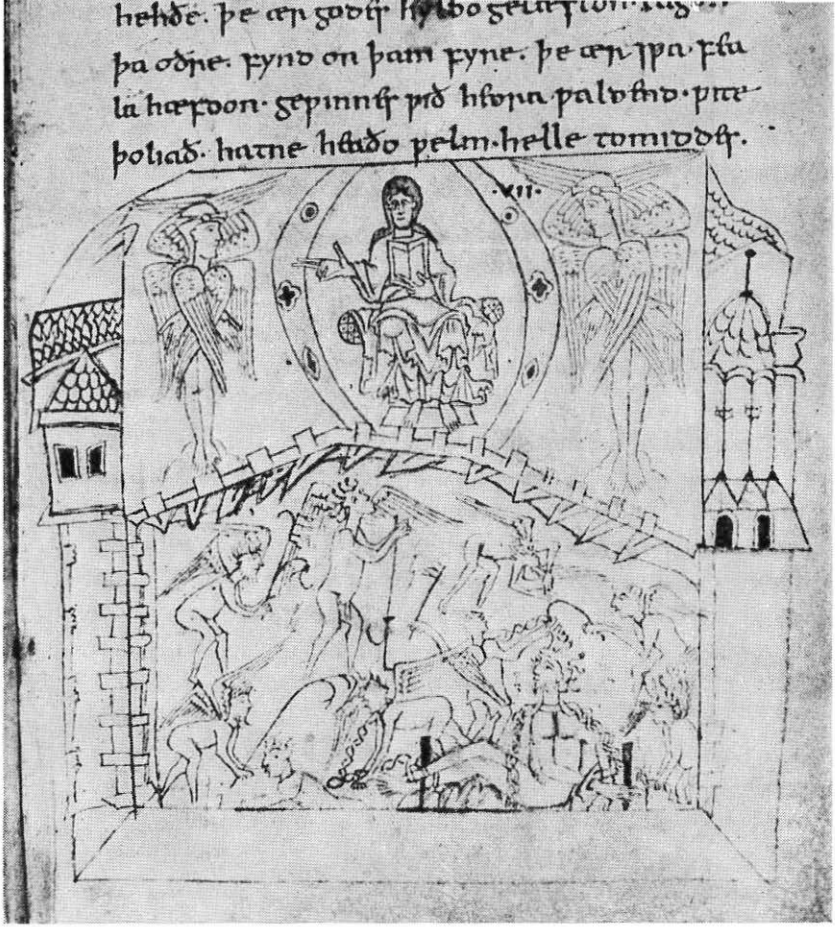

Figure 7 (above). Page 17 from *MS Junius 11*. A visual juxtaposition of the monarchs of heaven and hell, both enthroned and surrounded by faithful retainers. The pervasive poetic contrast between the obedient and the disobedient is yet again intensified by the artist's symbolic color code: red ink for salvation, brown for damnation.

Figure 8 (opposite above). Page 36 from *MS Junius 11*. In the upper level, Adam and Eve, conscious of their nakedness, stand in a pose of contrition. On their lower left, the emissary-devil begins to descend through the gate of hell. In hell, he is gesturing before the still-enchained Devil. The repetition of the figure of the emissary-devil contributes to the "transitory effect."

Figure 9 (opposite below). Page 31 from *MS Junius 11*. Above, Adam receives the forbidden fruit from Eve (right). Behind Adam stands the disguised devil, dressed in red-colored angelic robes. Below, the fallen couple repents. The fiend, drawn now in brown ink, sheds his disguise.

The Symbolic Color Code

A final example of the artist's creation of a visual language is seen in his deliberate manipulation of color. The drawings of the *Cædmonian Genesis* display the colored outline technique. Instead of filling an outline with pale washes of color, as in the *Benedictional of Æthelwold* (London: British Museum, MS Add. 49598, A.D. 984), the artist drew the lines in different colored inks. Although the artist restricted himself to two colors, red and brown, he nevertheless created a symbolic code whereby these two colors were juxtaposed for emphasis and contrast.

The symbolic use of coloration in medieval manuscripts has also been noted by W. O. Hassall, who, in a discussion of the coloration of the Holkham Bible, notes that the color red should have recalled to a priest the blood of Christ; that the color red becomes the emotional keynote of the manuscript.[24] Hassall also notes a symbolic use of coloration in the illustrations of the *Divina Commedia* (Holkham Library: MS 514). The artist employed red and black as the dominant colors in the *Inferno* whereas brown characterizes the *Purgatorio*.[25]

The first artist of the *Cædmonian Genesis*, who illustrated the poem up to page 73, has also created a symbolic color code. The color red is consistently reserved for depictions of the Deity, the obedient angels, and the structure of heaven. In the drawings on pages 3 (Fig. 5), 9, 10, 11, 16 (Fig. 6), 17 (Fig. 7), and 44, the Deity's nimbus, garments, hair, hands, and codex and drawn in red ink. By contrast, the depictions of Satan, the rebel angels, and the structure of hell on pages 3 (Fig. 5), 16 (Fig. 6), 17 (Fig. 7), 20 (Fig. 2), and 36 (Fig. 8), are always drawn in brown ink. The colors red and brown are employed by the artist to reinforce the thematic contrast between the blessed and the damned, the faithful and the faithless, the obedient and the disobedient. The fact that the artist was consciously aware of symbolic coloration is seen in his depiction of the fall of the angels on pages 3, 16, and 17 (Figs. 5, 6, 7). Before the rebellion in heaven, Lucifer and his followers are outlined in red ink, but after the fall, they are drawn in brown ink. The change in color visually reinforces their loss of heavenly bliss. We have already seen how the artist juxtaposes the two modes of spiritual existence on pages 16 and 17 (Figs. 6 and 7). The upper portions of both drawings, which depict scenes in heaven, are outlined predominantly in red. In dramatic

contrast, the lower scenes in hell are drawn entirely in brown. Thus, the ironic juxtaposition of the two spiritual states is intensified visually by coloration; red denotes salvation; brown, damnation.

An even subtler use of symbolic coloration is seen in the temptation-of-Eve scenes. As noted earlier, the success of the emissary-devil in tempting Eve depended largely upon his employment of an intellectual and "phantasmic" deception, a trick, rather than a moral enticement. An essential part of the fiend's manipulation of Eve is his disguise as an angelic messenger. The disguise motif is clearly emphasized by coloration in the drawings on pages 24, 28, and the upper portion of page 31 (Fig. 9). While in hell, the messenger is outlined in brown ink (Fig. 2), but when he assumes his disguise as an angel he dons a red garment and crown (Fig. 2). Once the temptation of Adam and Eve has been completed, the fiend's sartorial disguise is discarded, and, on the bottom of page 31 (Fig. 9), he is again drawn in brown ink.

The artist of the *Cædmonian Genesis*, in conclusion, has successfully approximated certain structural and stylistic techniques in visual form. He has created, to enumerate briefly, a consecutive series of visual panels corresponding to the narrative sequence of the poetic text. By the repetition of the same figure in consecutive scenes, he has simulated in pictorial form the transitory element. He deliberately employed position and grouping to suggest harmony and disorder. Other techniques, such as the repetition of type-scenes, variation, and juxtaposition, he used to reinforce certain pervasive textual contrasts. And finally, the artist created a symbolic color code which intensifies the verbal rhetoric inherent in the illustrations of the *Cædmonian Genesis*.

1. Kurt Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 1.
2. Geoffrey Keynes, *A Study of the Illuminated Books of William Blake: Poet, Printer, Prophet* (New York: Orion Press, 1964), p. 7.
3. David Bland, *The Illustration of Books* (New York: Pantheon, 1952), p. 16.
4. René Wellek, "The Parallelism between Literature and the Arts," *English Institute Annual*, 1942, p. 53.
5. Keynes, *William Blake*, pp. 24–25.

6. John Leyerle, "The Interlace Structure of Beowulf," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XXXVII (October, 1967), p. 1.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
8. Helmut A. Hatzfeld, "Literary Criticism Through Art and Art Criticism Through Literature," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, VI (September 1947), p. 3.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
10. David Lenfest, "The Illustrations of *Gulliver's Travels*, 1727–1838, Considered as an Index of Interpretation," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1967).
11. David Bland, *The Illustration of Books*, p. 14.
12. Actually three artists composed the drawings in the manuscript, but in this study I focus on the work of the first artist, who illustrated the poem up to page 73.
13. I am grateful to the authorities in the Department of Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, for permission to publish the photographs of pages 2, 3, 16, 17, 20, 31, 36, 49, and the frontispiece from *MS Junius 11*. Color reproductions of these pages are available from the Bodleian Library in filmstrip format (rolls 172 D, E, and 228.6).
14. "The Illustrations of the *Cædmonian Genesis*: Literary Criticism Through Art," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, No. 3, 1972.
15. Otto Pächt, *The Rise of Pictorial Narrative in Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 3.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
17. Kurt Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947 rep. 1970), p. 12.
18. Pächt, *Pictorial Narrative*, p. 6.
19. Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex*, p. 17.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
21. Eugene Dorfman, *The Narreme in Medieval Romance Epic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 5–7.
22. All line citations from *The Junius Manuscript* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), ed. by George P. Krapp.
23. J. M. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 162.
24. W. O. Hassall, *The Holkham Bible Picture Book* (London: The Dropmore Press, 1954), pp. 12–13.
25. Hassall, *The Holkham Library Illuminations and Illustrations in the Manuscript Library of the Earl of Leicester* (The Roxburghe Club, 1970), p. 26.

On the Cover: A Rubbing of a Claudian Bronze Tablet

Reproduced on the cover is a rubbing by Edward M. Catich of one of a set of bronze tablets of an oration that Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41–54) delivered in the Senate House of Rome in the year 48. Father Catich spent a year traveling over the Mediterranean littoral searching out Roman inscriptions of the Republican and Imperial eras for the third volume of his triology, *The Imperial Alphabet*, in which he hopes to "show, among many things, the broad band of letter-acceptance during the Imperial Age." Father Catich's comments follow:

The official text of Claudius' oration was incised in large bronze plates discovered in Lyons in 1528 and now installed in the Lyons Municipal Museum. Tacitus has preserved the text (*Ann.*, xi, 23–25), but after the discovery of the bronze epigraph it would appear as though the great historian had redone the oration in such a way as to transform a modest speech into one of the most solemn discourses of antiquity.

In old Rome bronze workers (*caelator*, *aerarius*) were numerous, and their craft products ranged from cooking utensils to weapons and armor. Copper was one of the first and easiest metals to fabricate, often being found in raw lumps—unlike iron which had to be smelted from ore. Some of the earliest copper came from the island of Cyprus (*Cuprum*), hence the name.

My recent research investigation has been concerned with brush writing and its end-product: the stone inscriptions in ancient Rome. However, all writing and lettering techniques interest me, and in many contacts with palaeographers and epigraphists in Rome, Athens, and elsewhere I have not been able to extract exact information on the process by which ancient letters were incised in bronze. Mommsen, Egbert, Sandys, *et al.*, describe Roman bronze tablets as being engraved. Ordinarily one thinks of engraving as a method of gouging into metal by means of a hardened metal burin—a slow, tedious and exacting skill. I hesitate to accept this. Indeed I prefer to think that the writing on Republican and Imperial bronze tablets most often was a direct and quick technique very much like the writing one fashions with a square-edged reed on paper. It had to be a

quick and easy process in order to explain the enormous quantity of bronze tablets produced throughout the Republic and Empire. There are many reasons for this conclusion, chief of which is that the "bronze writing" (e.g., on the Claudian tablets) shows all the internal dynamics peculiar to the chisel-edged reed, such as: crispness of strokes, cant modulation, constancy of stem-widths, thick-and-thin variations of letter parts, repeated tool handlings, an almost-total exclusion of "built-up" and "filled-in" letter parts, the *rugae* of letter depressions, and the absence of burin marks (the two latter facts could be ascribed to bronze aging).

As indirect evidence, one cites the coexistence in Etruria of bronze crafting and wax-tablet writing. In fact, the linear quality of gods, figures, animals, etc., for example, on the backs of Etruscan mirrors closely resembles the monolined Etruscan writing; one could hazard the guess that both mirror graphics and alphabetic writing were fashioned by the same stylus-drawing-writing tool.

In Rome the writing on bronze tablets generally varied little from wax-tablet writing. The difference usually was one of degree in that the writing for bronze ordinarily was formal, carefully made, and intended for permanence; whereas the writing on wax tablets was mostly ephemeral, informal, and hurriedly cursive. The recessed ground receiving the wax in scribal tablets generally was made of wood, bone, or ivory; whereas the ground for bronze tablets was the bronze itself with the wax layer much thinner than the layer of wax on scribal tablets.

The process of making bronze inscriptions, I contend, was similar to our present-day plate-etching technique in which the plate is first thinly coated with wax-asphaltum, pitch, varnish, or some acid-resistant layer in which the drawing is scratched with a needle or hard stylus exposing the bare metal underneath which then is immersed in acid (the most common being nitric, hydrochloric, potassium chlorate, and iron perchloride), corroding and eating away exposed metal. After the acid-etch, the plate is cleaned of its acid-protective layer. The acid-bitten, depressed areas in ancient Roman bronzes were then filled with white lead to effect a contrast between writing and field—not unlike the Roman practice of painting the V-cut stone inscription with red lead.

The Lyons Tablets are quite possibly the finest palaeographic bronzes extant. The letters (about 4,500) on these Claudian Tablets in the Lyons Museum are examples of the very best formal, written majuscules of the Imperium. Their average height is 1.9 centimeters ($\frac{3}{4}''$). A small sampling of the letters is shown in Huebner's *Exempla*, no. 709; a more detailed treatment is to be found in C.I.L., xiii, 1668; and Boissieu, *Inscr. ant, de Lyon*, p. 133 ff.

* One of an assortment of pages reserved in future issues of *Visible Language* for graphic designers to present their ideas on letter-forms in practice or research. See overleaf for some general instructions.

Experimental Design Pages

One of this journal's primary aims is to encourage an exchange of creative ideas among designers. We propose, therefore, to publish in future numbers of *Visible Language* special articles from practicing designers as well as from academic design programs.

In essence, we're saying to designers: take this 6 × 9 page (or eight or ten of them) and run with it! Develop any creative idea—in any technique you want to use.

1. Each article should relate to man's continuing problems in getting *verbal* language down in *visible* form. (This does not include, for example, the "language" of photography—but could include symbol systems.) In other words, the major emphasis of your article should in some way be concerned with letterforms or their visual corollaries.

2. Layout of the article should be completed by the designer, since you can best organize and present your own ideas visually.

3. Creative, unusual presentation of ideas is strongly encouraged, through the use of sketches, lettering, collage; any medium may be used that can be reproduced in one color. Sketch out and letter the entire piece, or we'll set type to accompany your art work.

4. Copy, illustrations, and layout may be submitted in any form that would be acceptable to a printer. Any copy to be set in type must be typewritten, double-spaced.

5. Please keep in mind the proportions of this page: 6 × 9 inches.

6. If you use more than one page, begin with a right-hand page. Do not begin with a double-page spread.

7. Normal journal margins are not inviolate, but should be observed where appropriate.

SPECIAL NOTE: Designers are encouraged to submit to the editor a preliminary sketch and/or draft of their ideas before undertaking final rendering.

Correspondence

The editors welcome comments on articles, reviews, and letters that have appeared in past numbers. Communications should be addressed to the Editor, c/o The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio, USA 44106.

To the Editor:
We were most interested to read the letter of G. Thomas Tanselle and your note (Winter 1972) on the subject of the double hyphen. This useful but little-used character has had a hard time escaping the dictionary. We at Merriam-Webster have been using it since 1961, when *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* was published, as an end-of-line mark to show division at a spelling hyphen. But the mark can be found as far back as 1890 in the old Funk and Wagnalls *Standard Dictionary* where it was used both as an end-of-line mark and as an internal mark to indicate a spelling hyphen as distinguished from the hyphen used to indicate a syllable boundary in an entry word. (The latter function has been taken over by the centered dot in most modern dictionaries.) Funk and Wagnalls has, however, discontinued use of the character in their more recent books and, so far as we know, we may be the only publishers currently using it. The double hyphen's real problem in catching on may have been summed up in a remark made by one of our editors a few years ago: "It tells people more than they want to know."

E. W. Gilman
G. & C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Mass. 01101

To the Editor:
Thomas Tanselle has suggested we use: (a) a single hyphen for word division at the end of a line, (b) a single hyphen for compound hyphenated words *not* at the end of a line, (c) a double hyphen for compound hyphenated words at the end of a line when the second part begins the next line. In other words, he is suggesting two kinds of hyphens for the same thing: compound hyphenated words—which would seem to complicate our procedures mentally and visually.

As a handwriter who works mainly for reproduction, I am using: (a) the single hyphen for compound hyphenated words within a line, and also

when they are broken at the end of a line, (b) a double hyphen for any other word divided at the end of a line. Is this a simple and acceptable solution?

Alf K. Ebsen
60 Logandale, Willowdale, Ontario, Canada

To the Editor:
I am puzzled to know why you accept the idea of using (=) for hyphenated words occurring at line ends in preference to a rule which says "no word breaks at line ends unless a word is naturally hyphenated." It would seem to me that *Visible Language*—which uses standard word space (unjustified text)—has no need to resort to mutilating line endings, a practice which follows from the renaissance obsession with "balanced" rectangles of squared-up text. Stop snapping words in half and you will not need to cause further confusion by the misuse of the sign for equality. Or have you some other reason for wanting to break words in unjustified text?

Peter Burnhill
22 Wolverhampton Road, Stafford, England

Editor's Note: We have never been completely sold on the idea of avoiding entirely word breaks at line ends, even in unjustified text. Very long, unbroken words carried over to following lines usually result in too many large and confusing gaps at the right margin. Without any research substantiation, we would guess that there might be something to say for increased legibility in maintaining a somewhat standard line length, if only to establish one's fixation "schedule" for that particular piece of print. As mentioned with Tanselle's original letter, we agree that the bibliographers have a point in suggesting that the double hyphen is a visual signal adding some valuable information both for the reader and for any subsequent analysis of the author's intent.

To the Editor:
How odd that, throughout the review by Colin Banks of Edward Johnston's *Formal Penmanship* (Autumn 1971), Johnston's name is misspelled! More importantly, though, I think your reviewer misconstrues Johnston's intentions by assuming that he wanted "scriptorial disciples" (though Eric

Gill wasn't a bad one!). His purpose, as he used often to explain, was to rescue a formal style from the mish-mash of debased and confused styles which the sign-writing fraternity had wished on the public, and I think he succeeded: the standard of public lettering in Britain is quite high, and I think Johnston can take a great deal of credit for this having taken place over so short a period of years.

Roy Brewer, Editor
British Printer, Maclean-Hunter Ltd.
30 Old Burlington Street, London W1X 2AE, England

Response by Colin Banks: I did not suggest by implication or instance that Johnston "*wanted* scriptorial disciples"; the truth is he got them, and some of them were not very good. However, I did make my opinion clear, I think, that Eric Gill *was* a good pupil. My reference to London Transport anticipates Mr. Brewer's assessment of Johnston's good effect on public lettering.

Editor's Note: We should also have mentioned that Edward Johnston's *Formal Penmanship* is available in the United States from Hastings House, Publishers (10 East 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016) at $17.50.

To the Editor:
"The Emergence of Gothic Handwriting" by Leonard E. Boyle (JTR, Autumn 1970) is a most interesting article by a man obviously well informed about his subject. It was all the more surprising to find, in the last paragraph on page 314, beginning "In fully developed Gothic . . .," his remark that "The use of the broad pen heightens the impression of weight and solidity, echoing to some extent the Gothic architecture of the period."

Even the layman could see for himself that in Gothic cathedrals, using Chartres as an example, everything was done to deny the weight of the architecture; that by using composite mouldings and "bundle" columns, every effort was made to almost disintegrate the material itself. The climax was probably reached in St. Chapelle, where the walls are really glass with only enough stone to support the vaulting.

To cite one of many authorities: Otto Von Simsom in *The Gothic Cathedral* (Bollingen Series XLVIII, 1965) on page 6, "Thus the massive thickness of the walls and piers is never allowed to appear; where it might become visible . . . these openings create the illusion, not of a wall, but

of a membrane-thin surface. Again the true volume of the supports is concealed behind, or seemingly dissolved into, bundles of frail soaring shafts." Later, page 204, ". . . as the windows were no longer openings in the walls but walls themselves."

It is quibbling, of course, but it seems a shame to mar an otherwise admirable article.

Mark Ash II
110 Hunting Lane, Simpsonville, Md. 21150

Response by Leonard Boyle: The writer is correct. My statement was very loose, indeed, even when my cautious "to some extent" is taken into account. My apologies.

To the Editor:
The scheme presented on the inside front cover of *Visible Language* is needlessly provincial and alphabet-bound. The ideographic writing system used by about a quarter of the world's peoples and for the language most widely spoken in the world is given no place. Yet its superiority in many respects to our inefficient phonic system is clear. I admire your magazine too much not to protest when it seems chauvinist to occidental imperialism.

Prof. Harry Duncan
The University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Neb. 68101

Editor's Note: We couldn't agree more with Prof. Duncan's insistence that visible language research include non-alphabetic writing systems. Our phonetic writing system does indeed have much to learn from the non-phonetic systems. It seems to us, in fact, that we have gone out of our way to suggest that visible language research "encompass the investigation of *any* expression of a language in visible form" (Winter 1971, p. 5). In the scheme on the inside front cover, the category, "Comparative writing systems (e.g., phonetic/non-phonetic)," was meant to call attention specifically to our world-wide outlook. And we have published articles on cuneiform, on ancient Maya writing, and on a new Japanese typeface.

Résumé des Articles

Traduction : Fernand Baudin

Après le livre ? *par George Steiner*

Le livre tel que nous le connaissons n'a été un phénomène important que dans certaines régions, dans certaines cultures, et pendant une période assez brève -environ un siècle et demi. A présent, le milieu dans lequel baigne notre vie intellectuelle et sentimentale n'est pas formé de lecteurs. Le statut du livre change, de même que la composition du milieu langagier dans lequel nous évoluons. L'écrit est devenu comme la légende de l'image visuelle et musicale. Notre héritage verbal est pris entre la culture semi-littéraire du marché des masses et les infinis détails qui passionnent les spécialistes. L'écrit perdure, mais les nouvelles formes qui le véhiculent amèneront des changements dans nos sensibilités et dans nos habitudes de perception.

Les origines de la notation musicale polyphonique *par Gordon K. Greene*

La musique est affectée par la notation qui la fixe. Le système qui fut élaboré entre le dizième et le treizième siècle en Occident permet aux compositeurs de noter analytiquement les sons simultanés. Toute la musique vocale et instrumentale qui s'ensuit est marquée par le souci de l'harmonie et de la rigueur dans sa transcription. Elle fait appel à des principes devenus courants depuis lors. Au douzième siècle un nouveau système est introduit pour noter les rythmes. Il permet de répartir plus économiquement les voix sur le parchemin, produit coûteux. La superposition des voix revient en usage dès que le papier est devenu un produit de masse. En 1325, un accroissement considérable dans le nombre des indications de rythme force les compositeurs à revoir leur système de notation. Si bien qu'une bonne partie du répertoire musical du quatorième siècle est transcrit d'une façon particulièrement compliquée, les compositeurs s'intéressant désormais à l'aspect visuel de leurs compositions et leur donnant la forme d'une harpe, d'un cœur, d'un cercle, etc.

Le langage visuel de la Caedmonian Genesis, *par Thomas H. Ohlgren*

Beaucoup de recherches ont été consacrées au récit en tant que forme littéraire dans les auteurs du moyen-âge. Mais les littéraires n'ont guère tenu compte des copieuses séries de miniatures qui accompagnent certains de ces textes. L'auteur examine la manière dont l'illustrateur d'un récit biblique en anglo-saxon, la Caedmonian Genesis (Bodleian Library, *MS Junius* 11) a réalisé une série d'images correspondant à la narration poétique. Dessinateur et poète ont imaginé une suite d'incidents organisée de manière à dérouler le récit. Les illustrations révèlent que le dessinateur connaissait le contenu, le thème et le style du poème. Les dessins ne constituent pas seulement une expression graphique parallèle qui souligne l'iconographie du poème, ils en reflètent la structure et les caractéristiques stylistiques. L'accent est mis sur l'invention de scènes-types et d'une symbolique des couleurs. L'article commence par envisager trois types de critique littéraire par le biais de l'illustration.

Kurzfassung der Beiträge

Übersetzung: Dirk Wendt

Und nach dem Buch? *von George Steiner*

Das Buch, wie wir es kennen, taucht als bedeutsame Erscheinung nur in bestimmten Gebieten, bestimmten Kulturen, und seit relativ kurzer Zeit in der Geschichte auf— etwa anderthalb Jahrhunderte. Heute ist die umhüllende Struktur unseres intellektuellen und emotionalen Lebens nicht die Welt eines Lesers. Die Rolle des Buches ändert sich, wie auch die Aufmachung der Sprach-Welt, in der wir leben. Das geschriebene Wort ist ein begleitender Text zu dem sichtbaren und hörbaren Bild geworden. Unser sprachliches Erbe steht zwischen der Halb-Lesefähigkeit des Massenmarktes und den Feinheiten des Spezialisten. Das geschriebene Wort besteht, aber neue Formen seiner Verbreitung werden Änderungen unserer Empfänglichkeit und unserer Auffindungsgewohnheiten mit sich bringen.

Von Maitresse zu Gebieter: Die Ursprünge der polyphonen Musik als visuelle Sprache *von Gordon K. Greene*

Musik wird beeinflußt durch die Notation, in der sie aufgezeichnet ist. Das Notationssystem, das im Westen zwischen 900 und 1200 n.Chr. erdacht wurde, erlaubte es den Komponisten, gleichzeitige Töne analytisch zu betrachten, und die anschließende Entwicklung vokaler und instrumenteller Musikkunst ist eine direkte Folge jenes mittelalterlichen Interesses an der Harmonie und an der Notation, das ihre Untersuchung ermöglichte. Diese Notation verwendet Prinzipien, die heute noch vertraut sind. Im 12. Jahrhundert wurde ein System für bestimmte rhythmische Werte eingeführt, mit dem Erfolg, daß verschiedene Stimmen ökonomischer auf dem teuren Pergament untergebracht werden konnten. Die Noten-Anordnung des Arrangements kam erst mit der Massenproduktion von Papier wieder auf. Ein großes Anwachsen der Anzahl rhythmischer Zeichen um 1325 führte die Komponisten dazu, die Grenzen der Notationsmöglichkeit zu erforschen, mit dem Erfolg, daß vieles aus dem Repertoire des 14. Jahrhundert extrem komplex notiert wurde; die Komponisten interessierten sich auch für die visuelle Erscheinung der Komposition und entwarfen Notenlinien in Form von Harfen, Herzen, Kreisen usw.

Visuelle Sprache in der altenglischen "Cædmonian Genesis" *von Thomas H. Ohlgren*

Obwohl die Erzählung als literarische Form der mittelalterlichen Literatur beträchtliche Aufmerksamkeit der Gelehrten auf sich gezogen hat, haben die Literaturwissenschaftler doch im allgemeinen die ausgedehnten Zyklen von Illustrationen und Bild-Erzählungen ausgelassen, die einige dieser Texte begleiten. Dieser Aufsatz betrachtet die Art, wie der Künstler in einer biblischen Erzählung, der altenglischen *Cædmonian Genesis* (Bodeian Library, MS. Junius 11), erfolgreich eine Folge von visuellen Episoden schafft, die der erzählenden Folge des dichterischen Textes entspricht. Der Künstler und der Dichter formulierten eine fortschreitende Kette von Ereignissen, die zur Darstellung einer Geschichte zusammengefügt waren. Die Illustrationen zeigen darüberhinaus des Künstlers Anteilnahme an Inhalt, Thema und Stil der Dichtung. Die Zeichnungen nähern nicht nur visuell die Ikonographie der Dichtung an und betonen ihr Thema, sondern sie ahmen in visueller Sprache die rhetorische Struktur und Stilmerkmale der Dichtung selbst nach. Die Betonung liegt auf der Schaffung visueller Typenbilder und eines symbolischen Farbschlüssels. Der Aufsatz beginnt mit einer Betrachtung der drei Typen von Literaturkritik durch die Kunst.

Resumen de los Artículos

Traducción: Tony Evora

¿ Y Después del Libro Qué? *por George Steiner*

El libro, tal y como lo conocemos, ha constituído un fenómeno significativo sólo en ciertas áreas, en determinadas culturas, y por un lapso relativamente breve en la historia: alrededor de siglo y medio. Hoy día, la matriz protectora de nuestras vidas intelectuales y emocionales ha dejado de ser el mundo del lector. La posición del libro está cambiando, como están transformándose las formas del 'mundo-hablado' que habitamos. La palabra escrita se ha convertido en el pie de grabado de la imagen visual o musical. Nuestra herencia verbal está atrapada entre el semi-analfabetismo del mercado masivo y las minucias del especialista. Aún persiste la palabra escrita, pero nuevas formas de circulación ocasionarán alteraciones en nuestra sensibilidad, así como modificaciones en nuestros hábitos inventivos.

Del ama al amo: los orígenes de la música polifónica como lenguaje visual *por Gordon K. Greene*

La música depende de la forma con que se le inscriba. El sistema de anotación descubierto en occidente entre 900 y 1200 D.C., permitió a los compositores la posibilidad de ser análiticos en relación con los sonidos simultáneos, y el desarrollo posterior del arte musical vocal e instrumental es producto directo del interés medieval por la armonía y la anotación que permitió su estudiosa investigación. Esta anotación emplea principios que nos son familiares hoy día. Un sistema para indicar valores rítmicos fue introducido en el siglo XII, con el resultado que las partes para voces separadas aparecen distribuídas más económicamente en el pergamino. La disposición de la partitura volvió con la producción en masa del papel. El vasto aumento en el número de signos rítmicos alrededor de 1325 condujo a los compositores a explorar los límites de su sistema, con el resultado que gran parte del repertorio de la última mitad del siglo XIV fue escrito en forma extremadamente compleja; los compositores se interesaron por la apariencia visual de su composición y diseñaron pentagramas en forma de arpas, corazones, círculos, etc.

El lenguaje visual del Viejo Génesis Gædmoniano Inglés *por Thomas H. Ohlgren*

A pesar de la atención que los estudiosos han prestado a la narración como forma literaria en la literatura medieval, han ignorado generalmente los extensos ciclos de iluminaciones o narraciones pictóricas que acompañan a algunos de estos textos. Este artículo considera los medios mediante los cuales el artista de una de estas narraciones bíblicas, el Viejo Génesis Cædmoniano Inglés (Biblioteca Bodleian, Oxford, manuscrito Junius 11), creó con éxito una serie consecutiva de episodios visuales que corresponden a la secuencia narrativa del texto poético. Ambos, el artista y el poeta, expresan una progresiva cadena de incidentes, organizados de manera de contar una historia. Aún más, las ilustraciones revelan la conciencia del artista en cuanto al contenido del poema, su tema y estilo. Los dibujos no sólo aproximan visualmente la iconografía del poema, alumbrando su tema, sino que también simulan, en un lenguaje visual, la estructura retórica y las características estilísticas del poema. Se ha puesto énfasis en la creación artística de escenas y en el simbólico uso de los colores. El artículo comienza con una consideración sobre los tres tipos de crítica literaria a través del arte.

The Authors

George Steiner is Extraordinary Fellow at Churchill College, Cambridge University (Cambridge CB2 2BS, England). Educated in France, United States, and England, he has worked as a journalist and is the author and/or editor of numerous books of literary and cultural criticism. Dr. Steiner's latest book (1971) is *Extra-territorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution.*

Gordon K. Greene is professor and chairman of the music history department, Faculty of Music, University of Western Ontario (London, Canada). His research has led to a comparison of the social revolutions in the fourteenth and the twentieth centuries as seen in the musical repertory. In order to grapple first-hand with early music performance practices, he founded the Collegium Musicum ensemble at the University of Western Ontario. During the 1972–73 academic year Dr. Greene will be in Europe transcribing fourteenth-century French music for publication by Les Editions de L'Oiseau-Lyre.

Thomas H. Ohlgren is assistant professor of English at Purdue University (West Lafayette, Ind. 47907) where he teaches Old English literature and Medieval Studies. He received three degrees from the University of Michigan. In addition to conducting interdisciplinary research, Dr. Ohlgren is actively involved in computer applications in the humanities and popular culture.