

# The Mythical Method in Song and Saga, Verse and Prose: Part II

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**Abstract** Offering descriptions of a few works of prose fiction written in English from the 18th to the 20th Centuries, the present essay attempts to supplement T. S. Eliot's somewhat polemical notion of Joyce's "mythical method," which is here re-understood as a continuous element in certain select narratives, rather than as any kind of substitute for narrative method itself (as it apparently is in *The Waste Land*). The essay demonstrates the workings of this kind of (modified) mythical method by retailing novels that subordinate correspondence with (and allusion to) a somewhat mythic or archaic original to their own particular stories, even while wittily maintaining contact with a specific archetypal narrative, or "scripture," overtly or covertly acknowledged or disclosed by the text in the course of its own narration. The novels summarized and quoted from are Ian Fleming's *Dr. No* in relation to the St. George myth, George Meredith's *The Egoist* in relation to the legend allegedly found on willow pattern china, Henry Fielding's *Amelia* in relation to Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* in relation to the Davidic Succession Document in the Bible. The last two novels of Henry James in relation to the patriarchal marriage-saga in the Bible, and Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* in relation to *Moby Dick*, bracket the discussion overall, and demonstrate de-mythicization and re-mythicization as the two poles and termini of the discourse.

**Key words** "Mythical method"; myth; plot; prose fiction; scripture disclosure-point; atavistic interpolant; willow pattern; epic; *Aeneid*; Davidic Succession Document

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lish-speaking countries.

T. S. Eliot's so-called 'mythical method' is a publishing author's practice of taking an ancient or received myth, legend, or traditional or archetypal or a historical story—from the point of view of literary realism a tall tale or fantastic legend—as the skeleton or organizing principle or scaffold or template or infrastructure or pinto for a narrative or plot that is both ostensibly self-standing and in some sense or other 'modern,' or more contemporary, and yet can be mapped onto a kind of archaeological other or original.<sup>1</sup> Eliot thinks the post-Flaubertian mess of the contemporary novel's reflection of anarchic modern life might well need this kind of ancient stay against present chaos, or this means of reinventing the novel form. Eliot seems to deplore the Bakhtinian unspecifiability of the omnigenic novel, and sees this structured way of escape from it. Thus Eliot famously wrote:

In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. It is a method already adumbrated by Mr. Yeats, and of the need for which I believe Mr. Yeats to have been the first contemporary to be conscious. It is a method for which the horoscope is auspicious. Psychology (such as it is, and whether our reaction to it be comic or serious), ethnology, and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art.<sup>2</sup>

Of course Eliot's polemical-ideological description might work well enough for the collection of antique fragments and variously ventriloquized voices called *The Waste Land*.

Mythology in literature tends to disclose the sentimental under-presence of a prior culture in a later one: Graeco-Roman mythology in *The Faerie Queene* and in the similes of *Paradise Lost*; Germanic mythology in Wagner and Tolkien; Celtic myth in Yeats. But when an archetypal story is used as the framework of a novel's plot, why, after the building is up, go on consulting the blueprint—or why x-ray the statue? But with the mythical method the guides have been retained or incorporated as a visible dimension of the design, and they inevitably ask to be considered, as it were, stereoscopically. Ordinarily, the novel's contemporaneity, domesticity, intimacies, naturalistic bias, reportage, and everyday protagonists, would seem to replace ancient story, rather than depend on it. And yet there are examples of this dependence quite distinct from Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Offering longish and somewhat elliptical descriptions of three works of prose fiction, Henry Fielding's *Amelia*, George Meredith's *Egoist*, and Mario Puzo's *The God-*

father, the present essay will attempt to supplement T. S. Eliot's somewhat polemical notion of Joyce's "mythical method," which we will re-understand here as a continuous element and technique in our chosen narratives, rather than as any kind of substitute or replacement for narrative method itself (as it apparently is in Eliot's enarrable *The Waste Land*, whether or not this is the case with Joyce's *Ulysses*). We can demonstrate the workings of this modified mythical method by retailing stories that subordinate correspondence with (and allusion to) a mythic or archaic or legendary original to their own particular histories, even while they allusively and wittily maintain contact and correspondence with a specific and select archetypal narrative—as it were a "scripture"—overtly or covertly acknowledged or disclosed by the story during the course of its own telling. We will begin with contrasting examples of mythicized story in Ian Fleming and de-mythicized story in Henry James, and we will conclude with James' polar opposite in the re-mythifying fiction of Thomas Pynchon.

By means of the mythical method (whether a technique of writing or of reading), a contemporary story can be mapped onto and/or modeled after an older, received and reconceived one, but the telling of the new version is typically managed by dissimulating or disguising or abiding some or even much of the dependence on the older story, until at some critical juncture the narration can dramatically reverse into a disclosure of the superimposition of one story on another, by means of a pronounced intrusion of a recognizable or tell-tale element from the latent pattern into the manifest one.<sup>3</sup> If the parallels never meet, there seems to be no cat to be let out of the bag. The cat can only be released by means of some kind of interference-like slippage being allowed from the one discourse to the other; but first there has to be a cat, or rather a telltale hybrid. At that point the tale actually becomes more meaningful than before, or more significant, by virtue of its becoming the sign of (or index to) another significant tale; oftentimes a myth or "canonic story."

In what follows I wish to pinpoint some places in the texts of select fictions where the cross-over between ancient 'myth' (or *received story*) and modern 'novel' occurs: the disclosure of what's going on, or where we are, and of where we find ourselves, when we start reading not for the plot of the novel, but for that of the novelist, at the point of atavistic interpolation—or at that juncture when reading for the plot becomes reading for its plottedness by a prior paradigm. Coincidence hereupon turns into design; the fiction loses its innocence—or naïveté—and becomes ironic, insofar as this form of obliquity entails a double consciousness. Disabused of the pretense of the story's originality, we re-discover its ingenuity on a second register: what myth are the characters re-living, under what sign are they re-born?

Something transactional needs to happen if the reader is to recognize the pattern or template—when it dawns on him or her that he or she has been, as it were, "had," when he or she realizes that what seemed like a novel or original story is actually a kind of *Doppelgänger* for—or reincarnation or offspring of—the actual original; on which the secondary version now affords a kind of commentary. —Or vice versa. In any case, at some point one's consciousness of the text divides and doubles, when the latency of the subtext becomes more or less manifest and in want of appreciative attention for its own sake.

## I. MYTH IN SOME SECULAR FICTIONS: IAN FLEMING'S *DR. NO*, HENRY JAMES'S *WINGS AND BOWL*

Despite its general tidal movement away from the participation of myth in religious belief, secular fiction can also lead us the other way, towards restoring a myth, rather than ironizing it parodically or euhemeristically. Ian Fleming's *Dr. No* has a midpoint chapter titled "Dragon Spoor," and the relevance of this phrase emerges two chapters later, when "The Thing" of the new chapter turns out to be a swamp-thing equipped with a flame-thrower:

Half a mile away, coming across the lake, was a shapeless thing with two glaring orange eyes with black pupils. From between these, where the mouth might be, fluttered a yard of blue flame. The grey luminescence of the stars showed some kind of a domed head above two short batlike wings. The thing was making a low moaning roar that overlaid another noise, a deep rhythmic thud. It was coming towards them at about ten miles an hour, throwing up a creamy wake.<sup>4</sup>

Bond reassures his spooked native associate, "you can forget about dragons," but nonetheless he thinks to himself: "Have to fight it here. What 'll its weak spots be? The drivers. . . . I 'll go for its headlights. . . . Must have some kind of giant tires. . . . I 'll go for them too." Of course, dragons are said to get their names from their eyes, and they are vulnerable to sudden thrusts at anatomical weak points. —Poke 'em in the eyes, kick 'em in the cajones. Elsewhere we learn that Bond has been decorated as a member of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, presumably making him a bit like that knight in Paolo Uccello's painting of St. George,<sup>5</sup> as found in the poem of U. A. Fanthorpe's *Side Effects*; the champion in question, speaking to the Lady—for she is surely in need of his services as a defender—claims that he has "diplomas in Dragon / Management and Virgin Reclamation." "Don 't you want to carry out the roles / That sociology and myth have designed for you?" he plaintively asks.<sup>6</sup>

For a less campy example of a fictional groundplot that is folkish and also Biblical, and where we hardly expect it, consider Henry James's *Wings of the Dove* and *The Golden Bowl*. Both novels seem to have as their fable the stories in the patriarchal marriage saga as found in Genesis 12, 20, and 26, about a sojourning patriarch enriched by a wealthy local patron who learns that the patriarch's female travelling companion, with whom the patron himself thinks to bed down, is not the patriarch's sister, and thus not at her guardian's dispose, as the man has himself self-protectingly alleged; rather, she turns out to be the man's woman and sexual partner, and thus a future matriarch and mother in Israel. Mating with another man's sister is customary, and sleeping with his wife is taboo. But James's two novels have reversed the genders, and turned the dynastics into a plot to possess an inheritance of enormous means—rather than avoiding a potentially threatening design upon an elect genealogy. The conclusions that Merton Densher cannot marry the Kate Croy to whom he is secretly engaged, and that Prince Amerigo in London cannot enjoy his secret mistress Charlotte in American City, are nonetheless the same: Amerigo cannot sleep with the

recent mate of his wife Maggie's father, and Kate cannot marry the fortune her fiancé has inherited by his charming of her dead rival. A taboo has arisen, as if Kate had indeed become Densher's sister, or sister-in-law, and the dead Milly Theale become his wife in absentia. Amerigo has acquired access to a fortune and brought Charlotte near him only by making her the object of a similar incest taboo or prohibited degree.<sup>7</sup>

The implicit commentary on modern power-relations between the sexes makes the person in the middle, now male, into the pawn between two women, who are positioned as rivals for a legacy or a title or social security. In the Bible the impending transaction, the wife-sister swap, was "between men." In James the lover-husband swap is "between women." The men are now the bargaining chips; they are pawns between competing women. These are parallels that never meet; James never discloses any relation to the Bible, and without the atavistic interpolant, there is no *frisson*, and no dawning sense that one plot or fate is mirroring or guiding or determining another, and asking to be recognized. In James the only plot that takes some recognizing is the plots of the characters on each other.

## II. THE EGOIST AND "THE WILLOW PATTERN"

"You need not tell me you have a design in all that you do, Willoughby Patterne."

— *The Egoist*, Chap. 34, Mrs. Mountstuart to the title character, shortly before reporting Lady Busshe's sardonic remark that her wedding china gift should have been the Willow Pattern

"Similes have the merit of satisfying the finder of them, and cheating the hearer," said Laetitia.

— *The Egoist*, Chap. 48, on Clara Middleton's comparison of herself to a perfectly still fisherman's float on the water during her interview with Vernon Whitford

For an example of mythic interference or interface at the level of the fable, that is, a decisive intrusion or intervention coming from the pattern and asserting its presence in the latter-day text, consider George Meredith's *The Egoist*, from Henry James's own fictional era. The key moment in the doubling of the plot is surely this quote, in an interview between Mrs. Mountstuart and the hero, Sir Willoughby Patterne, discussing the rejection of Mrs. Mountstuart's rival Lady Busshe's wedding gift of china to Willoughby's fiancée Clara, whom Mrs. Mountstuart has oddly but insistently characterized as "a rogue in porcelain." Sir Willoughby says:

'... She makes a mouth at porcelain. Toujours le porcelaine! For me, her pettishness is one of her charms, I confess it.'...

[The lady takes up the theme:] 'Sir Willoughby, in any case, to quote you, here we are all upon the road, and we must act as if events were going to happen [namely the marriage]; and I must ask her to help me on the subject of my

wedding-present, for I don't want to have her making mouths at mine, however pretty' . . .

[Willoughby says:] "Another dedicatory offering to the rogue in me!" she says of porcelain.' [Clara is reporting her distress at the progress towards the marriage she has realized she does not want.]

[The lady replies:] 'Then porcelain it shall not be. I mean to consult her; I have come determined upon a chat with her. I think I understand. But she produces false impressions on those who don't know you both. "I shall have that porcelain back," says Lady Busshe to me, when we were shaking hands last night; "I think," says she, "it should have been the Willow Pattern." And she really said: "he's in for being jilted a second time!"'

Sir Willoughby restrained a bound of his body that would have sent him up some feet into the air. He felt his skull thundered at within. 'Rather that it should fall upon her!' ejaculated he, correcting his resemblance to the high-cast culprit as soon as it recurred to him.<sup>8</sup>

The china pattern's name locks into alignment with our high-cast hero's own. But what can Willoughby possibly mean? *What* "high-cast culprit"? What terrible fate should overtake "her" rather than himself? We will have no idea what this is all about if we do not know who the high-cast person is. He is the Chinese duke in the story of a maiden betrothed to him by her father, and in love with her father's banished secretary, to which we must add another maiden wasting away with love for the same nobleman. And that's the story that has provided the *donée*—or fable, or groundplot—for the novel as a whole. Lady Busshe, Sir Willoughby, and the narrator all have shown they know what "the Willow Pattern" actually is. Knowing what it is in Victorian England is the key to knowing where it is in this Victorian novel.<sup>9</sup> The story is now an etiological tale in its own right, an explanation for how the willow pattern came to be.

Once there was a wealthy mandarin, who had a beautiful daughter. She had fallen in love with a humble accountant, angering her father. He dismissed the young man and built a high fence around his house to keep the lovers apart. The Mandarin was planning for his daughter to marry a powerful Duke. The Duke arrived by boat to claim his bride, bearing a box of jewels as a gift. The wedding was to take place on the day the blossom fell from the willow tree. On the eve of the daughter's wedding to the Duke, the young accountant, disguised as a servant, slipped into the palace unnoticed. As the lovers escaped with the jewels, the alarm was raised. They ran over a bridge, chased by the Mandarin, whip in hand. They eventually escaped to the safety of a secluded island, where they lived happily for years. But one day, the Duke learned of their refuge. Hungry for revenge, he sent soldiers, who captured the lovers and put them to death. The Gods, moved by their plight, transformed the lovers into a pair of doves.<sup>10</sup> (Wikipedia)

In a modern edition of Meredith's novel (Wordsworth Classics, 1995) Alfred Sutro's preface reports that "[Meredith's] tale is loosely based on the story depicted in the design of Willow Pattern china (whence the hero's name), where, for all the wrong reasons, a mandarin wishes to marry his daughter to the rich old man who lives across the bridge, but she falls in love with a poor gardener."<sup>11</sup> Willoughby is "a despotic prince" (ch. xxx, p. 18), while his secretary fills the role of the poor employee—he is "said to have been based on Meredith's friend Leslie Stephen." Like his counterpart on the plate, Sir Leslie would become famous for his writing.

In the story for the china pattern, the wedding gift of the rejected nobleman was stolen by the runaway bride. In the novel, it is the porcelain—Lady Busshe has brought it as a wedding gift—which is rejected with the groom, and the lady's cunningly suggested substitute gift is the china pattern based on the story of the rejected nobleman. Here is a story pattern that might be more acceptable to Clara than the unacceptable Patterne, for the china pattern supplies Patterne's rejection, in so far as it is a precedent for it.

It seems possible (to investigators) that Copeland and Spode or somebody like that merely made up the story after the china pattern had been created (i. e., to suit its imagery of edifice, branch, cottage, tree, bridge, boat, etc.) and to glamorize and sell a product as a 'romantic' and 'traditional' one. But if the pattern really was originally an export from China, later imitated by the English, then an East Asian provenance for the story, and perhaps the pattern also, becomes more plausible. Ideally, at least for my purposes here, the story would exist or pre-exist in a myth, legend, or poem, so that the Englishing of it would be an instance of ancient or timeless poetical myth or tradition transformed into (a) modern porcelain, (b) commercial prose about it, and (c) contemporary novel. But without a Chinese original, this putative genealogy becomes itself a fiction about a fiction. That is, the copy proves to be the original, and the supposedly ancient original has only been feigned or "manufactured" to be the source from which the copy derives.

No matter. For the recession of the classic story from public view, and its re-emergence there, is the burden of the following discovery of it in England by a supposed on-stage visitor from China, a magician named Chim-Pan-See, who had come to London to see the Great Exhibition of 1850. Here are some of his opening words, addressed to his English audience, from an operetta or long skit of 1851, called "The Mandarin's Daughter"<sup>12</sup>:

So of course when I heard of your great Exhibition,  
 I was speedily found in a state of transition,  
 On my dragon I came—but, conceive my surprise!  
 Round a public house kitchen when casting my eyes,  
 I saw upon table, stand, dresser, & shelf,  
 In Earthenware, China, stone-hardware, and delf [sic],  
 Drawn longways & shortways, drawn outside and in,  
 On plate, cup and saucer, dish, basin, tureen,  
 A picture, which is but a full illustration

Of an olden love story well-known in my nation.  
 But still more my surprise, on [and] eclipsing my pleasure  
 At finding the English so ready to treasure  
 The legends of China, to find that unknown  
 Was the story from which all the picture had grown;  
 And when I told the story they said "You be blowed!  
 That's the old Willow Pattern of Copeland & Spode." <sup>13</sup>

In other words, the play has given the story's principals both voice and audience, and thereby can hope to free them from the two-dimensional prisons of the mute plate as a silent script. The play, moreover, shows that the loss and recovery of the story behind the plate can become a literary motif in its own right. The manifest design of the plate is controlled by the latent design of the story, and the recovery of the story is a story in itself. The plate cannot speak, except in a jokish text by Dickens, "A Plated Article," where a piece of the china in question itself self-describes "that amusing blue landscape, which has, in deference to our revered ancestors of the Cerulean Empire, and in defiance of every known law of perspective, adorned millions of our family ever since the days of platters."

Meredith's heroine, who is insistently compared to a piece of porcelain by the novel's other old lady, revenges the female sex of the tale, by pre-jilting or pre-divorcing her somewhat villainous and blissfully egotistical fiancé. The decidedly willful hero being named Sir Willoughby Patterne, his denomination practically declares his will's subjection to an inherited archetype. But unless Patterne marries there is no possibility of the continuing of the house and line of Patterne. (The neurasthenic and seemingly exhausted woman Willoughby is finally forced to marry may in fact not be able to reproduce.)

The paternalistic egoist's dread of being virtually pre-cuckolded by being jilted for another suitor is the driving force of the novel. And indeed the betrothal period is one traditionally fraught with purity and danger—very different instances are Hero's peril in *Much 'I Do' about Nothing* and Mary of Nazareth's pregnancy in Matthew's Gospel, when taken with Deuteronomy 22:13ff. on raped fiancées as damaged goods (see also grounds for divorce in "some uncleanness" in Deut. 24:1-4).<sup>14</sup> But as in the example given of the last two James novels with their biblical analogates, the place in the earlier story occupied by the autocratic and willful Willoughby does not confer on him the paternal and patriarchal power implicit in his great name: in the end, like Merton Densher and Prince Amerigo, Willoughby is being traded among women. The shadow of infidelity or defilement of one kind or another is allowed to pass over Meredith's Clara Middleton for much of the novel, in parallel with the sickness always hovering over the somewhat joyless and lovelorn Laetitia—whom Willoughby the Reject must eventually take to wife, to prevent his having no marriage at all. No such dénouement exists in the legend in the other versions I have seen. But the threats of Clara's shaming and Laetitia's ill health dissolve with the eventual exoneration of their lives from the straitjackets of the china pattern, Willoughby's paternal-

ism, and the House of Patterne.<sup>15</sup>

### III. FIELDING'S AMELIAD

... nothing can be more evident than that exclusive of revelation, man cannot be considered as a creature left by his Maker to act at random and live at large up to the extent of his natural power, as passion, humor, willfulness happen to carry him, which is the condition brute creatures are in; but that from his make, constitution, or nature, he is in the strictest and most proper sense a law to himself. He hath the rule of right within; what is wanting is only that he honestly attend to it.

—Joseph Butler, *Five Sermons*: “Upon Human Nature, III,” sec. 3<sup>16</sup>

Late nineteenth century Meredith might not illustrate T. S. Eliot's implied thesis of the modern world's need of myth to organize or make sense of an anarchy the naturalistic novel was no longer up to dealing with, and Fielding's last novel *Amelia* seems to suggest that the archetypal fictions are not necessarily up to the mythical method's Eliotic task either.

The greatest long narrative in English before Fielding was *Paradise Lost*, and a famous epigram by Dryden suggests Nature had combined Virgil and Homer to create the great poem's author. Milton had indeed modeled much of the generic technique of *Paradise Lost* on the two Classical poets, especially in superstructure and subplot. A telling example of his touching base with the *Aeneid* has Aeneas's affair with Dido haunt Adam's initial relations with Eve. Adam and Eve consummate their marriage under the sign of Dido and Aeneas's congress in the cave—earth again “gave sign,” and that day has been the first of death and of woes the cause (*Aen.* IV, 167, 169 – 70), words that Milton suppresses, where Faltonia Proba's famous cento had once sutured some of them in—namely, at the Fall.<sup>17</sup> Just as surprisingly, Milton's Adam has courted Eve in the shadow of Aeneas's rendezvous with Dido's shade in the underworld: Adam's cry in the imperative, “Return, fair Eve, / Whom flit'st thou? Whom thou flit'st, of him thou art” (*PL* IV, 481 – 82) are the first words of the first man to the first woman (and indeed they christen her), but they chime with Aeneas's final words to Dido in Virgil's Hades: “Stay thy step and withdraw not from our view. Whom fleest thou? The last word Fate suffers me to say to thee is this!” (*Aen.* VI, 465 – 66). Then Dido turns away, and flies to Sichaeus, while Eve, responding more positively to the same sentiments, rejoins Adam. In other words, both Dido and Eve return to their true husband. So of course Milton's Adam will speak to his innamorata not only with the voice of Aeneas, but also the accents of the God (or the Son) speaking to the same party: “What thou seest, / What there thou seest, fair creature, is thyself” (*PL* IV, 467 – 68). We recall Proba's lines climaxing her poem's invocation: “be at my side, Lord, set my thoughts / straight, as I tell how Virgil sang the offices of Christ.”

These Miltonic re-writes of Aeneas's Sidonian Dido as Adam's Edenic Eve anticipate Fielding's treatment of his heroine Amelia, in a novel where the mythical method as an independent historical phenomenon apparently comes into its own rather deci-

sively. Amelia begins with a reference to the *Iliad* while actually re-casting the openings of the *Aeneid* and the *Odyssey* on the divine or human causes of the protracted adversities that the narrative will report as having been suffered by the married protagonists, Amelia and her husband Captain Billy Booth. We could hardly notice the parallel to the epic proposition of the work's subject without some grounding in the classics, but given that prerequisite, we can also hardly escape it. A year after the novel's publication Fielding himself wrote that he had taken Virgil for a model, and in 1936 George Sherburn opined that "the using of Newgate Prison to parallel the palace of the Carthaginian queen and the cave where was consummated the *furtivum amorem*" was "[A] touch worthy of James Joyce."<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Fielding's seductress, Mrs. Matthews, almost turns into a daylight version of Joyce's Circe. Bella Cohen is a dominatrix under whose tutelage the Ulyssean Bloom becomes the new womanly man, and a re-rendering of heroic epic is also the semi-conscious burden of Fielding's *Amelia*.

Fielding's initial, formal *propositio* replaces Virgil's hostile goddess Juno with the goddess Fortuna, and just as Juno finally consents to the marriage of Aeneas to Lavinia and the defeat of Turnus, so Fortune must have finally consented to restore Amelia's purloined fortune to her: an enrichment which enables Booth to leave the army, where his loss of his commission is the main burden of his misfortune, along with his naïveté and misplaced trust in noble friends, and a somewhat spineless conduct derived from his twin beliefs that "all men act entirely from their passions,"<sup>19</sup> and that we are atoms in the void whose godless lives are shaped by chance and not design. In other words, Booth's failure to believe in Providence is a failure to believe in the same authorial force and control that governs Roman destiny, inspires Virgil's *Aeneid*, and co-authors Fielding's novels.

Booth's senior advisor and patron, Dr. Harrison, is Fielding's Anchises figure, and so he "dies" in the third book, meaning only that Booth loses him as a counselor because of Harrison's new appointment as an educator; but Harrison's opposition to Booth's philosophy is repeatedly presented in the text, and is always at work to change Booth's mind, though only Dr. Barrow's sermons on behalf of the Christian religion finally convert Booth from his epicurean subscription to a belief in the power of Fortune; near the end of the novel, where these sermons have the force of the divine intervention that finally secures Aeneas's win over Turnus. The resemblance is structural—but not telling. Indeed, after the third book, the parallel between Virgil's and Fielding's narratives becomes rather difficult to demonstrate; the scent goes cold.<sup>20</sup> The half-pay captain may have a little "Iliad" in his tour in Gibraltar and a little "Odyssey" in his time abroad from England, but he has no "Aeneid" subsequently, beginning from Book IV, because he has no historical destiny, no Rome to found or empire to plant the seeds of, and only a floundering personal existence to keep afloat. But of course he has a social existence as well as a private one, and his own condition reflects that of his society—a society he derives and follows from, rather than leads and creates. His mistakes reproduce the vices of the company he keeps. The heroism to which he is called is the heroism of everyday duty, even if he answers the call only inconsistently. The *Aeneid* teaches honorable perseverance in a cause; in Fielding

this becomes merely the cause of preserving virtue and honor in themselves in the face of such unreformed evils as the current bail bond system and penal code.<sup>21</sup> But Booth—unlike his author—is no reformer of laws and institutions, only their hapless victim.

But the critical interference of the model with the copy is insisted upon by a chorus of pointed quotes from classical texts. The kind of disclosure-point that we might look for, first intuited as an atavistic interpolant, is illustrated by that place in the novel, in Book VI, where Virgil's verses are counterpointed against the action found in the prose, which concerns threatened marital fidelity and trust—a narrative seemingly under the influence of the separation scene in *Paradise Lost*.<sup>22</sup> The learned lady Mrs. Bennet says that Virgil calls the practice of second marriages “a violation of chastity, and makes Dido speak of it with utmost detestation: . . .” She then quotes Dido at length in six lines of Latin.<sup>23</sup> The recital “not a little staggered Booth,” who is here in the position of Aeneas in the underworld, in that the lines come from Virgil's fourth book, but are honored in his sixth, when Dido returns to her husband—or rather his shade—and so unmans Aeneas. In Book IV Booth is credited with “the general knowledge of that fury which possesses a woman scorned, *Furens quid foemenia posset*,” that is, the fury that woman is capable of, when she is scorned as Dido was by Aeneas, i. e. as Mrs. Matthews was deserted by Captain Booth, who “had more particular reasons to apprehend the rage of a lady who had given so strong an instance how far she could carry her revenge.”<sup>24</sup> She had murdered her husband. Mrs. Bennet believes she had done the same thing, before she became Mrs. Atkinson; i. e., she is as much like Mrs. Matthews as the Amelia for whom she professes such an affinity. Her name-change seems to betoken—if not epitomize—woman's essential mutability.

It is the last and by far the longest Latin quote in Fielding's sixth of twelve books as offered by a learned and mistreated lady, Mrs. Bennet, which makes much of our point. Mrs. Bennet is recommending the policy of Dido when she is insisting in Virgil's fourth book on her faithfulness to Sichaeus. This is Fielding's way of remembering Dido's return to her husband among the shades in the underworld of the sixth book of Virgil. Mrs. Bennet goes on to tell her cautionary tale as a warning to Amelia: it is the story of a woman who was betrayed into betraying her faith to her husband by a determined seducer. The husband dies young, and Mrs. Bennet thinks of herself as having killed him, even while she clings to the knowledge of the good of marital faithfulness—Dido's defaulted determination to be loyal reanimated by the loyal Dido's shade. As the quote comes near the end of Fielding's Book VI, it is at the half-way point where it must have dawned upon early readers that the novel might have followed the Virgilian epic consistently in earlier books.

Mrs. Bennet's defense of female education earns her audience's polite but superficial concurrence: “yet it may be a question whether they did not assent rather out of complaisance than from their real judgment.”<sup>25</sup> The reader is perhaps warned by this reaction not to be so stupid as to fail to translate the Latin, or the Latin story. But Booth himself, despite his strength in the classics, mostly denies (even if he unconsciously is flattered) that Colonel James, from Book VII onwards, has designs on Amelia—designs that cast James as a kind of Turnus in relation to Amelia's Lavinia.

That is, Booth is an unwitting Aeneas who, on the one hand, believes more in luck and chance than free will, and, on the other, never has any clear idea of what Providence has in store for him, since he doubts its existence. The careful reader, however, is in a potentially different position. The amount of time Booth has spent in prison with bailiffs is an index of the extent of his enthrallment by his philosophy, but also by the evils of the present social system. The first sentence of the first chapter uses the word liberty twice, for the extra-territorial jurisdictions falling to the district of Westminster in which Captain Booth is deprived of his liberty for much of the novel.<sup>26</sup> But something insistently aleatory in Booth's life-story keeps us from ever knowing if the teleological imposition of the *Aeneid* on the novel could ever have really converted Booth's haphazard story of redemption into the illustration of a destiny. The whole second half of the novel seems to depart from the pre-established parallel with the *Aeneid*, because Booth cannot recover the military commission or profession that would have made him more of an Aeneas in the midst of a campaign, and less of a plaything of fortune in the midst of a corrupt society. The undeterrable Mrs. Matthews has a novel-long leverage on Booth that the perished Dido does not retain over Aeneas, and Amelia's guilty secret of Colonel James's unwanted attentions operates similarly to encumber a marriage that in the *Aeneid* exists only in the national and notional future. Turnus as a potential dynastic rival is replaced by James as a potential sexual rival, and where the *Aeneid* is about the sacrificial cost of founding Roma, the Ameliad is about the maturity and good faith required for preserving conjugal amor.<sup>27</sup> Where Aeneas will get his marriage back only posterior to his epic, Captain Booth has his in place prior to the action of his novel. The epic telos, once again, is lacking, and likewise the epic "cause" or etiology. And Booth has no Iulus, even if Amelia more or less does.

Various internal characters' quotations of Virgil and other classics for either authority or prestige function in Fielding's novel to ask both whether a Classical education can possibly be of any advantage to a woman, and if it can conduce to anyone's practice of virtue, or sustain his or her good nature. This leads us to wonder about the relevance of the comparison of the Booth of Fielding's prose to the Aeneas of Virgil's verse, with Booth's imprisonment as Carthage, Mrs. Matthews as its Dido, and Amelia as a kind of incarnate Creusa-Lavinia whose unfailing marital support the original Aeneas hardly had at all. Is a genuine thematic purpose served by one's recognizing Dr. Harrison as Anchises or Sergeant Atkinson as a faithful Achates, or indeed any of the citation of Virgil and the Virgilian underpinning, when there is essentially no Boothiad? Atkinson knows no Virgil, and it is his piety, more than the hero's, which saves the day. And if Virgil is in fact so significant, why would Fielding make the marginal spouse figures of the epic, Creusa and Lavinia, into the title role of the novel, where there is only a big blank in Virgil? The fainting, blushing, and vulnerable Amelia is far from a bloodless shade, even if she seems to live her life very much in the shadow of her careless and blunder-prone husband and indeed that of anyone who chooses to impose on her; she gets much of her saintly persona from her being the kind of angel in the house who can say and do virtually no wrong, but maybe not enough else. Her notable lack of wardrobe seems to bespeak the exposed

and defenseless character of her kind of virtue in a frequently pitiless world, a place she can ameliorate but not yet fundamentally change.

We are told that Fielding's heroine is based on his wife Charlotte, who died young, ten years after eloping with Fielding, and to whom the novel is dedicated. Thus her large role in the novel is a poignant post-mortem memorial tribute to what Charlotte might have been in Fielding's whole life. In other words, it is Fielding himself—not Booth—who was a kind of widowed Aeneas, with Amelia as his lost Creusa. (Milton may have created Eve out of a similar autobiographical re-write and would-be recuperation of psychic losses, given that the first words the man says to the woman are the last words Aeneas says to Dido.) Fielding's title tells us his novel wants to compete with Pamela; take away the Sh of *Shamela* and you have most of our titular heroine's name, just as if you took away Pamela's hypocrisy you might have a virtuous heroine worth naming. But the early Mrs. Matthews is a kind of resource and solace, and an adaptable woman of special abilities, albeit possessed of markedly predatory instincts; she only becomes the wholly vindictive villainess after she has given us a demonstration of some of the worldly wisdom that Amelia will seem pointedly unable to acquire, despite her mask in Mrs. Atkinson/Bennet-as-Matthews or Moll.

Meanwhile, Booth himself seems incompetent for any purpose that would effectively animate his assigned role as the Aeneas who was instrumental in realizing a Roman destiny after the loss of Troy. Booth's good service at Gibraltar is the corresponding history (an anachronistic one, as often noted), but this war veteran just wants to recover an appointment in the army, in order to reform his own social and economic fortunes—he's not much like Aeneas seeking New Troy and relief from the onus of defeat in the Trojan War, as opposed to merely losing at the card table. Is Fielding's tentative recuperation of the *Aeneid* then wholly ironic and likewise super-structural? Is *Amelia* a comparative—or at least a virtual—epic, or is it more like a mock-epic? On the serious side, Fielding is perhaps making something of Virgil's own epic point, namely that faithfulness to an ideal of piety or marital fidelity is not merely a private or domestic matter, but rather a societal one, even if it is a losing battle in a corrupt world, at least without a miracle like Amelia into the equation. Then the refounding of Troy as Rome is comparable to the recoupment of the idealized happiness and benefits of marriage as marriage.<sup>30</sup> But Dr. Harrison himself, the alter ego of the author in the novel, is rebuked for utopian notions of virtuous government taken from classical periods: “‘To apply maxims of government drawn from the Greek and Roman histories, to this nation, is absurd and impossible. But if you will have Roman examples, fetch them from those times of the republic that were most like our own. Do you not know, doctor, that this is as corrupt a nation as ever existed under the sun? And would you think of governing such a people by the strict principles of honesty and morality?’” (Bk. XI, ch. 2; p. 467) Surely the analogy with the *Aeneid* skates on the same thin ice.

The morality of the individual in his marriage is an index to—and constitutive of—the morals and morale of his society. People need to honor their status; spouses should be faithful, and nobles—regularly depicted in the novel as heartless, selfish,

and callous cads—should feel obliged to be noble, that is, to patronize merit, rather than serve their own private and selfish self-interest. Mrs. Matthews threatens marriage in the way that the queen of Carthage threatened the future of Aeneas's Rome. Wifely Amelia, disdainful of masquerades, which she successfully avoids, is Booth's supremely loyal and all-forgiving friend; such a stalwart domestic partner is irreplaceable not only by the spouse, but by his or her society. But Booth himself hardly seems to have done anything to deserve this paragon, except to elope successfully with her, against the odds of marrying her with her guardian's permission. The elopement requires no masquerade, but there is nonetheless a suggestion that Booth aspires by it (and perhaps by his devotion to the Classics) to change his class. Amelia, after all, may be heir to a fortune.

It could be that Booth retires from the military because legendary epic warriors and the heroic code cannot make a bourgeois society great, while faithful spouses and their prosaic virtues perhaps might hope to make it good. Hence the novel's concern with dueling, a practice that perpetuates the viciousness of violence and war and the warrior code and the officer class in the private sphere, while family life is the fruit of peace and amnesty in the public sphere—and the fruit of peace is the social success of families and friends. Dueling offers heroic status to arguments over honor, but at the expense of trivializing the collective purposes mobilized and celebrated in epic—to say nothing of dueling's immoral legitimizing of attempted murder.<sup>31</sup> Dueling may stand in for the Ate-driven Turnus of Fielding's novel, because it also seems like a mere relic of military epic, a "furioso" remainder no longer qualified to be the substance of the domestic epic that replaces military epic—as has already happened in *Paradise Lost*, where Satan seems like a disgruntled and frustrated would-be duelist at the end of Book IV. In any case, duel-prone Booth is less the pious father of Rome than his frequently pregnant and home-bound wife is England's mother.

The regular citation of Virgil by Fielding's speaking characters, and their appeal to his relevance, tacitly bruises the relevance of Classical studies to contemporary life, even while it questions it. When Fielding's Dr. Harrison is lecturing Amelia on the immorality of any allowance to be made for dueling, he cites Helen's foolish injured vanity when Paris is embarrassed in his duel with Menelaus, and then rebukes her concern with her husband's honor or at least his reputation with "I do know your meaning . . . and Virgil knew it a great while ago. The next time you see your friend Mrs. Atkinson"—she being a kind of Virgilian and academical chorus—"ask her what it was made Dido fall in love with Aeneas?"—Or, for that matter, what made Fielding's Mrs. Matthews fall in love with Captain Booth, or what made Mrs. Bennet—latterly Mrs. Atkinson—succumb to the nameless lustful and ignoble Noble Lord. We presume the answer is commiseration with—or pity for—a soldier down on his luck. Such a question makes it obvious that Fielding wanted his reader to keep in mind his original refashioning of pious Aeneas and the lovelorn queen. But while Widow Dido's husband Sichaeus has been killed by his political enemies, Mrs. Matthews's husband has been knifed to death by his wife; Mrs. Matthews herself. Again, dynastic epic has translated itself into domestic novel.<sup>32</sup>

It is the unhappy Mrs. Bennet, remarried as Mrs. Atkinson, who is able to fore-

warn Amelia of the designs on her of both the sinister, off-stage Noble Lord and the oppressively re-introduced Colonel James—which is to say, of the emergence of the two would-be seducers as the “Turnus” challenging Aeneas-Booth for his Lavinia-Amelia, and threatening to turn him into Shakespeare’s Othello, with Sergeant Atkinson as his Casio. The parallel with Turnus is strained at best, because Aeneas challenges, in the name of destiny, the prior claim of Turnus, while the would-be seducer James’s prior claim is only that of his already being a frequently successful predator. Indeed, the Colonel’s own wife is party to his intrigues—she has the role of Lavinia’s mother Amata, Turnus’s human sponsor. But whereas Amata’s opposition to Aeneas is caused from the outset by divine intervention, the collusion of James’s wife in the undoing of his conquests is only gradually insinuated with the emergence of his evil record as a successful philanderer. Mrs. James is perhaps more her husband’s victim than his goad or prime mover—the reverse of Mrs. Matthews, who is again this same reverse of Virgil’s Dido. Mrs. Matthews does not allow herself to become a victim. In Mrs. James’s case, we cannot be sure.

Fielding’s domestication and partial re-gendering of the dynamics of epic conflict may accord with his avowed favoring of a prosaic history over a fabulous mythos. But the challenges and disasters of the card-table can hardly replace those of the battle-field, unless the effect is that of mock-epic. Indeed, the novel’s ending turns the *Aeneid* upside down: Mrs. Atkinson only half-learnedly crows over Booth’s final good luck as that of Turnus in *Aeneid* IX, and Booth is entertained by Colonel James “without Booth ever knowing a syllable of the [rival’s] challenge [to a duel] even to this day.” The happily deceived Booth has been equally oblivious to the danger posed by James through most of the second half of the novel because he is totally insensitive to the meaning of his wife Amelia’s reluctance to involve herself with the Colonel, which should have told Booth what was going on. While at the end of the novel Amelia’s evil sister Miss Harris flies off to France like Turnus’s sister Juturna, leaving the field to Amelia, and so finalizing Fielding’s *Ameliad*, Booth himself perversely delays the happy ending by his diversionary recital of a dream of a coach and four, which must inevitably recall the ostentatious purchase of just such a coach early in the history, to the ruin of his virtuous attempt at farming. Nor does he delay the revelation (with the detour into the dream) in order to prevent his wife’s too sudden surprise (as he speciously claims), since he provokingly increases her anxiety by accepting a loan he surely knows she thinks he cannot repay, the loan being kind of treacherous assistance he has foolishly sought previously. In short, at the end of the novel we are entitled to doubt that Billy Booth has grown any wiser, or less the victim of his own unthinking whims, inclinations, and folly—and the plaything of that manipulative female called Fortune.

Dante calls Virgil’s *Aeneid* a tragedy—it’s a tragedy in verse, like *Paradise Lost*. But Fielding’s sudden and improbable happy ending, amidst so many threats to it, characterizes *Amelia* as a comedy—and yet only technically; rather it is a tragi-comedy, a deeply ironic and insistently mordant history in prose, in which only a *deus ex machina* can rescue it from the effects of the protagonist’s inadequacies, helplessness and fecklessness, despite the plot elements for the final developments having been

planted from the novel's beginning. The beset Captain is generous of heart and enchanted by his wife, and his somewhat *Candide*-like naïveté is set off by the author's episodic illustration of the evils of the law courts, of the laws themselves, of routs and masquerades, of the patronage system and markets in preferment, of gambling and dueling, of the mistreatment of stalwart soldiers, and of the arrogant aristocracy, self-serving clergy, and bribe-taking officialdom. Scenes from Hogarth, so to speak, adorn the house of this fiction at every turn, and over its entire twelve books they repeatedly encumber and drag upon the protagonist's simple quest for an honest and sociable happiness. Bleary-eyed Moll's missing nose in chapter one also mars Amelia's damaged looks in Booth's recital of his wife's history thereafter, and the same monster's pox also afflicts Mrs. Bennet, according to her comparable recitation. But many if not most of the married couple's reverses are co-operated in by the conduct of the feckless and gullible male protagonist, who despite his good and ingenuous heart and despite being a soldier of demonstrated merit, proves a drinker, gambler, and promise-breaker—a weather-vane with little judgment, a somewhat sadistic and unfaithful husband, and an incorrigible fool with his own and his wife's money; his private vices and deficiencies could never add up to anybody's public virtue. They can only keep him perpetually behind the eight ball of the world's callousness and whichever of his own passions is currently uppermost.

The funeral that appears at the end of each book of the *Aeneid* may have some slight structural resemblance to the savage deductions that the narrator tends to put at the end of many of his chapters as road-blocks to any optimism about the world's operation in favor of the novel's comparatively innocent protagonists. Fielding has not altogether disregarded the medieval reading of the *Aeneid* as an allegory of the developmental pilgrimage of life,<sup>33</sup> but book by book the desultory rake's regress of the *Ame-liad* more accurately characterizes life as a history of repeated set-backs, mistakes, and discouragements. That too, of course, is a possible reading of the overall burden of the *Aeneid*, and may well account for the ironic English Augustan's choosing Virgil's epic as his vehicle, and then steadily jettisoning it, like Gibbon describing the Antonine enlightenment before coming to the fall of Rome he was to make so memorable and proverbial.

#### IV. MARIO PUZO'S *DAVIDEIS*: FROM DON QUIXOTE TO DON CORLEONE

When a character in literature or a performer in the entertainment industry finds a large audience, then the culture that gave him or her ear begins to be authored by that character. Falstaff is not only witty, but the cause of wit in other men, and of the demand for more Falstaff. The success of *Don Quixote* creates a rival Quixote. We observe the same process—the same phenomenon—in Mario Puzo's novel, *The Godfather*, which was eventually followed by *The Sicilian*, as his characters become somewhat mythic. I read *The Godfather* forty years ago, when it was published and when I began teaching the Bible in New Haven—a city reputed to have an active Mafia. I was mainly reading Puzo's novel for its lurid socio-historical plot, but after it began to dawn on me that I had read such a history of a dynastic intrigue for a throne before, I found myself reading as much for the parallel as for the plot, or the arche-

typal shadow of a plot, because apparently they were on the same track and had in view the same destination.

*The Godfather* is an instance of “the mythical method,” with its prose narrative partly controlled by an atavism in verse. The verse (as in the phrase “chapter and verse”) is that of the King James Bible, where we find the Davidic Succession Document, the mythos in question. Like the Bible story, Puzo’s tale can be taken for a quasi-historical account of the bureaucratization of a family-style patriarchy, told from inside the family by an omniscient and cunning narrator knowing all the hearts and bedrooms of the principal agents. In both cases, the reader is turned into a privileged voyeur, in the wake of the narrator and his co-conspirators. Who saw David looking at Bathsheba? Who saw Vito kill Fanucci?

A passage from II Samuel critically relevant to Puzo’s novel also gave Faulkner the basis for title of *Absalom, Absalom* (where the beset Davidic patriarch corresponding to the Godfather is Thomas Sutpen):

And the king said unto Cush, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cush answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

And here is the comparable moment from the Mafia novel:

Don Corleone asked only one question at the end [of a report to him]. “Is it certain that my son is dead?”

Clemenza answered. “Yes,” he said. . . .

Don Corleone accepted this final verdict without any signs of emotion except for a few moments of silence. Then he said, “None of you are to concern yourselves with this affair. None of you are to commit any acts of vengeance, none of you are to track down the murderers of my son without my express command. . . Our Family will cease all business operations until after my son’s funeral.”<sup>34</sup>

Not the same “my son” at all, one might say, and without any Faulknerian enhancements. But of course not. The emotional father inside the Don is what he consistently represses; he only says “my son” three out of the five times he found in the Bible, nor he does say it histrionically, or poetically, or rhetorically.

Although it is in prose, certain idiomatic or coded phrases in the novel have the force of oral formulaic in verse epic: “Moustache Petes,” “a ninety caliber pezzonovante” (a bigshot), “do the job” (have sex with a woman), “pay off” (exact retribution), “an offer you can’t refuse” (incentive to yield to coercion, persuasion against your will), “to be a fool” (to court harm). This last, innocent-looking one is a vital clue to the novel’s underworld *realpolitik*. For here is a second piece of the Bible’s versified prose, with a snatch of atavistic poetry, as found in II Samuel:

So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.

And David said to Joab and to all the people that were with him, . . . mourn before Abner. And king David himself followed the bier.

And they buried Abner in Hebron; and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept.

And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth?

Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters; as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou.

. . . all the people and all Israel understood that day that it was not [ the will ] of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner.

And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?

And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zerui-ah be too hard for me. (II Sam. 3:33 – 34, 37 – 39)

And here is the modern prose, in which Don Corleone gives up the war between Mafia families, which has been precipitated by the murder of a drug-dealer crucial to the future livelihood of the other Families:

Don Corelone sighed. “How did things ever go so far?” he asked rhetorically. “Well, no matter. A lot of foolishness has come to pass. It was so unfortunate, so unnecessary. . . . Tattaglia has lost a son, I have lost a son. We are quits. What would the world come to if people kept carrying grudges against all reason? That has been the cross of Sicily, where men are so busy with vendettas they have no time to earn bread for their families. It’s foolishness. So I say now, let things be as they were before [ the war ]. I have not taken any steps to learn who betrayed and killed my son. Given peace, I will not do so.”<sup>35</sup>

### **Foolishness gives death a chance to make a fool of you.**

The word fool, Hebrew *nabal*, appears three times in the David story, but each time in connection with a victim of David’s rise to power, or with David’s powerlessness to prevent an offender’s death. Saul’s general Abner dies as a fool dies, when he is murdered by David’s *caporegimen* Joab; Tamar’s rapist is warned he shall be as one of the fools in Israel, and he is murdered by her brother Absalom; and Nabal, whose very name means fool, is offered protection in the Mafia sense by David, and he dies of a heart attack when he learns that his wife has accepted an offer he thought better of refusing. “Foolishness” as a term for blind folly occurs once in II Samuel, when God himself intervenes decisively to favor David’s cause and acts to “turn the counsel of Achitophel into foolishness” and thus cause Absalom’s foiled advisor, his *consiglieri* Achitophel, to commit suicide. Puzo’s next novel was called *Fools Die*. The closest analogue is surely that same rhetorical question from David’s elegy over Saul’s

foiled general Abner, “Died Abner as a fool dieth?” (2 Sam. 3:33, AV)

“Have I ever been taken for a fool?” Don Corleone asks his godson Fontana in the book’s very first chapter. Solomon in Ecclesiastes says: “I applied mine heart to know and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness” (Eccl. 12:3). “Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools” (Eccl. 7:9). “The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself” (Eccl. 10:12). The Don is looking for something Solomonic in his counsels. Thus the Don’s idea of his enmity to foolishness occurs in the crucial council with the other Dons. The critical sentence containing the operative term is: “A lot of foolishness has come to pass.” It hearkens back to Abner’s and David’s having been made fools of (by Joab) in ending the war between Saul and David.

Being an enemy of what he calls foolishness, Vito is also the friend of those accepting offers it would be foolish of them to refuse. On the penultimate page of *Fools Die* the first-person narrator prides himself on still being alive: “[T]hat’s more than I could say for . . . poor Jordan. I understood Jordan now. It was very simple. Life was too much for him. But not for me. Only fools die.” “Merlyn had his troubles,” Jordan once said to the narrator—who is the self-named John Merlyn—when Jordan first met him. “Yeh, but he never died,” Merlyn replies.<sup>36</sup> Even though he has won big in Vegas, the suicidal Jordan can’t take it—life itself. Vito, his name implies, can. He takes the name Corleone at age twelve when he is sent from Sicily to America to save his life. Lion-heart is like David, lion of Judah, who killed a lion in his youth. Vito’s son Michael will be sent back to Sicily for the same kind of reason, because he deliberately assassinated a policeman in New York.<sup>37</sup> At the end of *The Sicilian* we learn that this long episode in Michael’s life teaches him that survival on dishonorable terms is preferable to foolishness on honorable but lethal ones. In *The Godfather*, “[a]n Irish as a *Consigliere* had been the only foolishness the Don had ever perpetrated. No Irishman could hope to equal a Sicilian for cunning” (p. 396).<sup>38</sup> Amerigo Bonsera had not been so smart about dealing with the rapists of his daughter: “The judge sentenced them to three years in prison and suspended the sentence. They went free that very day. [He] stood in the courtroom like a fool and those [rapist] bastards smiled at [him]. And then [he] said to [his] wife: ‘We must go to Don Corleone for justice’” (p. 30). Vito rebukes this penitent, who had failed to rely on him in the first place: “‘You spend money on lawyers who know full well you are to be made a fool of,’” the Don says (p. 32). “‘You lived like a fool and you have come to a fool’s end.’” The Don similarly rebukes his godson Johnny Fontane on the same day; “Don Corleone paused to ask in a patient voice, ‘Are you willing to take my advice this time? . . .’” (p. 37). It is the kind of offer the once foolish Amerigo has the good sense not to refuse.

The words successor and succession are used in *The Godfather* often enough to make them *leitwörter* also.<sup>39</sup> So far as the narrative is concerned, the successor to the Don serves as the novel’s abiding question. David had four sons, and an abused daughter; Absalom, Amnon, Adonijah, Solomon, and Tamar (sister to Absalom, and abused by Amnon). Vito Corleone has four sons, and an abused daughter: Son-

ny, Fredo, his son-in-law Carlo Rizzi, Michael, and Connie (wife to Carlo, who abuses her repeatedly). Are these symmetries merely superficial, like there being rivers in Henry V's Monmouth and likewise in Alexander's Macedon? If the Corleone family succession is to be hereditary, the successor nonetheless will be neither the womanizer-hotelier-chef Fredo, nor the aggressive but gunned-down Sonny, nor the always-suspect son-in-law Carlo. They are like the disqualified Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah, while Michael is like the wise Solomon—because Michael is the one with the Ivy League education. (His sponsor Tom Hagen can recognize the portrait of Alexander Hamilton in a bank, and Michael is engaged to an Adams of Massachusetts—the Queen of Sheba, in her way.)

“Succession in control of such an enterprise as the Family was by no means hereditary” (395), the narrator-historian advises us, in allowing for the possible accession of the *caporegimen* Tessio, who finally gets himself killed in the place of David's ambitious general Joab and David's ambitious son Adonijah. Michael dispatches Tom Hagen from New York to work in Las Vegas, but leaves him out of the inner circle—because he got fooled. Hagen here is like the priest Abiathar, whom Solomon thrust out from being priest in Jerusalem, and banished to house-arrest in his birthplace in Anathoth, though it is Carlo who thinks he is being sent back to work in his native Nevada, after a kind of house-arrest like Shimei's in Jerusalem. Carlo is garroted on his way out the door to Nevada. Readers of David's story will wonder what fate overtook Abiathar after his exile to Anathoth from Jerusalem—was it like Shebna's fate after he was lured from his residence in the same place?

At the center of the biblical Succession Document the reckless Absalom usurps the kingship. While the Don is out of action—out of commission in the hospital—Sonny enjoys a troubled regency comparable to Absalom's usurpation. And in the end, like Absalom, he becomes a casualty of an internecine war. In the Bible Amnon the rapist gets himself killed by his half-brother relatively early; in the novel, the brother-in-law of Carlo the wife-abuser takes more time, revenge being a dish (we are told) more enjoyable when eaten cold.

The climactic turn-of-the-page in this page-turner comes with the gangland murder of Sonny Corleone, heir apparent of the Don—“See how they have massacred my son” (257), says the Don, when his son's shot-up remains are being displayed to a mortician from whom Vito is now calling in the favor from which the novel has virtually begun. The mortician and his wife were humble folk whom the legal system had humiliated—indeed, made fools of, as the narrator himself insists—and whose cause Don Corleone befriended. The novel winds up after the non-violent death of the retiring Don, who is planning for the succession of the elect son—the Don's favorite Michael, who proves a shrewder character than the violence-prone Sonny—and who will move the family business to Las Vegas, where it can go legit. Distinguished by his Dartmouth education and his Smith College-educated Yankee wife, Michael transfers the rackets to Nevada, as Solomon, proverbial for his learning, built the temple and his palace in Zion. A man of war who had shed much blood, David could not build the Temple (according to 1 Chronicles 22: 8); a man of respect, Michael can buy it. With a few more mop-up murders of rivals and traitors, Michael is anointed as the

new Don, and secured in his father's old position. The opening chapters of I Kings tell the same story.

Thus the main frame for the story of the Don's Family is one of two pieces from the Hebrew Bible that have made it into the old *Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*, the so-called Court History of David. Few will have suspected that the Corleone family business, olive oil, relates to the anointing that makes David a royal, but during his exile from Saul's court, David obviously does run a protection racket, in the Paran of 1 Samuel 25. He is sought out by a wise wife who sees he will be king, and he is spurned by her spouse, a fool or churl named Fool, or Nabal, who shortly dies after refusing protection from the local racketeer. Another grateful client-petitioner at Connie's wedding provides the Don with bread for all occasions—Abigail supplies David with loads of bread in 1 Samuel 25.

David kills Goliath in the service of Saul, the Lord's Anointed, but a king whom God has abandoned; David is best friends with Saul's son, who figures as the novel's Jonathan, though the relation is doubled by reappearing in the next generation, where a Jonathan and David friendship exists between Tom Hagen and the Sonny Corleone who brings the orphan home. Jonathan's name turns up elsewhere as David's conscience and publicist, the prophet Nathan, and Hagen, as Vito's lawyer, has Nathan's role too. Vito takes over the olive oil business, from having been a mere grocery store truck driver for it, after he kills the neighborhood hood who has himself muscled in on it. He is best friends with the grocery store owner's son, Genco Abbando. The olive oil is called Genco Pura, because Vito honors the genetic rights of his friend Genco, as David honored Jonathan's. (The Don cannot save Genco from his enemy Death, any more than David can save Jonathan from the Philistines, but the respect the Don accords Genco's last hours and his survivors comports with David's elegy over Jonathan and his protection of Mephiboseth.)

But God abandons Saul and therefore Jonathan, and it is David who is the descendent in the line of Judah, and God's choice. Likewise, "Destiny had decided that Vito was to become a don and had brought Fanucci to him to set him on his destined path" (201). This Fanucci is a local extortionist, so re-read: "Yahweh had decided that a Judahite was to become a king, and had brought Goliath to him to set him on his destined path." Like the Philistines, Fanucci has been exacting tribute from the locals who have rackets of their own. This would-be big-shot has suffered a near fatal neck wound from young bloods who resented his predatory ways. The Philistines' idol Dagon loses its head in the presence of the ark and has to be patched up. Vito, the future Godfather, kills Fanucci with a gun—he had been trained on the wolf-gun he became skilled at using at age nine hunting with his father in Sicily. He has not mastered a shepherd's slingshot, but a shepherd's shotgun (203). "The deadly Sicilian shotgun was the favorite weapon of the Mafia" (326). But it was once the shepherd's weapon against wolves. The Don knows its use from his childhood. Like King David, Don Corleone is a shepherd with an underdog's lethal weapon, and he too becomes a big-shot.

The future Don's reputation for aid to the oppressed and redress of grievances

grew in his community. Again, like David: “And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them” (Samuel 22:2). Captain in the English Bible, *capo* in *Puzo*. Eventually Saul dies, after making war on David, and David integrates the kingdom of Israel into the kingdom of Judah. Vito integrates the rackets of one Maranzano into his own, after ordering Maranzano’s murder. “And now that the Don had ordered his business affairs, he found that he had trouble at home.” The trouble is his obstreperous son Sonny, who thinks his destiny is also in the family business; he becomes a *capo*, but he is a hothead whose mismanaged anger costs him his life. In the meantime, the Don conceives a plan to reduce mob violence: “Like other great rulers and lawgivers in history Don Corleone decided that order and peace were impossible until the number of reigning states had been reduced to a manageable number. . . . And so he mounted what was in effect a colonial war against” the local criminals, who weren’t operating inside Mafia Families (220). He is aided by the fearless and violent Luca Brasi, who emerges as a murderous henchman like David’s hit-man Joab. The secret of restraining an irrational and violent man like Brasi is carefully discussed.<sup>40</sup> His murderous dedication to Vito is like Joab’s to David, who always feels the sons of Zeruah are nearly out of his control.

Some of the parallels become more exact when Carlo Rizzi marries the Don’s daughter and physically abuses her. This drives her brother Sonny into a murderous rage, and he stays away from its object. But one day he finds his sister made a mess of by her husband’s assaults, and he goes down to the bookmaking shop where the bully is doing his part in the family business, and administers a humiliating beating of him in the street. This intervention serves in place of Absalom’s murder of his half-brother Amnon at the sheep-shearing festival in II Samuel 13. That is, Sonny has the part of the avenging brother Absalom, Connie the part of the raped sister Tamar, and Carlo the part of Absalom’s half-brother, the family rapist; Carlo, comparably, feels powerful because “one of the Corleones was his doormat” (236). But Carlo doesn’t die, unlike Amnon; he lives to finger Sonny to the Family’s rivals. Nor does Carlo refuse the hand of the kingpin’s daughter, he apparently desires it; indeed, the novel begins with the marriage in question. And yet *Puzo* has touched base with the original story, because one of the Don’s petitioners at this marriage is a mortician named Good-Night America, and his petition concerns a daughter whose marriage prospects have been ruined by the violence of a would-be rapist. Here then is the rest of the Princess Tamar story, as found in her and Prince Amnon’s chapter in II Samuel (ch. 13), and transposed to Carlo’s and Connie’s wedding-day. The mortician Amerigo “went to the police like a good American,” and the perpetrators of the outrage got off in the courts. So apparently did Amnon. But the Don’s serviceable goons subsequently carry out the vengeance on the perps that David *failed to* take on Amnon.

Sonny, in his role of the novel’s Absalom, becomes the temporary head of the family, by default, because the Don is nearly murdered and is seriously laid up; so Absalom became king in Israel, when he took over the throne from David, by usurpation. Sonny dies during the Mafia war while coming to avenge his sister; he is ambushed at a tollbooth, while trapped in a Buick. The Buick doesn’t altogether stop

here, however, if it turns out Puzo has reversed Absalom's killing of Amnon, for Puzo's Amnon has aided in the killing of Puzo's Sonny, and he will eventually pay the price of the bad blood that was always between them. Carlo went on abusing his wife Connie after Sonny beat up on him, so at first it seems that Sonny does not succeed in killing him as Absalom killed Amnon for raping his sister Tamar. But Carlo is finally paid off by Sonny's brother Michael for Carlo's betrayal of Sonny to the rival Barzini Family—the betrayal that had enabled Sonny's murder.

At the end of the gangland war culminating in the death of Sonny Corleone, and after making his peace with the other Dons, as David made peace with the Absalomite party, the Don's mind turns to his semi-retirement; he keeps to his house where he "plays the fool in his garden," as David in his senescence slept with Abishag, using her as a kind of electric blanket. But the Don also turns to bringing his son Michael home from hiding in Sicily, to make him the Don in his place. Such an office brings responsibilities, self-protection from traitors among them. David had instructed Solomon in the same arts. So advised and prepared, Michael undertakes the murderous retaliation his father has foresworn. From the moment of his resolve to assassinate the police captain, Michael has been, in Tom Hagen's eyes, the reincarnation of the Godfather. Hagen's recognition is like Nathan's prophetic prediction of the Davidic succession, or Nathan's confirmation of it—at Solomon's birth.

In the Bible, the Joab who kills Absalom is eventually killed by Solomon for supporting Solomon's rival Adonijah's bid for the throne. But Solomon executes Joab, at David's behest, not for giving the coup de grace to Absalom, and not for supporting Adonijah, but for killing two enemy generals who had each been promised not only amnesty, but also Joab's place (Saul's former general Abner and Absalom's former general Amasa), and thus making a fool of David. Nonetheless, Carlo becomes like Adonijah, because he has all along hoped the Family would let him become royalty, and his aspirations, like Adonijah's, are foolishly grand. Carlo's actual killer is an earlier Joab-figure, the merciless Clemenza, who kills Carlo in a parallel to the way Benaiah, Joab's replacement under Solomon, kills Adonijah. And such a Benaiah-figure emerges in the story: Albert Neri, who replaces the hit man Brasi as the enforcer Benaiah replaces Joab. Carlo's isolation in his house on the family mall is comparable to the house-arrest of David's enemy Shimei in Jerusalem; their departures from their houses, under temptation, are their death-sentences. The new Brasi, former policeman Albert Neri, isn't the one assigned to kill Carlo, but he kills the Don of the rival Barzini family in the same clean sweep that kills Carlo, whom the Barzini had "turned." The death of the capo Tessio, likewise "turned," is also engineered in this purge—he has to go, like Joab or like Carlo, for having joined himself to the same proscribed rival house.

But, in the centerpiece of the whole intrigue, why would one identify Puzo's Sonny as David's son Absalom? —Because "his crop of bushy, curly hair," mentioned at his first introduction into the novel (15), makes him look even taller than he is. The same paragraph indicates his prodigious sexual endowment. Neither his "bushy" hair nor his member gets caught in the New Jersey tollbooth where he is ambushed and killed. But the slot of the toll booth and the Buick automobile out of

which Sonny's body slams while he is on the rampage about the abuse of his sister are nonetheless shadowed by the biblical Absalom, who dies in flight from battle, riding on a mule, his magnificent hair trapped in the branches of an overhanging tree. Then comes the job of reporting the death to the father, which is handled in Puzo's novel with the same kind of tact as the reporting of Absalom's death to David ("He must, Hagen knew, tell the news" [p. 268]).

The internal organization of the Corleone Family resembles that of David's party. The "capos" Tessio and Clemenza split power and authority like Abiathar and Zadok, or Joab and Benaiah, or Joab and Abishai (in the war against the Amonites and the Syrians). Luca Brasi, the early counterpart for Joab, is later turned into Albert Neri, the cop-turned-hit man who replaces Brasi in the regime of Michael Coreleone, as Benaiah under Solomon replaced Joab. Benaiah "slew an Egyptian, a goodly man; and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear." This single verse from the end of II Samuel is the basis for the episode in which the turn-coat cop Neri, disdaining to use a gun, receives the knife-thrust of a negro criminal into the palm of his hand and a split second later bashes the aggressor's head in with his flashlight. Neri is a "special," Benaiah is a "mighty man," and out of "the thirty," he is one of The Three, which means the same thing. Curiously, Albert Neri, who becomes the head of security at Michael's hotel in Vegas, is said to be "no fool" (420), while Saul's general Abner son of Ner, thanks to Joab's treachery, died as fool dies.

To review: virtually retired, David commissions Solomon to kill Shimei and Joab; comparably, the Don plans with his son Michael for the reconsolidation of the Corleones' power under Michael, and for the revenge of the murders of family members dear to Michael. Both purposes require further murders—after the death of the present kingpin. Solomon was known for his wisdom; Michael has the Ivy League education. Solomon made political marriages outside of Israel; Michael marries a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant whose ancestors were the Adams family. Michael is critical in advancing the Don's plan to transfer the rackets and the next generation of the family to Las Vegas; Solomon built the Temple in Zion, the Don's family muscles in on the gaming industry. As the Don initiates the crucial buy-out of Moe Green's Las Vegas hotel operation, so David captured the city of the Jebusites, and bought the site for Solomon's Temple.

New York, Las Vegas, Hollywood—heady stuff. But much of the Hollywood part is gratuitous to the Davidic vehicle for the novel, unless we decide that it is a substitute for the repressed sexuality of the straightlaced Don, with Johnny Fontane and Sonny and Fredo all as Davidic skirt-chasers, and many starlets as Bathsheba and David's several concubines. The various son-figures in the novel are all womanizers, Michael—like his father—excepted. (The Don is generally the friend of monogamous Uriah-types, not their betrayer.) And there seems to be no biblical parallel for the celebrated episode in which the severed head of his prize horse turns up in the bed of the threatened Hollywood studio head and producer Woltz, who has indignantly re-

fused to give the Don's godson—the singing heart-throb Johnny Fontane—a prize part in a new picture.<sup>41</sup> In the Bible, however, Saul's son Ishbosheth rebukes Saul's former general Abner for having gone into the dead Saul's concubine. "Am I a dog's head, which against Judah do shew kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David"—Abner asks the enfeebled son of Saul—"that thou chargest me with a fault concerning this woman?" (II Sam. 3:8). Ishbosheth is warned about his fate, and not so obliquely. The consiglieri Tom Hagen and Woltz, say nothing like that to each other, but the family lawyer's offer of help with impending labor union troubles (corresponding to David's kindness to the House of Saul) is rebuffed by the unsavory Hollywood bigshot, and the foolish man thereafter wakes up in bed with the bloody head of his prize horse, in place of his preferred bedmates, namely thirteen-year-olds with maidenheads. In other words, Hagen has silently asked the same black-mailing kind of question Abner threateningly asked Ishbosheth about the Saulide capo's treatment as a decapitated animal, and Woltz, like Abner, is rebuked (though silently) for forbidden sexual traffic. The intimidated and wisened-up Woltz accepts the Don's so-called help, and surrenders the movie part to the Don's godson, who becomes Hollywood royalty. In the Bible Abner switches sides from Saul's house to David's, and Saul's protection-less son, Ishbosheth, is thereafter beheaded in his bed. Unsavory violence, in both Woltz' and Ishbosheth's cases, is the negotiating tool of last resort.

#### V. EPILOGUE: "AND I ONLY AM ESCAPED ALONE TO TELL THEE"; MELVILLE'S *MOBY DICK* AND PYNCHON'S *GRAVITY'S RAINBOW*

Do we really need the David story to elicit and articulate the understructure of Puzo's novel, its skeletal plot? Perhaps the question should be put differently—or more "mythically." Why did Puzo's novel resonate with the public in the blockbuster way that it did? What was the corresponding historical subtext? The rise of an ethnic family to power, the legacy of the sons, the violent death of brothers, the assassination of the assassin, the transfer of operations from one territorial seat to another, the chaos engulfing a divided society, the mood of Good-Night America? Why the seconding of the Italian Godfather by a *consigliere* and a mouthpiece supposedly Irish? Were the Corleones in fact being discerned inside the silhouette of the a-borning myth of the Kennedys' lost Camelot? Or could the Five Families be re-read as the five ethnic groups competing for turf and power in the five boroughs?

This all seems slightly satiric, if not deeply ironic—as if the mythical Great American Novel of whatever stripe were always teetering on the brink of self-parody.<sup>42</sup> Melville's Ahab with his prosthesis readily lends himself to re-depiction as Captain Hook in James M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, Hook's marine nemesis being a crocodile who has swallowed the metal clock ticking in its stomach. This trans-Atlantic comment on *Moby Dick* as a boy's book may be compared to the rendezvous with German rocketry in *Gravity's Rainbow*. The body of the novel's fool-hero Tyrone Slothrop incorporates an "erectile plastic" (the "peculiar polymer" Impolex-G) used in the manufacture of the V-2 rocket, the implant of which sympathetically causes Axis missiles to target the

scenes of his sex-life in World War II London; the white whale tracked by Slothrop is the black box—the “Schwarzgerät” (“black device,” or death chamber, on the 00000 rocket). Slothrop is mythicized as Rocketman, on the model of Plasticman, introduced in 1943 in boys’s comics. Melville went to sea and thought about the Leviathan and Richard Chase’s account of the Essex; Pynchon worked at Boeing and thought about Werner Von Braun and the V-2 files in his employer’s archives (certain episodes in the novel have been dated by a singular photograph of Von Braun with a broken arm in a white cast).

In Mailer’s Great American War Novel, *The Naked and the Dead*, General Cummings plotted the human sexual climacteric on the arcing and the collapsing of civilization in homage to Spengler’s similar model of a missile’s trajectory. Thereafter a modern Bible scholar—George Mendenhall—linked the meteorological seal on God and Noah’s peace-treaty, the rainbow in the heavens, with the bow on the disc of the Assyrian war-god in the Near Eastern firmament on carved reliefs of Assyrian conquest.<sup>43</sup> Mythicized history imitates historicized myth: where the god Asshur trained his rain of arrows on ancient Near Eastern conquests and subject nations, a general named Schwarzkopf conceived an Operation called Desert Storm. Pynchon’s Slothrop turned into Rocketman, and the U. S. Army’s General Schwarzkopf into “Stormin’ Norman.” —Because of their dense black hair, it is thought, the ancient Assyrians were known in their world, and to themselves, as the black-heads. For some months, it appeared, General Schwarzkopf was America’s Assyrian god.

As for *Moby Dick*, it ends upon a chapter for which the epigraph is, “And I only am escaped alone to tell thee” (Job 1: 1 – 5). Melville’s protagonist has drowned with echoes of the fate of Dante’s Ulysses, but the book began with the invitation to call its narrator by the name of the folkish outcast Ishmael, and it ends upon the invitation to identify that same narrator as now the messenger who thrice reported the collapse of a pious man’s estate in the land of Uz. The epigraph mythicizes the narrator’s audience (“thee”) as itself in Job’s shoes, with Ishmael as the messenger of mischance, that is, the reader becomes the object of that legendary test of wisdom conducted by those ultimate, mythic agents from Job’s prose introduction, namely God and Satan. God’s own final poetry in Job implies that only the Creator can land the Leviathan with a hook (Job 41:1), but a quasi-mythic stature attaches to the monomaniacal but mortal sea-captain who thinks he can do the same thing with a harpoon. And once Ahab has become himself a cultural myth, his artificial limb can be transformed not only into Captain Hook’s prosthesis, but also the peculiar plastic operating in the body of Pynchon’s Tyrone Slothrop. For Ahab’s peg-leg was ivory from a whale like Ahab’s nemesis, and the peculiar plastic is otherwise to be incorporated as insulation in the rocketry of the Axis enemy in World War II. Old myths need never say die when it is so apparent they will be revived through the multiple literary mutations and transpositions of the poetic and prosaic that may be compared to the exchanges we have noted between myth in verse, and history in prose. Or vice versa.

### [Notes]

1. See T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975) 174 – 179. The essay presented here was originally Part II of a two-part lecture. Starting from citations of Jesse Weston and Sir James Frazer in relation to 'the mythical method' of Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Joyce's *Ulysses*, and reflections on structural uses of myth in literature generally, the first part of the paper proceeded through a series of poetical examples of mythical subplots: Milton's Satanic 'Telegoniad,' Tennyson's 'Columbian' Ulysses, Milton's Columbian Satan and his politicized and industrialized 'war in heaven.' The present paper takes up from the conclusion of Part I: "when Raphael's narrative in *Paradise Lost* has arrived at the point from which Milton-as-epicist himself began, namely Satan's fall from heaven, the poet says 'half yet remains unsung.' That half, in our case, would concern not the heroes of epic and romance, but the protagonists of the domestic novel and prose fiction. Even within Milton's epic itself, the brave warrior from the aristocratic past becomes the lethal spoiler-seducer from the bourgeoisie future."
2. T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," in *Selected Prose*, 177. Eliot's review was first published in *The Dial* in November, 1923. For pithy commentary on this passage, see Denis Donaghue, "Yeats, Eliot, and the Mythical Method," *Sewanee Review*, Spring (1997), Vol. 105, Issue 2: 206 – 227.
3. Chaucer's exasperated Wife of Bath tears out three pages out of her husband's compendium of misogynistic treatises, from which he has gotten all the stuff originally from St. Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* that is vexingly insulting to women; but the nearly authorial annotations of the scribe for the Ellsmere manuscript puts it all back in, and reiterates the source, in the manuscript's margin. Here is a parable of intertextual/intratextual relations of the general kind that we are exploring here. See *Canterbury Tales*, Wife of Bath's Prologue, ll. 669 – 680 ("... Seint Jerome, / That made a book agyne Jovinian. . ."), 788 – 91 "... thre leves . . . / Out of his book. . .").
4. *Dr. No*, ch. 12, "The Thing": 104. Fleming's lightsome chapter titles perform the alerting function in several instances, such as "Amidst the Alien Cane," where the reference is to the seduction scene in the Book of Ruth, via a phrase about Ruth among the alien corn, which is varied from Keats by the Caribbean setting. (There may be a second joke here, Ian Fleming being the name of an actor in a Somerset Maugham film vehicle called *Quartet*, the second playlet of which is titled "Alien Corn.")
5. The honor is known as the C. M. G. See Ian Fleming, *From Russia with Love*, 37: "'Myths are built on heroic deeds and heroic people. Have they no such men?' . . . It was Colonel Nitikin of the M. G. B. who broke the silence. He said hesitantly, 'There is man called Bond,'" to be read with the Russian comments on Bond's dossier on p. 42; "'The fact that this spy was decorated with the C. M. G. in 1953, an award usually given only on retirement from the Secret Service, is a measure of his worth.'" A few pages earlier (38) one of these Russian spymasters, plotting Bond's assassination, recalls Bond's fairly recent interference in plot in which a German named Drax was killed. (Drax is variant of the words drake and dragon.) Discounting his legendary qualities, the hero at the same time makes himself sound like one of Spenser's heroes as commissioned by Gloriana: "'It's like this. I'm sort of a policeman. They send me out from London when there's something odd going on somewhere in the world that isn't anybody else's business' . . . Bond told the story in simple terms, with good men and bad men, like an adventure story of a book" (94). The second chapter of *Dr. No*, "Choice of Weapons," needs to be read with Erich Auerbach's chapter "The Knight Sets Forth," in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, tr. Willard R. Trask, pp. 123 – 42. See also Angela Jane Weisl, *The Persistence of Medievalism: Narrative Adventures in Contemporary Culture*, with especial reference to the canons and plot formulas of romance in the cinematic ventures of *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*.
6. U. A. Fanthorpe (1929 – 2009), *Side Effects* (Cornwall, UK: Peterloo Poets, 1978). The pic-

ture and the opening of the poem are on the book's cover, the author's first. The dragon's section of the poem (I) there includes "I don't mind dying / Ritually, since I always rise again."

7. For this analysis and the biblical analogies see David McWhirter, *Desire and Love in Henry James: A Study of the Late Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1989).

8. *The Egoist: A Comedy in Narrative*, intro. Lord Dunsany, 364–65 (in ch. xxxiv). (All quotations of the novel and their page numbers are from this edition.)

9. The relation is noted and studied in Robert D. Mayo, "The Egoist and the Willow Pattern" 71–78; reprinted in Robert M. Adams, ed., *The Egoist* (NY, London: Norton, 1979) 453–60; the cover of the Norton edition reproduces the china pattern.

10. Wikipedia, sub "Willow Pattern." See E. Cobham Brewer, *The Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 1303: "To the right is a lordly mandarin's country seat. It is two storeys high to show the rank and wealth of the possessor; in the foreground is a pavilion, in the background an orange-tree, and to the right of the pavilion a peach-tree in full bearing. The estate is enclosed by an elegant wooden fence. At one end of the bridge is the famous willow-tree, and at the other the gardener's cottage, one storey high, and so humble that the grounds are wholly uncultivated, the only green thing being a small fir-tree at the back. At the top of the pattern (left-hand side) is an island, with a cottage; the grounds are highly cultivated, and much has been reclaimed from the water. The two birds are turtle-doves. The three figures on the bridge are the mandarin's daughter with a distaff nearest the cottage, the lovers with a boat in the middle, and nearest the willow-tree the mandarin with a whip. *The tradition.* The mandarin had an only daughter named Li-chi, who fell in love with Chang, a young man who lived in the island home represented at the top of the pattern, and who had been her father's secretary. The father over-heard them one day making vows of love under the orange-tree, and sternly forbade the unequal match; but the lovers contrived to elope, lay concealed for a while in the gardener's cottage, and thence made their escape in a boat to the island home of the young lover. The enraged mandarin pursued them with a whip, and would have beaten them to death had not the gods rewarded their fidelity by changing them both into turtle-doves. The picture is called the willow pattern not only because it is a tale of disastrous love, but because the elopement occurred 'when the willow begins to shed its leaves.' "

11. *The Egoist*, prefatory statement: "[Meredith's] tale is loosely based on the story depicted in the design of Willow Pattern china (whence the hero's name), where, for all the wrong reasons, a mandarin wishes to marry his daughter to the rich old man who lives across the bridge, but she falls in love with a poor gardener." In Meredith's version of the story, the collusion between the nineteen year old Clara Middleton's learned father and the no longer young Willoughby is abetted by the seduction of the girl's sponsor with samplings of the finest of the rich man's port—"wrong reasons" enough, it comically appears.

12. My attention to this stage-piece was drawn by Patricia O'Hara's study "The Willow Pattern That We Knew: The Victorian Literature of Blue Willow," *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 36, no. 4, 421–43. This quote is the epigraph for her very instructive essay, in which Meredith's novel figures as *chef d'oeuvre*.

13. *The Mandarin's Daughter! Being the Simple Story of The Willow-Pattern Plate, A Chinese Tale* [1851] (London: Thomas Hailes Lacy, nd [apparently 1876]). Meredith's narrative suggests that Clara and her eventual husband, in flying off to the Alps for their honeymoon, are the lovebirds of the legendary immortalization and metamorphosis of their originals, eternally flying together in the sky of the plate. Meredith describes the blossoms on a branch in prose so rich he appears to be hopelessly in love with nature's ephemeral beauty (as Lord Dunsany thinks, in his introduction to the Oxford World's Classics edition), rather than toying with the urgency in the old story, where the falling of the blossoms determines the fatal date of the unwanted wedding.

14. The shadow of female sexual violation as treated in the deuteronomic texts hovers over such sentences as Vernon's verdict on Willoughby's tyranny: "A man of full growth ought to know that noth-

ing on earth tempts Providence so much as the binding of a young woman against her will" (ch. xxx; p. 321). There is something of a doubled Proserpina figure in the two women under Willoughby's power, the sickly Laetitia ("the modest violet" of ch. iii, p. 18 who becomes the "faded creature" of ch. xxiii [p. 235]) and the flourishing Clara, whom Willoughby dreams of reducing and discarding in revenge for her reluctance to marry him: "Ten thousand Furies thickened about of him at the thought of her lying by the roadside without his having crushed all bloom and odour out her which might tempt even the curiosity of the fiend, man" (pp. 235–36). Clara is also compared to Andromeda by the narrator's disavowal of Whitford's capacity for the role of Perseus: "he was not the hero descending from heaven bright-sworded to smite a woman's fetters off her limbs and deliver her from the yawning mouth-abys" (ch. xvi; p. 158).

15. Willoughby determines to marry his long-time admirer, the brainy, portionless poetess and not altogether glamorous or vivacious Laetitia Dale, because "At least she would rescue him from the claws of Lady Busshe, and her owl's hoot of 'Willow Pattern,' and her hag's shriek of 'twice jilted,'" (ch. xxviii; p. 292).

16. Joseph Butler, *Five Sermons*, intro. Stuart M. Brown 45–46.

17. But the *Tellus* . . . *dant signum* of the same passage (*Aen.* IV, 166–67) is attached to the Fall; twice ("Earth felt the wound, and Nature . . . gave signs of woe," "Earth trembled . . . and Nature gave a second groan"; PL IX, 782–83, 1000–01). In the Cento *Vergilianus de laudibus Christi* of Faltonia Betitia Proba (ca. 322–70), God pronounces a death sentence on Eve, after condemning her with the sad old age, disease, and labor he has just cursed Adam with: "These evils will always be yours. And you, o savage wife, not ignorant of ill, of all these ills are the head and the cause" (*Haec tibi semper erunt, tuque, o saevissima coniunx, non ignara mali, / caput horum et causa malorum* [lines 263–65]: comparing Virgil, *Aen.* IV, 169–70, *ille dies primus leti primusque malorum / causa fuit*).

18. Twentieth Century Views/Spectrum Books reprints George Sherburn's essay in *Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Ronald Paulson: "*Fielding's Amelia: An Interpretation*," pp. 146–57.

19. Bk. I, ch. 3: "he did not believe men were under any blind impulse of direction of fate; that that every man acted merely from the force of the passion which was uppermost in his mind, and could do no otherwise" (p. 24). The discussion of "impulse of fate" here appears to take a phrase from the assertion of Milton's God that he has not influenced the Fall or compromised free will; in *Paradise Lost* III, 120. Booth's notion is reasserted at Bk. III, ch. 4, "he was convinced every man acted entirely from that passion which was uppermost" (p. 103), and quoted at Bk. XII, ch. 5 (where Booth says, "men appeared to me to act entirely from their passions" [p. 522]; Dr. Harrison agreeing, though perhaps only momentarily, then opines that hope and fear being the strongest of these passions, religion with its rewards and punishments has a firm footing in the truth). Fools and wisemen most often act alike, because they act "from their uppermost passion," even according to the narrator (Bk. VIII, ch. x; p. 355); and likewise they act "from self-love," which seems to be that same "uppermost passion," according to Booth, lecturing Amelia in a philosophy she considers little short of atheism: "all men, as well the best as the worst, act alike from the principle of self-love. Where benevolence is the uppermost passion, self-love directs you to gratify it by doing good"—but where "ambition avarice, pride, or any other passion governs the man, . . . the miseries of all men affect him no more they would a stock or a stone" (Bk. X, ch. 9; p. 458).

20. The scent has not grown so cold that there are none able to find and study it throughout the novel; i. e., Lyall H. Powers, "The Influence of the *Aeneid* on Fielding's *Amelia*," in *Modern Language Notes*, 330–36; Maurice Johnson, "The Noble Model" 139–56; Eustace Palmer, "Amelia—The Decline of Fielding's Art," in *Essays in Criticism* 135–51; and John E. Loftis, "Imitation in the Novel; Fielding's *Amelia*" 214–29.

21. See Rebecca West, *The Court and the Castle: Some treatments of a recurrent theme* (New Ha-

ven; Yale Up, 1957) 94–99, for the relation of Fielding the reformist magistrate to the abuses and criminality in *Amelia*.

22. The nature of an atavistic interpolant is illustrated by the place in the novel, in Book VI, where Virgil's verses are counterpointed against the action found in the prose, which is all about threatened marital fidelity and trust—already felt in the influence in the text of the separation scene in *Paradise Lost*.

23. Mrs. Bennet, the lady learned in the classics, says Virgil calls the practice of second marriages “a violation of chastity, and makes Dido speak of it with utmost detestation: . . .” She then slightly misquotes quotes Dido at length in six lines of Latin (Bk. VI, ch. 7), from *Aen.* IV, 24–29. The recital “not a little staggered Booth,” who is here in the position of Aeneas in the underworld, when Dido's ghost returns to her husband and leaves Aeneas stunned (*Aen.* VI, “concussus”). The question of whether the author of the *Aeneid* or his poem's gods could ever assign an unjust fate to a pious man—Riphaeus—is taken up in no. 600 of Henry Fielding's alleged essays in Martin C. Battestin, ed., *New Essays by Henry Fielding; His Contributions to the Craftsman* 271–83.

24. In *Book IV*, ch. v; p. 166.

25. *Bk. VI*, ch. 7, at the end. Caveat lector.

26. For these observations see David Blewett, “Introduction,” *Henry Fielding, Amelia*, pp. xi–xiii, where the legal and philosophical implications of Booth's loss of liberty are suggestively expounded.

27. Or “*Aemeliad*.” Though *Amelia* is never spelled *Aemelia*, she is early on called “*Miss Emily*” by intimates, and Booth calls her “*my dear Emily*” late in the novel (*Bk. X*, ch. 9; Penguin edn., p. 458).

28. Though epic narrations are more historically oriented than myths, epics follow myths in explaining, etiologically, the why and how of something important or decisive that once happened.

29. This idea has its own history. A bogus and satirical advertisement circulated shortly after the publication of Fielding's novel begins as follows: “This day is published, / (In four Volumes Duodecimo, with the help of Dedication, / Introductory Chapters, long Digres- / sions, short Repetitions, polite Expletives of Con- / versation, genteel Dialogues, a wide Margin, and / large Letter, Price but 12s.) / SHAMELIA, a Novel”: quoted from Wilbur Lucius Cross, *The History of Henry Fielding*, in 2 vols., 2:335–36.

30. This is in agreement with Robert Alter, on the argument being made by the novel's Virgilian substrate, though there is no obvious speech by an authorial mouthpiece in its behalf (with the possible exception of Mrs. Bennet's recourse to Virgilian authority for her opposition to second marriages): *Fielding and the Nature of the Novel*, chap. 5.

31. The duel in an affair of honor that Pierre is unhappily goaded into in *War and Peace*, points a similar moral. We are gratified that Fielding's sinister braggart soldier is the loser, and ultimately comes to a violent end (the rakish scoundrel Dolukhov, on the other hand, is among the soldiers ultimately rescuing Pierre from prison in Napoleon's Moscow).

32. Fielding's domestic novel at least one edge towards a nightmarish Dostoyevskian tale; Sergeant Atkinson, who has a long-running crush on *Amelia*, wakes up from a dream and thinks he has strangled his apparently blood-soaked wife; he has been dreaming that he was dispatching *Amelia*'s would-be seducer Colonel James (*Bk. IX*, ch. 6; pp. 384–86). (In other words, the conflicted Sergeant would throttle his impulses to kill his own wife and go to bed with the Captain's.)

33. Dante, *Convivio*, IV. xxiv, advances the notion (taken from Fulgentius the Mythographer's Exposition of the Content of Virgil According to Moral Philosophy) that the *Aeneid* narrates the moral coming-of-age of an everyman.

34. The Godfather, p. 270.

35. P. 285. For further instances of foolishness, see note 38, *infra*.

36. *Fools Die*, p. 530 and p. 50. *Merlyn muses*: ““Jordan won over four hundred grand . . . And then he kills himself. . . .” ‘Foolish,’ I said” (141). At his big win, Jordan discovers, “He really

was a hero" (27). But heroism, he might have warned himself, could get you killed: "Jordan had no illusions about himself . . . [he being a] degenerate gambler. That is, a man who gambled simply to gamble and must lose. As a hero who goes to war must die. Show me a gambler and I'll show you a loser, show me a hero and I'll show you a corpse, Jordan thought" (12). We compare what Merlyn says, upon the death of his Simon-pure brother: "I knew that I was alive . . . at the core of my brother's virtue was that he feared neither his enemies nor those he loved. So much the worst for him. Virtue is its own reward and fools are they who die . . . I would sin, beware and live forever" (442–43). "Merlyn knew . . . [f]rom the very beginning Jordan was to have died in Las Vegas" (36), and death makes a fool of the majority of Merlyn's associates—few of them survive the novel.

37. *The sequel, The Sicilian, in which Puzo takes up the years and events of Michael Corleone's Sicilian exile, also ends on this note. Michael ultimately discovers his father has used him to effect a defensive betrayal of an admired Spartacus-like hero in the Old Country (who did not doubt "that he had some magnificent destiny before him. He shared the magic of those medieval heroes who could not die until they came to the end of their long story, until they had achieved their great victories" [101–02]). Michael plaintively asks his father, "'Does that mean that . . . you used me like a fool, a Judas goat?'" Don Corleone answers, "'You are alive and he [the local hero] is dead. Always remember that and live your life not to be a hero but to remain alive. With time, heroes seems a little foolish.'*" . . . "It was the first lesson Michael received from his father and the one he learned best." (397–400.) —The lesson, in other words, that fools die.

38. There are many examples of "fool." — Vito to his fearful wife, before his successful murdering of Fanucci, whom "he thought . . . was a crazy fool" (198): "Do you think you've married a fool?" (201). The Don considered threats the most foolish kind of exposure" (219). Tom Hagen knew, at the murder of Sonny, he "was . . . no fit Consigliere for a Family at war. He had been fooled" (266). The Don to the other Dons: "We are all men who have refused to be fools . . . we have to be cunning like the business people" (290). Michael: "The Corleone Family is a lot stronger than anybody thinks, but I hoped to make it foolproof" (411). The Don to Michael: "There are men in this world . . . who go about demanding to be killed. . . . I have seen a man, a fool, deliberately infuriate a group of dangerous men, and he himself without any resources" (423). Michael's wife to Tom Hagen: ". . . Michael lied to me . . . he made a fool of me" (441). The Don to Hagen: "It has to be foolproof when [Michael] comes home" (296). Michael accusing Carlo of treachery: "That little farce you played out with my sister, did Barzini kid you that would fool a Corleone?" (431). Mama Corleone says the retired Don "just plays the fool with his garden" (390), and Vito dies there saying "Life is so beautiful," but his preceding thought is: "Prudence. Prudence" (407). The Don to his associates: "Now, any man should be allowed one foolishness in his life. I have had mine . . . I'm being prudent, I've always been a prudent man, there is little I find so little to my taste as carelessness in life" (p. 294; we are unsure what the Don's foolishness is—his amusement in his garden, as opposed to the prudent, fortress-like estate around it?)

39. "If the Godfather had lived, he might have assured his son's succession; now it was by no means certain" (410). Rival families deem Michael a "mediocre successor" (396). "Sonny . . . would guard the Family's empire, . . . and since the position was not hereditary to an absolute degree, cement his claim as heir to the Corleone Empire" (259). Upon the early murder of the patriarch Don Aprile, Puzo's novel *Omerta* settles the family business succession question near the outset, but the analogous bequest structures and choices are illustrated.

40. Brasi, who has come under the Don's protection, is a virtual Molech. He has had his own newborn child thrown into a furnace, as Michael learns second hand in Sicily. Solomon (idolatrously) honored the murderous Ammonite god with a temple (1 Kings 11:5–7).

41. A record called *Sinatra Souvenir* was produced in 1961 by a record company called *Fontana*. The same company (or label) had also produced *The Frank Sinatra Story*, in 1958. "The part is foolproof," says Puzo's Johnny Fontane, speaking of the role that will win the singer-turned-actor an Os-

car (p. 166; *Fontane's godfather secures the part for him*).

42. *The postwar imagination of this hypothetical novel particularly haunted the career of Norman Mailer, as the story of Puzo's Mailer-like character Osano in Fools Die illustrates. A similar tribute is implicit in the Faustian thrust and arc of the rocket in Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow, which owes something to General Cummings's Spenglerian and sexual reflections in his memorandum in Part Three, ch. 6, of Mailer's The Naked and the Dead (pp. 494 – 96: "Spengler's plant form for all cultures . . . The fall is always more rapid than the rise . . . the curve of sexual excitement and discharge . . . It is the curve of the death missile as well as an abstraction of the life-love impulse . . . the life viewpoint is what we see and feel astride the shell. . . . In the larger meaning of the curve, gravity would occupy the place of mortality. . .")*.

43. George E. Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation; The Origins of the Biblical Tradition* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973) 43 – 48.

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