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Coining

Robert Viscusi

Owing¹ to the persistence of heroic mythologies of the Self, particularly among artists and writers, many readers continue to require a sustained act of the will in order to recognize that most of what people say and portray carries little if anything of the character belonging to an act of creation.² Persons do not create. They convey. They act and interact. Works of art respond to overwhelming conditions that preexist and support and, in fact, fully inform them. The noblest pile will always find more of its elegance in submission to than in disregard of dozens of demanding, even inflexible, laws: of gravity, of light, of geography, of pliability, of durability, of traffic, of sanitation, of politics, of service, of iconology, of expenditure, and of what is sometimes supposed to be inevitable decorum. What one calls, in a sentimental haze, *creation*, is no more, and certainly no less, than the intricate negotiation of innumerable and often conflicting requirements. In this essay, I wish to address one of these preexisting conditions or requirements which informs all of English literature: the double character of the English language, where a Germanic grammar and workaday diction cooperate uneasily with a vast wordlist of Latinate

elegance, abstraction, and authority.³ This double character, I suggest, more than any other single fact, both predicts and sustains the recurrent necessity of Italy to English literature as well as the perpetually questionable value which English literature assigns to Italian themes and characters, settings and words.

When we think of English writers in Italy, the first picture coming to mind is apt to be a vignette of Lord Byron, brutally acquisitive among the women he could so readily purchase. Or else, in a prospect of flowers, John Ruskin, by his money insulated equally from his own nature and from that of the Venetians whom he regarded as living obstacles to his clear view of what their ancestors had accomplished during the millennium they had passed incorrigibly failing to live up to the codes of morality he had now come to extract from their monuments. Readers with a more intimate knowledge of the theme will reflect upon how readily lovers of Italy, as they are delicately known, such as John Addington Symonds and Norman Douglas and Frederick Rolfe, perfected their tastes in the market of little boys. These pictures, it is true, are ugly. They call up a formidable catalog of other smug horrors that we associate with the triumphant beefeaters in Simla or Dublin or Pretoria or Rangoon or Tahiti or Salisbury or running the blockade to save the confederacy of slavers in 1863. We think of England in Italy as she appeared during the great blossoming of the pound sterling, when England was powerful and rich and monstrous. But England has not always been so.

It is sometimes remarked how certain faces one sees in the hills north of Rome will bring to mind Hannibal's Africans, or how many Arabic vowels live today in Sicilian nouns, or how the numbers of blondes in Southern Italy bear witness to the sojourn of the Normans there in the Middle Ages. England, likewise, bears vivid marks of the invader. London, York, Winchester, and many other of her principal places carry variants of the names devised for them by the Romans during four centuries of well-organized subjection. The language continues to employ the Danish demonstratives *this* and *that*, small scars of deep stabs. Unlike the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, which eventually replaced the Normans with Spaniards, and finally with Italians, England never threw off her French invaders. After the Battle of Hastings in 1066, the Normans remained and governed. Their descendants continue to carry titles and deeds made over to them by the conquering Guillaume in the eleventh century. All England and all her former colonies speak, to this day, an intricate Creole which preserves intact the social structure which prevailed in the early middle

ages: most of the fancy words are French, most of the plain ones Anglo-Saxon, in derivation.⁴ In practice, this has meant a strange and paradoxical freedom for writers and speakers of English. The syntax of the language and its diction of common speech lead a livelier existence than they might have done had they not needed to flourish forever in the shadow of the grander formal vocabulary which the imposition of Norman French made eternally available and recurrent in writing and speech which pretended to authority. But the dialect of dominance has never been—and, one suspects, never can be—fully naturalized.

Coinage in English has been, since the Norman invasion, overwhelmingly the privilege of speakers of French, Latin, and Italian. Anglo-Saxon, like German, invented most of its words by troping its own basic wordlist. *Kenning*, however, lost itself in *coining*, a word with the same consonants but hardly the same antecedents or connotations. The effects of this sociolinguistic fact have been stark and stubborn. The Germanic bones of English remain skeletal. Subtleties always grow in Latinate forms. On the many occasions when such poets as G. M. Hopkins or Basil Bunting have attempted to purify the dialect by saxonizing it, the result has always been more like dialect than like purity, and no one, almost no one, can read *The Wreck of the Deutschland* without a jargonary at hand.⁵

Now this effect is anything but accidental. The reason that the speakers of Latin, French, and Italian had the power to coin words while the speakers of Anglo-Saxon had it not was the same reason that speakers of Latin and French and Italian had also the power to coin money. They were, to put it simply, the King and his assignees. The Kings of England from William to James Stuart all had running in their veins more French blood and running in their minds more Latin politics than ever the mass of their subjects. This plain fact lies most of the time somewhere out of the range of the visible, but it provides a powerful motive for that peculiar form of violent history which goes by the name of *literature*.

Literature, properly capitalized and italicized, may be defined very strictly and very satisfactorily as *that which will be read*.⁶ In the future tense one hears very clearly the echo of an imperative. *Literature*, or what is known as literature as distinct from what is known as mere written matter, is that writing which in practice authority insures will have people paid to read it, interpret it, and teach its interpretation to young persons in the *paideuma*. Tax records are not literature because and only because they can go unread forever. When large numbers of people who are not ac-

countants come to feel that they must read tax records, tax records will be literature. Pornography began to become literature when a few intrepid monsters of learning began to teach it in universities.

Why is literature a form of violent history? Canons of what is literature have always been established by force or by its agent, finance.⁷ Epics, paid for by kings, employ poets to remind people that kings have armies. Tragedies sob over the misfortunes of generals and captains. Common men do not have tragedies until the middle of the twentieth century when, according to the hopeful fictions of leftist ideology, common men possess armies. Similarly, women's literature grows or wanes with the political and economic independence of women. Docile chattels do not have a literature. Angry servant-girls may. Children begin to have a literature at the same moment that they begin to have psychological independence and political rights. And it is a striking fact, dissonant with the prejudices of those who believe in literature as a form of personal creation, that it is readers quite as much as writers who produce a literature.

No one could alone imagine *ab tabula rasa* a pastoral elegy, or having thought of it, actually write it. Such a thing as a pastoral elegy is as much a public institution as a hitching-post or a restaurant. One writes a pastoral elegy in the firm expectation that persons can be found to listen to it, read it, judge it, and hail it for a fine example of its kind, much in the spirit that one mixes a new sauce for steak and serves it to people who have already tasted many steaks and many sauces.

It is important to review these fundamental matters in order to understand what actually takes place when one writes a poem. *The place of writing is a place of exchange.* Sometimes peaceful, but more often not, this exchange goes by many names. The most fashionable term for it in the present century has been *metaphor*.⁸ This much-defined term, which in modern Greek can mean *truck*,⁹ always carries with it some of its root-sense of *transfer*, which can mean either the *bringing of something to another place*, or, as is more to the point, the *putting of one thing in the place of another*. This act has received so much commentary, formed the basis of so many theoretical excursions, that there hardly seems room for yet another. We have learned, for example, to think of metaphor always as part of a double act of which the other half is *metonymy*. Several distinct structuralisms enjoin us to recall, as consequential, that while metaphor puts one thing in another's place, simultaneously the figure of *metonymy*, by which they largely mean *syntax*, is making or unmaking the place itself into which metaphor is putting whatever it is putting.¹⁰

These notions enable us to specify, at the level of the textual field, how writing is exchange. But the question for us now is not precisely the *how* as it is the *what* and *why* and *who* and *when* of this exchange if the exchange is of such a kind as to earn the title of *Literature*. For the *how*, as a standard, is hopeless: neither beauty nor complexity can ever be described in such a way as to exclude entirely from literature the gorgeous advertisement for the Mercedes Benz or the intricate treatise on the courtship habits of the arthropods. And yet we do exclude these, most times. Why is that?

What makes for literary exchange, as distinct from other kinds, is neither loveliness nor intricacy, but *social force*. One must perceive, howsoever dimly, that the metaphor which supports the poem or the play or the novel or the great oration is one which marks indelibly some new movement of actual persons and their actual desires in actual time into some actual position. Literature, some will retort, is then merely history. They will be correct. Literature is precisely history. The more absolutely literary it seems the more thoroughly historical it becomes.

Historians would sometimes seem, thanks to antique professional folklores which persist despite the excellent work of many waves of revisionaries and philosophers, to suppose that history is something that only can happen on a stage. Marketplaces, royal courts, battlefields, poop decks, hustings, convention halls: these are the historian's opera houses. History, however, is made mostly in private, for it is a writer's artifact requiring silence, reflection, and books for its prosperity. Scripts written in quiet houses overlooking the Lake of Geneva can be revised in public before howling mobs in Paris. But there are no operas when there have been no quiet studies. Even good jokes have their incubators of silence.

Literature is history, then, partly because history is literature.¹¹ But there is a better, a more compelling, reason. Literature is not merely history. If that were so, it would not differ from eyelashes or thumbnails, which are so profoundly history as to require many lifetimes of many brilliant scientists for their even moderate explication just barely to have commenced. Literature is history in a sense more than evidentiary. Literature is history because, language being the very scene of history, changes in language are the pith of chronicles of great events. They are tissue that the great events generate in endowing their own persistence. They are, as it were, the first and last battlefields and poop decks, continuous with the actual scenes, no less consequential than they. Literature is the great human exchange-place. When Hamlet posts the pickets of God almighty around King Claudius, he sets the stage for dreadful deeds and mighty wars. Virgil, it has been

said, invented Rome so perfectly we have not been able, even at this late moment, to rid ourselves of its power.

The Romans themselves understood this as they did so many practical matters. One of the first things they did after conquering a people—the Catuvellauni, say, or the Ordovices¹²—was to make it clear to the sons of the chieftains that one would only prosper in the new bureaucracy if he learned to speak and write Latin like a *rhetor*: and that meant soaking his mind with the *Aeneid* and the *Secular Ode* and those other models of eloquence which had as their unfailing burthen the divine mission of the Latins to bring to every corner of the world the blessings of the forum, the hot bath, and a dependable coinage. The Romans left many a deposit in Great Britain. Some of these are subtle. One needs aerial photography before the vastness of the public works really becomes clear to the eye.¹³ Only centuries of patient archaeology have revealed the range of the numismatic record and the scope of the inscrip-tional evidence. But some things are less subtle. The Romans, to choose a key example, invented London.¹⁴ The Icenii and Brigantes and other tribes now so lost to all accounts except those of the Romans and those of fantasy did not build cities. Indeed the very notion of a city as England first encountered it arrived on the island precisely as part of the same plan to teach the indigenes a manner and matter of living from which they have, in the event, never wanted to part for long: civilization, or, to define it historically, city life on the Roman plan.

Civilization often figures in the accounts of the uncivilized as that knowledge after which there is no forgiveness. You *can't* keep them down on the barrow after they've seen Londinium. Isolated and even numerous exceptions do not disprove this firm rule of the social thumb. The filtered light of the Hagia Sophia exerts an intricate sexual allure, compounded of power and delight, which no starshine on the Caucasus can ever equal. And this bond will survive taxation, civil war, secret police—anything, in fact, which the monsters in the capital can devise to increase their own power and the revulsion of their envious subjects at the periphery. In Dublin, people still speak English and memorize Shakespeare's exaltations of their conquerors. In Washington, they exuberantly spend democratic tax levies to broadcast in prime time sententious soap operas whose clear effect is to make everyone wish in Iowa City that he was having his boots fitted in Bond Street and his sideburns barbered at Trumper's. And in Londinium, once the Romans, having entered that tomb of narcissist helplessness which has become their perennial charade, had abandoned their British

garrisons, the Anglo-Saxons gradually made many a fine and warm place for the emissaries of the Pontifex Maximus, with their beautiful manners and their beautiful Latin and their endlessly variable music of that most cosmopolitan of cults.¹⁵ Against this background of remembered sophistication and passionate Roman Catholicism, the triumphal entry of the Normans in a cloud of Romance language and Romance bureaucrats has the character, not of a sudden and violent irruption, but rather of a long-awaited and absolute consummation of settled destiny.

So, in any event, it has turned out to be. The Normans have never departed. Even Roman Catholicism has, in the Anglican Church, survived more wholly than in any other Protestant sect of Europe. All the blood and trees which the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries expended to establish an English church entirely free of Rome were not able to exorcise from English fantasy the profound recollection of gilded arches and of marmoreal authority, the grandeur that was awaiting the Archbishop of Canterbury when, a few years ago, he crossed the polished pavement of a Vatican saloon to kiss the cheeks of the latest lieutenant of Rodrigo Borgia and Jesus Christ.

Consideration of the historical record leads me to two theses:

1. *BRITANNIA ENTERS HISTORY AS A PROVINCE OF ROME.*

Britannia enters history as a province of Rome. The complex arrangement of tribal hegemonies which prevailed on the island before Caesar has in the genealogy of the modern nation an importance which resembles, in our specific phylogeny, the influence of those among our ancestors who were crustaceans. That is to say, nothing obvious. The islanders first learned to think of themselves as *Britons vis-à-vis* Rome. The identity of *Britannia* still retains, whether or not it must always, this relational character. Its filiation is Roman. The strongest proof that the historical birth of Britain was consequentially—rather than trivially or sentimentally—Roman comes from the character of Britain's ambitions when it arrived at maturity: from Shakespeare to Evelyn Waugh, the masquerade of power in British literature dresses itself in the Roman dialect. This, it must be emphasized, despite (or because of) the growing dominance of an entirely spurious racial myth of Teutonic origins developed and propagated by successive generations of English historians of England.¹⁶ This peculiar paradox supports the earlier assertion that literature is history. History, *qua* history, has rarely managed to escape the charge of political

symptomatology for long: it so often responds rather to the ideological needs of the moment than to the guiding motives of public action that the serious student of times past inevitably turns to those documents which, produced in arenas where the magistrates go to refresh themselves by looking in the mirror, are much more likely to show what they see there than are the chronicles of those, the self-proclaimed recorders of events, who gain their living by telling the magistrates not what they themselves already know but what they want everyone else to hear. Historians of England have claimed that its true birth was in the Celtic court of Arthur. When they were forced to recognize that no such court and no such king ever held sway, they turned to the myth of Anglo-Saxonia which is only less remarkable for its staying power than it is for its wilful blindness to the monumental anxiety of origin that produced it. In fact, as Shakespeare understood and Milton gradually and grudgingly came to acknowledge, Britain as an historical actor first put on its mask on a Roman stage.

2. *ITALY IS THE SCENE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.*

Italy is the scene of English literature. Were I propounding a syllogism instead of an historical argument, this point would follow the first as the night the day. But, I am willing to admit, there can in fact be about this assertion no air of an irresistible inferentiality. However, the statement can stand on its own provided that all its meanings be adequately stipulated. None of the words in the italicized sentence, as it happens, is of a sort that a thoughtful writer can employ or a thoughtful reader encounter without being plunged into the very spiral of inquisition that their common epithet honors. *Italy, scene, English, literature*: these are terms to determine whose reference battles have been fought, libraries filled, bottles emptied. Since scientific inquiry claims the right to specify its instruments, and as these terms are mine in the present investigation, I shall go so far as to say just what I take them to mean.

Italy

The modern definition most frequently invoked belongs to Metternich: *Italy is a geographical expression*. Even the briefest analysis of this ironic reference to the political divisions of the nineteenth century will reveal that, as is so often the case with famous aphorisms, its charm lies in the degree to which its full

import runs in another direction than does its generally recognized burthen. Italy, for Europeans, is not so much a geographical expression as it is *geographical expression itself*. And this in two ways. First, having been for so long the historical boundary between Europe and the vast reaches of the South and the East, Italy has always functioned as the limit which shows Europe what it is. The Oriental, the Greek, the Middle Eastern, the African have first become Venetian or Florentine or Roman or Sicilian before they could be recognized as European or even, sometimes, human. This effect, no doubt, owes more than to anything else to topography¹⁷ which has made Italy at the same time fully permeable, its thousands of kilometers of coastline stretching from France almost to Libya and leading back again to the uplands of Dalmatia and the mouth of the Danube, and totally impassable, its formidable spine of mountains as impregnable as Switzerland which it foretells and as incommensurable as the Andes where its religion is still enthusiastically propagated in the thinning air. But whatever the calculus of material cause, Italy's historical role as mediator and translator of the South and the East has depended upon her imperial function as the geographer of Europe. Italy, to begin with, became Italy in the process of becoming Rome. Rome became Rome by the process of inventing Europe.¹⁸

This process, too well known to bear much rehearsal, made a federation of islands into a single province in Hellas, divided Gaul not only into three parts but also into systems of communicating traffic in water and caravans and weights and measures which continue, wearing occasionally even the same guises, to operate under the sunshine the anonymous machinery of their sempiternal serviceability; before this process sank into the texture of its prosperous tribes of descendants, it had laid its roads and its surveyor's chalk across all of Europe south of the Rhine and the Tweed, had made there marks so huge, so copious, so innumerable and indelible, that it is not now possible to fly in an airplane over any expanse of this vast and flowering garden without seeing somewhere in the prospect the long hand of the Roman geometer. *Circus, castra, via, aqueduct* follow one upon the other under the open sky as lucid and unmistakable as the antediluvian fern in the anthracite block on your mantel. These profound earthworks inscribed the oxymoronic palindrome ROMA-AMOR into the moors and meadows with a passion of persistent intent that more closely resembles the grammatology of glaciers and tectonic plates than does almost any other residue of human activity. By reason of this inheritance and others like it—by reason of the monumental

piles and the infinitesimally catalogable graffiti of a millennium of straightforward conscription, inscription, prescription, description, proscription, subscription, and tax—Rome has produced upon the face of Italy its heritage the matrix of the West.

Matrix, that is, *womb*, *mould*, that which produces, variously in similar fashion, posterities, characters, letters, types, coins. The meeting-place of mother and pattern. Italy is the mute evidence of an ubiquitous army of engineers and laborers: circle and square, everywhere to be seen. Geometry, the parcelling of earth, plays upon this rudimentary intercourse of the round and the straight, the female and male, to produce the addictive fruit we call civilization, the making of everything like to a city, and not just any city either, but only Rome. Thus it is, for example, that the Jesuit who passes his regency or philosophate among the baths and colonnades of the Aventine and Capitoline and Palatine hills will never need long to find his orient in Paris or Buenos Aires or Lima or Washington or Madrid. These vines hang upon a Roman trellis. Paris has been the Rome *de nos jours* as Washington and, with a visionary gesture, even Brasilia aspire to be. The Roman *castra*, or *chester* in English, forms the grid of ten thousand provincial initiatives from Turkey to Alaska.¹⁹

Scene

At the most painlessly visible intensity, this matrix is what I mean by the word *scene* in the sentence "Italy is the scene of English literature." Italy, as the paradigm extension of that prior paradigm Rome, forms the monad of the relation between center and periphery which characterizes Roman culture as it mirrors itself across the Alps and into the fourth dimension.²⁰ Italy in this sense is the scene not only of English literature but also of Viennese music and of the extraordinary chain of country clubs in which, from Hong Kong to Boca Raton, the letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians are preached by disciples of Norman Vincent Peale to the executives of the International Business Machines Corporation. Italy is the type of typology and typography alike, the pattern of empire, and the originary double of duplicity.²¹ It was the genius of the Romans to dispense with genetic procreation, replacing it with an ingenuity of recombinant genealogy which would allow a Visigoth, did fortune favor him, to present himself plausibly as the rightful recursion of Julius Caesar. The argument might be made, in this connection, that their most perfect poet was not the lucid ideologue Virgil but the metamorphic Ovid who

taught the principle of *discordia concors* in an open chain of fables whose unending theme is the sameness which may be discovered in difference and the variety which is possible, everywhere and anywhere, under an iron law of repetition. The Italian scene, thanks to whatever it was that made the Romans able to accept according to their modern proverb the simultaneous roles of translator and traitor—redefining every word, when necessary, into the requirements of a uniform code with no sentimental or Parmenidean insistence upon any actual identity, no need to remain faithful to anything except the requirement which was always pressing of an absolutely workable transformation—the Italian scene by virtue of this habitual and transferable genius established itself for the Romans and for good and all wherever they went, including England.

More precisely, what was this scene? You will not find it in the books of Moses, nor does it have a place in Homer or Plato. I point this out beforehand by way of a gesture towards defamiliarizing something which for us has so ordinary a character as to rise often under the pressure of consideration to the stature of what is inevitable. Thus, for example, Freud gives to the recurrence of the Roman pattern the primeval power of family romance. Roman archaeology—the discovery, we might say, of the very scene we are discussing—recurs frequently in Freud as the pattern of his own enterprise.²² But, despite our persistent habit of naturalizing what we live with, our desire, as it were, to paint the ruins of the Colosseum with trees growing through the cracks,²³ the Italian scene has an identity and structure which we cannot account for by any appeal to the nature of the human situation, even if, as we observe the progress of its influence, we find this scene establishing itself over so wide a range of human habitation as to lend some credit to the working Roman assumption that the gods had destined that city to administer the universe. With these stipulations firmly in mind, we can look perhaps a little more freshly at the character of the Italian scene.

The reader will have noticed that in the previous paragraph, the words *Roman* and *Italian* have been changing places with a freedom I have not allowed them earlier in this text. This exchange, to put it simply, is the character of the *scene* in the sentence "Italy is the scene of English literature." What the Romans invented, as everyone from Cato to Pope Woytyla exemplifies, was a technology for rendering every place specific by robbing it of its locality.²⁴ Places became historical by virtue of their relationship with Rome. This change heightened their identity at the same moment and

by the same process that it destroyed any possibility of identity. Rome inserted into Western history a duality which continues to operate as efficiently as the via Tiburtina, where one may see huge diesel trucks dragging tons of tape recorders up into the still-impoverished hills of Abruzzi. The duality has a perfectly simple outline. Rome is the city. Everything else is suburb.

It is a simple and pitiful fact that Rome is the city to which all others in its still-expanding orbit are suburbs. Such is the nature of Rome as it was developed, one might say invented, by the brilliant ideologues who constructed its historical character and conducted its astonishing business. Every other city is a subtype of Rome, and as such has its own suburban doubles. The Romans developed this arrangement in two distinct phases. First was the conquest of the peninsula which established the dyad Rome/Italy—which relationship, the armature of the *Aeneid*, ensured that no local power could sustain itself without constant reference to the central city. In the provinces, the Romans did the same thing, setting up local capitals, where often, as in Britain, none had previously existed. These capitals, themselves deferential and referential to the city on the Tiber, became necessary parts of the lives of tribal lords, who within a generation had erected villas for themselves in Londinium. Their annual pilgrimages between these townhouses and their provincial habitations established a rhythm of life which one may read equally in Tacitus and Anthony Trollope.²⁵ It is the nature of Rome to produce Italy. It is the nature of Italy to replicate itself as the scene of Rome.

Italy, that is, remains the type of what any Rome produces, whether in Paris or Londinium or Madrid. Insofar as London becomes Roman, it succeeds in making England Italian.

The relations between Rome and Italy constitute a very large topic in the history of Western culture, so that there is some excuse for avoiding the difficulty of entering the question in a large way but concentrating instead, as I shall do briefly, upon the scenic structure of the relationship.²⁶ If Italy is what Rome produces, it is, to begin with, equally the case that Rome is what Italy requires. Italy is geographic expression, as we have already seen; Rome, by contrast, is geographic *impression*. Rome is the coin to which Italy is the commodity. Rather a vacant definition? Yes: Rome is precisely definition without content, the empty hole in Peer Gynt's onion, the no-place that makes the common place meaningful, the sacred space whose sacredness consists in the impossibility of ever entering it, the superficies that makes the value of substance. Rome is the invisible that makes Italy visible *as* Italy.

One need find in these unpleasant facts nothing of the quintessential or inevitable in order to acknowledge their force. What they outline is an historical development whose power has yet to depart the stage. The gradual narrowing of the Roman hegemony from the military to the ideological to the purely "religious," from the martial republic to the divinizing Claudians to the philosophic Aurelians to the ecclesiastical Constantine, so that of all the Augustan titles only that of Pontifex Maximus remains active—and very active, too—across the Tiber has persistently been misread as a decline and fall when it has been instead a narrowing and a concentrating, a distilling and essentializing of the function of the cynosure Capital. The smell of quintessence in this definition is imparted compellingly by the historical process which has allowed pontifical Rome to shed irrelevant armies and politics at the same time that it strengthened its primary function for the West: the establishment of *credit*.

"*Credo in unum Deum . . . in unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam; confiteor unum baptismum. . .*" These key passages of the Creed decided at the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) established for what has turned out to be rather a long duration the modality of Christian Doctrine upon the Vatican Hill: not contemplation, not meditation, not askesis, not propaganda among the Chinese, not the discipline of poverty, not the promotion of world peace, not the lilies of the field who toil not neither do they spin, not martyrdom, not the selling of one's goods and giving to the poor, not any of these "perfections," all of which have maintained their place in catholic praxis as orbital and sometimes even marginal interests, but rather, at the center of ideology and even of ritual, in the most gloriously operative moment of the Mass where it serves the function of the bridge which separates the catechumens (the outsiders) from the communicants (the insiders), the Creed established the celebration of *confidence*. The Roman Catholic Church is and has been the church of the only text by which, in its daily and central ritual, it identifies itself (*unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam*): the Creed. It is, we thus must conclude, the Church which has devoted itself, as its imperial beginnings made extraordinarily and spectacularly plausible, to sustaining *faith, belief, credit*, the very fabric of a universal system of money.²⁷

Of ancient Rome all else has fallen away. The baths, the tribunes, the games, the triremes, and the sexual levity have all receded into the volcanic photography, rutted and faded and

hopelessly sad, on which we gaze so conscious of ourselves in Pompeii. But the glittering imperial coin, numinous with the genealogy of Diana, still gleams at Santa Maria in Aracoeli on the Capitoline. The peasant in plastic shoes who comes for Easter from Avellino does not more dumbly blink with amazement than the bank president's daughter from Stamford and Northampton who steps for the first time out of the blaze of the great piazza into the incomparable caverns of San Pietro. A person who encounters this moment without astonishment has secured the right to abstain forever from Western civilization. For here is the very theatre of credit. Here, with an unlikely vegetable will to recurrence, rises before the eyes the birth of the gods. Among the sinuous cherubs who offer you the huge scallopshells of holy water begins a rising rhythm of marble which lifts the eye through heavens of precious stones and avenues of Corinthian flowering leaves that draw the casual tourist with transfixing gleams and intimations towards the character of a pilgrim. Thoughts of Jesus Christ, in such a moment, have a flavor of rude simplicity. One walks into this great basilica like Freud into the heart of darkness. Somewhere down the endless apse begin in the pavement to occur the little markers listing the length to which the full extent of the other great cathedrals of Christendom might reach if they were placed inside this aerodrome—Chartres, Westminster, St. Patrick's, Cologne, reduced, in the tessellated splendor drawing you onward, to fragments and refractions of what still is opening before your footfall.

Here you witness the continual re-production of civilization in the consummate celebration of the mystery of money. A theologian might tell you that here the doctrine of the incarnation has its most perfect architectural explication. The doctrine teaches that Christ is the Spirit made into body, word made flesh, "*verbum caro factum*." This is the seductive Catholic theology of matter. However, the Church of Peter expresses this by making matter into a word. "*Tu es Petrus*," it says in the cornice of the dome. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and I will give to you the keys of the kingdom." Here Christ renames Simon with a pun, *petros* meaning *rock*, thus performing not an incarnation but an *excarnation*, flesh becoming word. This intercourse of matter and spirit, flesh and word, continues to the baroque climax of the whole composition in the apse, the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, where the chair of Peter sits aloft in a radiance of gold shooting out and around and up—up to the cornice, where it says, three times in Latin and three times in Greek, "Feed my sheep."²⁸

Panem et circenses. The Roman religion is the religion of bread in circles. Feed my sheep and keep them in a circle: that is, visible. One of the most striking effects of Saint Peter's is the gradual dawn of glory one feels in being able to gaze about at almost the whole vast interior. As if one might actually look at an empire instead of merely imagining it upon the basis of inscriptions and memoranda and account-books and maps. This, then, is the temple of credit: where the *cattedra*, surmounted by a transfigured host (*panis angelicus*), itself a great golden coin gleaming like a sunrise in a mirror, looks out into the rounded world, *urbi et orbi*, and feeds it.

Produces Italy, that is. Produces in this visual concourse, and produces again, impression upon expression, coinage upon gold. This theatre of confidence suggests why the Pope's worldly consequence has so long outlasted his armies and his provinces. Its concourse of the palpable and impalpable, of divine pattern and human metal, is, then, in our sense, precisely the *scene* which is *Italy*, the primal scene of credit and coinage, theatrically perfected in the dialect of Augustus, to whose Pantheon (built by his lieutenant M. Agrippa) it owes not only its style of polychrome aediculae and the engineering of its amazing double dome but also its exquisite measurement of its own importance at the very intersection of heaven and earth. Saint Peter's is the *Italian scene* in my special sense because it shows us, as the Pantheon did before it, the otherwise invisible horizon where spirit enters dross and produces money.

English

English is a word that derives from the Germanic Angles, a tribe whose territory because of its shape received from the Romans the name *Angulus*.²⁹ Thus *English* means *angled*, *at an angle*, *in an angle*. It has other meanings, but this set dominates here, and that for two reasons. First, it occurs in writing for the first time in Tacitus' *Germania*, where the Roman baptism is thus attested.³⁰ Second, it has a strategic appropriateness beyond all apparent connection to its origin as a continental place-name. *England* was not called *Saxonia*, though it might have been, because, from the continental point of view, it too is at an angle.³¹ The island of Great Britain is so placed *vis-à-vis* Europe that one can think of it as either the West or the North, and at different times and for different purposes each of these directions has predominated. Likewise the island's inhabitants have thought of Italy as either the South or the East, depending upon the purposes of

the moment. When the islanders think of themselves as Britons, they look to Rome as the East. When they think of themselves as English, they look to Italy as the South.

To understand the consequences of this alternation, we must first peer into its antecedents. Since the moment that Mercury flew to Carthage with a message for Aeneas, Roman history has always been written in an airplane. The imaginary Pope Hadrian the Seventh is said to have remarked "That when the Ruler of the World geographically rules the world, He is accustomed to do His ruling with a ruler. Our Predecessor Alexander VI used a ruler on a celebrated occasion on the Atlantic Ocean."³² As Pope Alexander divided empires between the Catholic majesties of Spain and Portugal with no device more substantial than a straightedge, so his predecessors, ranging back to the Etruscans, by habitual policy made their marks from above. The Roman wrote his maps directly into the ground, stepping into the middle of someone else's somewhere and planting on the earth an instrument called the *groma*. With this he found an East at sunrise and drew from there to West the *decumanus*, a street to which he intersected, using his instrument, at a perpendicular another street, the *cardo* or *hinge* of the sky, upon which the sun that day would turn. These two streets formed the axes of a symmetrical grid that would extend as far along the compass lines as need demanded and topography or resources permitted. One may perambulate this rectilinear maze in Timgad and Capua and many other places today.³³ Or, where the city is gone, one may glide over a barleyfield in Kent or Sussex and find the checkerboard there in ghostly intaglio against the wind or under the snow. Believing, no doubt, that his hand could master what his eyes could see, the Roman arranged his altars from the sky. Sky-thundering Jove stood at the center of each of these towns and cities. His initials *I. O. M.*, *Iupiter Optimus Maximus*, recur in inscriptions everywhere the Romans went. Colonies differed, but the title to heaven did not change. It belonged to Rome. It still does.

The persistence of the Roman dominance of the heavens is neither accidental nor hard to demonstrate. British literature, writing in Britain which is destined to be read widely, properly begins in 56 B.C. with the first coinage of Julius Caesar, who placed on the face of his coin a British chariot—a feature of local warmaking that much impressed the Romans, for it had not been seen in Gaul in fifty years.³⁴ Later coinage in Roman Britain follows a pattern, year after year, which makes a single point again and again. British copper or silver bears the imprint of the current

Divus Augustus: earth upon which sky has set his seal. And the imprint itself, often enough, enacts the same intercourse. Upon the obverse, the face of the divinity Nerva or Hadrian or Trojan. Reverse, the local.³⁵ The message of the long and diverse catalog of this coinage most neatly sums itself up in one of its most accomplished and glorious examples, the Arras Medallion, minted in Trier to celebrate the victory of Constantius Chlorus, at the time Transalpine Caesar and later Augustus of the Western Empire, over the rebellion in Britain under Allectus.³⁶ This rebellion, the most serious interruption of Roman rule in Britain, had persevered seven years under Carausius, a brilliant admiral whose success at maintaining his independence of central authority would later be interpreted by Edward Gibbon as a foreshadowing of British imperial invulnerability.³⁷ Constantius had less trouble than he had expected in putting this rebellion down, because Carausius had died and been succeeded by the far less capable Allectus. Nonetheless, as is the habit in such instances, the coin commemorates a triumph of cosmic resonance. On the obverse, the face of the Caesar Constantius. On the reverse, Londinium exquisitely appears, a kneeling figure outside the towers of her own city walls, before Constantius the rescuer upon his horse. The legend here on the underside, reverse, back, or bottom of the coin reads "*Redditor Lucis Aeternae.*" Returner of Eternal Light.

This coin with its emphasis upon repetition, return, timelessness, and sunrise can be said to initiate British literature in a form recognizable to readers of *Brideshead Revisited* and *The Waste Land*. For a millennium after this coin was struck, almost everything of importance written in England was written in its language and had for a dominant motive the same refrain: *Roma Lux Aeterna*. But even texts written in the motley of Germanic, Danish, Celtic, and French dialects which we call loosely by the names Anglo-Saxon and Middle English follow the same line of desire. This can scarcely be a surprise when we consider that the history of Europe during these years so frequently revolved around the reorganization of the Roman Empire and of the powers of its greatest surviving magistrate, the Pontifex Maximus in his pointed hat. In England, the power of the *Lux Aeterna Romana* is amply testified in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, which in the eighth century recapitulated the long effort of Augustine and his successors in the See of Canterbury to bring the island back, not to Christianity, from which in large part it had never taken leave, but to *Roman Christianity*.³⁸ The opposition in the seventh century (or, to be precise, after A.D. 597) had been between these bishops, who

had indeed needed to convert the pagan Anglians, on the one side, and on the other, the very numerous bishops of the British and Irish and other Celtic and Roman indigenes. These, during the fifth and sixth centuries, after the Emperor Honorius had left the Britons to defend their own borders (A.D. 410), had devised a form of church governance so powerful that much of the survival of Roman literacy in Europe is owed to their monasteries at Iona and Lindisfarne. Far from heathens, they had adopted administrative structures of their own that enabled them to take with Augustine a posture of holier-than-thou not unfamiliar among Irish bishops even in the twentieth century. The struggle in Britain was to bring these British Christians into Roman line. The success of this struggle perhaps is not so remarkable when we consider the powerful elegiac tone of Anglo-Saxon poetry. When they are not celebrating long-lost kingdoms of their own in other countries (*Beowulf*) or the devastating passage of time upon human relations (*Seafarer*, *Wanderer*), the poets of this language could look about them and feel the same anguish for a glory which their own language had never known ("The Ruin"):

There were giants once. This was the wonder
They fashioned out of stone. Now it has fallen
To rack and ruin. Fate rode over it.
Its towers are tumbled, and its roofs torn down,
And there are holes where gates stood, frost
Has crept between the bricks, the wind and rain
Have rent the shelter open. Time
Burrows like a mole. Where are the builders now?
Gone, all gone, held in the clasp of earth
That clings fast to its own. These lichen'd walls
Have seen a hundred generations come and go;
These russet stones have seen great kingdoms rise
And fall again, while storms broke over them.
And now the soaring arch is reft in two.³⁹

The Anglo-Saxon poets were more likely to lament a nation than to prophesy one. And, so long as this lament persists, England remains in large degree Britannia, West to Rome's East, the land at the edge of darkness to which eternal light returns.

This theme runs overpoweringly through literature in Britain, from "The Ruin" to *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which indeed reads like an amplification of the Anglo-Saxon poem into serial antitheses, from the *Apologia pro Vita Sua* to the lyrics of Philip Larkin. It runs broad and deep. But it does not run alone.

The rise of *England* upon the ruins of *Britannia* is no mere effect of language. It represents a major shift in governance, trade, and, moving through the entire process by which an imperial province transforms itself into a provincial empire, a reorientation of the map. As the British nation grew into a world ruler, its mythographers moved along the ecliptic from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, that myth of a feudal paradise in the Celtic West, to, eventually, Lord Macaulay's *History of England*, that fantasy of a capital paradise in the Protestant North.⁴⁰ As the needle shifted above, so it moved below. *Britain's* axis lay along the *decumanus*. It saw Rome at the Eastern end of its journey. *England's* axis was cardinal. From its Northern apex, it looked down to where the sun was shining brightly. Its opposite number was Italy.

Rome was a Source. Italy was an Other. The distinction has survived hundreds of years against all odds. Since the map does not actually move, it is not immediately evident how one place can be both the East and the South at the same time, with all the differences implied in these terms. That is, Rome, the East, is the origin of eternal light, the fountainhead of authority, and the model of behavior. Italy, the South, is the sunny heart of black, the playground of the degenerate, and the palace of lies. This is a matter profoundly of gender, not only in the relatively mild ideological sense that one finds in Robert Browning,⁴¹ but rather in the hard mechanical sense that one finds in the manufacture of a shilling. The die is masculine, the matrix feminine. Rome is the sky, the sun, the die. Italy is the earth, the darkness of its womb, the matrix.

That would, no doubt, be enough to explain the different values assigned in England simultaneously to Italy and to Rome its capital. But there is more. The very name of England means money. *Angulus* and *coin* are both originally terms that meant *wedge*; *angle* and *corner* are in fact the same things. And here once again etymology pleasantly enough reflects difficult reality. It was going to be the case that England's process—what used to be called its destiny but what we would now call its characteristic symbolic action—was going to be the dynamic structure of money. Phenomenology defines money as the ritual of payment.⁴² This is an excellent beginning for an understanding of what really goes on when an island (Britain) or a peninsula (Italy, Spain) finds itself able, despite the stupidity and even depravity of its administrators, to control the destinies of far-off and far-greater territories than itself for hundreds and hundreds of years. What happens

may for present purposes be put very simply: the center of a mercantile empire discovers that it has a signifying shape which may be repeated, and this shape becomes its coinage. In money, as in ritual, repetition is everything.

The Renaissance Italians played upon the possibilities of this processional effect with a nicety of judgment that has no parallels in prior Western history. Here, numerous small principalities and republics, often violently in competition with one another and none much larger than a good-sized county anywhere else, managed to control wide spheres of trade and influence, and all at the same time. The *floruits* of Milano, Firenze, Venezia, Genova, to choose only the most obvious examples, overlap to a very large extent. The discoveries of Columbus and Vespucci, which depended so deeply upon the achievements of these tiny powers, have tended to obscure what ducats and florins and letters of credit had been able to accomplish for their sponsors in the Middle Ages. As the Britons were becoming the English, they found that the Romans had become the Italians, and that Italy was, for all purposes, the meaning and source of money. Italian moneylenders controlled the purse of the Kings of England in the fourteenth century. It was their business which brought Chaucer to Italy.⁴³ It was their place which England, like Spain and Portugal and Holland, later aimed to supplant with her colonies.

England needed to *become* money, in order to fulfill both its destiny and its designation. Italy *was* money, the sibling to be supplanted. Rome was the *type* of money, the parent to be left intact. The resolution of this complex situation recurs under many guises in the history of the English relationship with Italy, and the force of its recurrence resembles the workings of a primal prohibition: Rome, as parent, could be continually admired or else attacked harmlessly, while the real damage was done to the sibling Italy.

Another element in this relationship is what we might call, a little grandly, the genealogy of coinage. By lineage, money is women.⁴⁴ The first money, in the sense of signifiers traded across clan boundaries, is women. Money as the sign of good faith or credit, as in an *earnest*, is also women: the word *earnest*, originally means *bride-price*, which is to say, in the changing of change, *bride*. At a guess, the close identification of money with women has much to do with the bad name it has always possessed. The root of all evil. You can't live with it, you can't live without it. And so on. Herodotus and Plato are no more immune to this subversive terror than are Marx and Derrida.⁴⁵ It is, before and after all else,

the mark of interdependence, the sign that men cannot do without women, Guelfs without Ghibellines, blacks without whites or whites without blacks. The sign of mutual obligation, as well as the mark of universal hierarchy and subordination. The history of money is a history of triangles, A and B agreeing to endow C with stability as a translator, or metaphor, or carrier of meaning from one tribe to another. Every coin has two faces which do not communicate except through the coin. Though these two faces are the tribes of the man and the woman who marry, though they bear the marks of both sides, the coin itself is the woman herself. This is important for the light it sheds on the inevitable turn in the destiny of every empire. The empire becomes an empire by fulfilling patriarchal warrior ambitions and turning itself into money. But money is a woman. And women, in the patriarchy, are there for the taking.

These are things which nobody precisely formulates but everyone knows. They lie ready to hand every time an Englishman rises from his bench in the Commons to recall the fate of Rome as a mirror for magistrates. The successful patriarch who finds that he has succeeded in transforming himself and his nation into money is the hero who cowers in secret when the preacher hisses in his ear the word *decadence*. The fulfilled man bronzing helplessly into a helpless woman is exactly what is meant by that terrible accusation.

This critical moment produces an hysterical intensity which most clearly illustrates the absolutely ideological relations in English between the terms *Rome* and *Italy*. At the very moment that England's imperial ambitions are reaching their crisis, at the end of the nineteenth century, when the suspicions of decadence have become the common chat of newspapers, Roman aspirations increase to their highest point while Italian fears subsume most of the terror of Roman decadence. After this critical moment, more and more Rome comes to represent England's past and Italy her future. Thus it is that only today, after centuries of systematic erasure and as a clear sign of England's rapid descent, have England's Roman foundations become the subject of popular archaeology in Great Britain.

Literature

If Italy, or geographic expression, is the scene, or place where credit is given, to English, which is nation as coin, then what is

literature? Literature, we said by way of introduction, is the sign of social force. It is history. We can make these broad gestures more precise now. Literature is the intersection of possession and belief in writing.

Possession—it is the only weakness which inheres in property—requires acquiescence. The function of literature is to prolong acquiescence. This is most plain in the case of coinage. One secures possession by arms. One consolidates it, makes it quotidian, by coinage. *Redditor Lucis Aeternae*, whispers the gold in the closet, a powerful silent silencer of seditious conversations downstairs at the fireplace. The most intransigent white supremacists in Alabama buy their shotguns with notes that murmur Lincoln's victory, "*E pluribus unum.*" Money no doubt is the purest form of literature, the one most profoundly attended to, loved and hated, feared and admired, memorized and exchanged at Christmas.

Too pure, perhaps. Its very familiarity, the complete and unshuddering surrender it exacts at all hours of the day and night, its overwhelming power over all we do or intend, can blind us to its absolute continuity with other forms of the same phenomenon. Even so keen an eye as Umberto Eco's can lose some of its sharpness when gazing at this. "The only difference between a coin (as sign-vehicle)," he writes, "and a word is that the word can be reproduced without economic effort while a coin is an irreproducible item (which shares some of the characters of its commodity-object)."⁴⁶ But a coin is *not* a word. It is more like a poem. The production of words *does* require economic effort. Coins *can* be reproduced, though it may be illegal for most agents to do so. The coin's relation to its commodity-object is a very uncertain and often difficult one. Nonetheless, there is a difference between money and other forms of literature, which we can express succinctly by saying that money in use is metonymic, literature metaphoric.

Such a distinction has the force of a commonplace nowadays, but its meaning remains hard to extricate. The reason for this is the peculiar relation of the terms *metonymy* and *metaphor* which have become, in contemporary usage, an inseparable pair, negatively joined: each implies the precedence of the other. *Metonymy*, which is the figure of exchange or syntax or carrying, means, literally, *after naming*. *Metaphor*, the figure of naming, means *after carrying*. In practice every metonymy follows upon a metaphor, no metaphor is possible without a metonymy. To put it another way, one cannot exchange a coin which has not received a stamp, and to give a stamp is to guarantee exchange. Money in use is more

obviously metonymic because its metaphor, its naming or legend or figure, is relatively stable, the sign of enormous concentration of social force. Literature in use is more obviously metaphoric, because its metonymy, its exchange value, is relatively stable, in a different way quite as much the sign of concentrated social force. To put it another way, the price of money tends to vary because the imprint does not; the meaning of literature varies because the price is fixed. The stabilities, of course, are relative: nothing goes unchanged, but the rate of valuation or devaluation has everything to do with the apparent opposition of money and letters.⁴⁷

There is no question of imposing an absolute identity here. Money and literature are the same thing but in two very different forms. Money may indeed "begin" as the valued object, or commodity, in trade. It is not at all clear that this object can have been, early on, any *thing* at all: much more likely livestock or women or both. The sense of life given and life received remains central to money. *Time*, as we nowadays call existence, is money. Your money, some of us (doctors, for example) like to say, or your life. Your life for my money, my time for yours. At the minimum, \$3.15 for every hour of a life. What am I getting for my hour? The chance to buy someone else's hour. Or, if the someone is a doctor, my hour may be worth thirty of his seconds. All of this is very familiar, of course, so ordinary a mode of calculation that writers and thinkers since the time of Carlyle and Karl Marx have labored to their fullest measure to try to give the transaction some sense of strangeness, some new habiliment that would allow its figure to stand forth clearly in all its imposing harshness. They have not done so without success, of course. But the success has a way of slipping into the surrounding air. As one listens to the echoes of the thundering cheers and the victorious muskets, already from across the piazza the limpid afternoon air carries the unmistakable chink of silver in the palm. We may stand the world on its ear. A little later, we must buy dinner.

Money is ineradicable. It is not an evil, unless life is evil.⁴⁸ Schemes to avoid money, whether these originate from the right or the left, always have one of two destinies: either they fail altogether, or they return to money in some superficially changed manner. Such schemes always proceed from a literalism which insists that things must remain what they are: the craft of the hand, the skin of the nubile, the sweat of the arm suffers violation when it is exchanged for something else. Its translation into capital makes a person's labor its own enemy. Alienation is tragic. But, like other tragedies, it gains its status as an object of contemplation

because we recognize in it the hard hand of the inevitable. No sensible thinking on the question is possible which proceeds from an assumption that alienation can be fully overcome. That would be to make tragedy into melodrama—what we would call sentimentality because we recognize not its implausibility but its impossibility. Schemes to obliterate money erase themselves in *exchange*. Metonymy, to put it more succinctly, is implicit in metaphor. It isn't *labor* at all until it can be sold.

Metaphor, likewise, comes with metonymy. Schemes to obliterate metaphor, to put an end to literature, to control its capacity for giving everything a new name and a new meaning, always collapse on this point. Meanings cannot remain univocal precisely *because* they are going to be exchanged. The very process of exchange alters them. This is the cognitive source of inflation of currencies. It is always a temptation for the persons who control exchange to engage in censorship of interpretation. For so long as interpretation remains constant, the flow of money lies easily under control. But the very flow implies new interpretation. A *lira* is an uncertain quantity in Moscow. The florid imprints of Nicaragua, San Marino, and Barbados may have more presence in the stamp collector's album than those of Japan, West Germany, and the United States. In general, it is a cognitive rule that money outside its local sphere develops all the paradoxical qualities of the heterogloss. This means simply that its original strangeness returns under the light of a new kind of estrangement. No amount of mathematizing of money can entirely free it from these effects of translation.⁴⁹ That is, one might say that the pound note is exotic in Brazil because it looks odd and does not automatically compute into the local petty rate of exchange, but that the pound as a money of account, existing nowhere except in the memory banks of computers in Rio and São Paulo, is simply another cipher among ciphers. One might say this. The apologists for control always do say this. But it is patently not the case. At the level where even paper money has been distilled into electronic calculus, the grammatological presence of the note, scribbled all over with emblems and signatures, does not disappear but simply translates itself into another form of writing. The money has become merely numbers. The totems of possession then remove themselves to architecture, interior decor, clothing, paintings, sculptures: all the big banks these days look American. And, in the computers, all the currencies measure themselves against the dollar. It needn't be the dollar. It might be the pound. It might, under wild inflation, be gold. It might soon be the yen. But the

controllers of the computers know perfectly well the sources of the ciphers they manipulate. And those sources are what we identify most lucidly by means of metaphor.

And one cannot control metaphor in the ways one manages metonymy. Money, like syntax, has rules of correctness. Literature, like metaphor, prefers audacity. Thus arise endless possibilities for mutual violation between the spheres of money and literature. To say nothing of the confusion in discussions of their relations.

But, in fact, since no word is produced completely free of labor and no coin is completely transmutable, the relation of literature and money is one of monumental complementarity. Literature prolongs acquiescence by providing money with the appearance of metaphorical wholeness, and so of stability. It is the symptom which shows us the true function of that imperial public work, more expensive even than bridges and aqueducts, which we call *literacy*. The universal bureaucracy of education upon which literature sits promotes, as poetry promotes, acquiescence. We keep schools as we keep cemeteries. They teach not only manners and skills. They teach prestige. They inculcate the powerful will of the dead. England's noble universities and noble cathedrals are also noble repositories of ashes. The callowest adolescent earns status by demonstrating ability to decipher the lapidary entitlements which cover the walls and floors, say, of the Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey, where one finds the flat gray totem pole of English literature.

Perhaps no prize boy ever earned a more dazzling First in this *examen de distinction* than Henry James, writing on the funeral of Robert Browning. James announces that on such an occasion "pride of possession and of bestowal, especially in the case of a career so complete as Mr. Browning's, is so present as to make regret a minor matter." He glosses this observation with a general considering of the display at the Abbey. "We possess a great man most when we begin to look at him through the glass plate of death." This theme of ownership leads him to consider the great departed—Chaucer, Milton, Spenser, Dryden, and the very numerous rest of them—"not only as local but as social, a sort of corporate company. . . . They are a company in possession, with a high standard of distinction, of immortality, as it were." Does Browning belong with them? "As they look out, in the rich dusk, from the cold eyes of statues and the careful identity of tablets, they seem, with their converging faces, to scrutinise decorously the claims of each new recumbent glory, to ask each other how

he is to be judged as an accession." The question is, can Browning with his "surface unsuggestive of marble" and his "high individuality of form" really be accommodated to the classic status implied here? James, with high amusement, answers yes, knowing that this vast settled order of things is going to follow its own remorseless path of watery subsidence in assimilating the shrill particularities of the peculiar poet in question. For even Browning's moment of high capital individualism submits to a principle, higher or deeper as the case may seem, not so able to be embodied in an argument or an ideology. "For the great value of Browning is that at bottom, in all the deep spiritual and human essentials, he is unmistakably in the great tradition—is, with all his Italianisms and cosmopolitanisms, all his victimisation by societies organized to talk about him, a magnificent example of the best and least diletantish English spirit."⁵⁰

3. CHOROGRAMMATOLOGY

And it is these two items—Italianisms and organized discussion—which remain to be enclosed within the walls of our definition of literature. These are, oddly enough no doubt, actually the same thing. *Italianisms*, using the definition of Italy we have already stipulated, refer always to exploration of geographical expression, what Bakhtin calls heteroglossia and what probably now ought to be called *chorogrammatology*: that is, *the study of other nations as inscriptions*.⁵¹ Every literature which becomes a literature-in-fact, rather than an oral or purely ephemeral expression, devotes itself to the *chorogram*: it inscribes the names of other tribes. It includes in its own metonymic play the codified metaphors, the verbal heraldry, of its enemies, its trading partners, its sources of shells and cattle and exogamy. And finally, it is the powerful chorogrammatic motive in a literature which renders organized discussion, whether this takes place in royal courts or abbeys or Browning societies or universities, absolutely essential. For the chorogram which a literature inscribes is one of the greatest public services that the institution of literacy offers to the nation in return for the support it requires. The chorogram renders possible the bureaucratization of diplomacy, of trade, of war, of empire. The chorogram, because what it names is always invisible and incommensurable, always requires discussion. "What news on the Rialto?" is the inquiry of chorogrammatology. Its reply is always long, intricate, inconclusive, and useful. Literature, then, is the footnote to money, the stabilizer of possession, because it renders

stable that which in money is most unstable: foreign exchange, foreign need, foreign force. And Italy is the scene of English literature, finally, because Italy has been, throughout most of the life of Britain and of England as a nation, the great stage of the chorogram in Europe, the receiver and bestower of national and even continental identities.

The scene of English literature, James specifies, is a "rich dusk." Exactly Italy-as-England, the rich duskiness as of a Moor translated into this island of the twilight West, seen here in this Abbey church built upon the ruins of a Roman palace, near Westminster crossing, where Caesar first forded the Thames, and consecrated in the year 616 by the Anglo-Saxon king Sebert to the honor of Saint Peter. The dusky rich scene of English literature, Westminster Abbey, then, underneath the Teutonic royal nuptials so frequently televised from within its narrow precincts to a gaping and English-speaking world, is by baptism exactly *Saint Peter's* church. Rome produces Italy. Each new Italy requires a Rome, a piece of the true inverted Latin cross (the plan of Westminster Abbey) to sit astride its intersection of *cardo et decumanus*. The rich dusk of this crossroads had also its poet under gloom of the imperial climax:

What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth! . . . The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires.

The sun set; the dusk fell on the stream, and lights began to appear along the shore. The Chapman lighthouse, a three-legged thing erect on a mud-flat, shone strongly. Lights of ships moved in the fairway—a great stir of lights going up and going down. And farther west on the upper reaches the place of the monstrous town was still marked ominously on the sky, a brooding gloom in sunshine, a lurid glare under the stars.

"And this also," said Marlow suddenly, "has been one of the dark places of the earth."

.

"I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago—the other day . . . Light came out of this river since—you say knights? Yes; but it is like a running blaze on a plain, like a flash of lightning in the clouds. We live in the flicker—may it last as long as the old earth keeps rolling! But darkness was here yesterday. Imagine the feelings of the commander of a fine—what d'ye call 'em?—trireme in the Mediterranean,

ordered suddenly to the north; run overland across the Gauls in a hurry; put in charge of one of these craft the legionaries—a wonderful lot of handy men they must have been, too—used to build, apparently by the hundred, in a month or two, if we may believe what we read. Imagine him here—the very end of the world, a sea the color of lead, a sky the color of smoke, a kind of ship about as rigid as a concertina—and going up this river with stores, or orders, or what you like. Sandbanks, marshes, forests, savages—precious little to eat fit for civilized man, nothing but Thames water to drink. No Falernian wine here, no going ashore. Here and there a military camp lost in a wilderness like a needle in a bundle of hay—cold, fog, tempests, disease, exile, and death—death skulking in the air, in the water, in the bush. They must have been dying like flies here. Oh yes—he did it. Did it very well, too, no doubt, and without thinking much about it either, except afterwards to brag of what he had gone through in his time, perhaps. They were men enough to face the darkness. And perhaps he was cheered by keeping his eye on a chance of promotion to the fleet at Ravenna by and by, if he had good friends in Rome and survived the awful climate. Or think of a decent young citizen in a toga—perhaps too much dice, you know—coming out here in the train of some prefect, or tax-gatherer, or trader even, to mend his fortunes. Land in a swamp, march through the woods, and in some inland post feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed round him—all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men. There's no initiation either into such mysteries. He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination—you know, imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate."

He paused.

"Mind," he began again, lifting one arm from the elbow, the palm of the hand outwards, so that, with his legs folded before him, he had the pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus-flower—"Mind, none of us would feel exactly like this. What saves us is efficiency—the devotion to efficiency. But these chaps were not much account, really. They were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force—nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind—as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complex-

ion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretense but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. . . .”

He broke off. Flames glided in the river, small green flames, red flames, white flames, pursuing, overtaking, joining, crossing each other—then separating slowly or hastily. The traffic of the great city went on in the deepening night upon the sleepless river.⁵²

Westminster crossing, and a Buddha in European clothes, East-in-West, Rome-in-Britain, Italy-in-England if Italy remains the translator of East into West, talking of the idea, the light, entering the western darkness: *Redditor Lucis Aeternae*, the Englishman in Africa, the Italian in England, the flash of the golden coin in that metonymy or changing dance of chorograms which is the glittering ritual of trade, the gaze of the divine father gleaming on the faces of the women changing hands, Iupiter Optimus Maximus, Divus Pater Augustus, “green flames, red flames, white flames, pursuing, overtaking, joining, crossing each other,” metaphors of fatherhood spinning in the water: Conrad is right to make this memory of misery, of mystery and murder, the primal scene of English empire, of English narrative, of England’s authority or filiation to the sun. Wrong to suppose, as was common in his time, the Romans not such settlers and administrators as their four hundred years in London clearly show them to have been. “Roman building material found in the precincts of Westminster Abbey and what are said to have been the remains of a hypocaust pila actually under the nave of the Abbey church testify to the presence of a substantial Roman house. . . . The limestone sarcophagus of one Valerius Amandinus inscribed to his memory by his sons, found on the north side of the church, and the funerary sculpture of a child, found when building the Science Block of Westminster School, suggests that a well-to-do family was in residence and was burying its dead locally in some style at quite a late date.”⁵³ The memory is more than merely primal. Its persistence lies in the stones sustaining walls sustaining roofs where Englishmen are at this moment swinging the censer and chanting the creed. It persists in the hypocaust, the decumanus, cloaca maxima, and in the universal chorogram or Roman sewerpipe of language: *doctor, tractor, penis, factor; bonus, actor, mausoleum*. But the great rightness in Conrad’s account flows with the rainbow lightning on the water, that sign of the absolute continuity of inside and outside,

of sky and eye, of empire and of money as the infernal landscape of a progress possible to be called spiritual.

Henry James locates for us the "interest and the fascination, from the *inside* point of view" of Browning's having become a classic of English literature. It is to this inside that we must turn before concluding this argument. And this by way of *refutatio*. For, since the argument here has been that Italy is the scene of English literature because Italy, or geographic expression, is the interaction of palpable and impalpable which produces credit and money, and that, further, Britain is a Roman coinage and England an Italian Other, and that, finally, literature is the lettering of coins, the placement there of chorogram or national metaphor, it will certainly be objected that this reading offers reduction where expansion is called for, flatness where depth, outside where inside, and matter where spirit. But this objection rests finally upon the repression of the metaphor of money, the old insistence either that money is an evil, needed or not, or else the newer insistence that money is merely account, number, and manipulation.

There is nothing, the history of the Roman Catholic Church bears labyrinthine witness, more profoundly spiritual, internal, expansive, complex, syntactically intricate and metaphorically numinous, nothing more completely literary in its nature and in its workings than credit, which is the name we give to that ritual of social bonding which makes its presence universal in the flash of coins. The pride of possession and the fear of loss move like wedded sovereigns preceded by trumpets through the lines of Shakespeare and Jane Austen, Henry James and Virginia Woolf. These are not mere "themes," indirect distributions of scattered concerns in the writer or the reader. They are the fabric of language, particularly of our own, where the archaeology of credit lifts itself before the attention in every word with several syllables. Our Creole gives a living history not of some mildewed balance-sheet but of a passion born in calculating genocide and lived amidst a chronicle of battles, losses, gains, and empires. And this in every sentence. Italy is the scene of English literature because it has remained the scene of English sentences, the battle of the Celt and the Roman, the Saxon and the Norman, the English and Italian, the monarch and the pope.

The aesthete-philosopher, who resents the entry of the clinking coin into the argument, names himself in Greek, because the Romans gave that language currency in Europe. Likewise the psychologist whose map of passions sees the florin as a fecal lump but makes no theory of theory, ignores the money in the map

itself.⁵⁴ Literature exchanges coins, unlike these mystagogues, while reading what the coins recall. *Redditor*: "When to the sessions of sweet silent thought/ I summon up remembrance of things past/ I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,/ And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste." *Lucis*: "Then can I drown an eye unus'd to flow,/ For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,/ And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,/ And moan the expense of many a vanished sight." *Aeternae*: "Then can I grieve at grievances forgone,/ And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er/ The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,/ Which I new pay as if not paid before. / But if the while I think on thee dear friend,/ All losses are restor'd and sorrows end."⁵⁵

1. This essay owes much to the useful and generous conversations of Louis Asekoff, Bruce Hoffacker, Adrienne Munich, Peter Carravetta, Lee Haring, John Irwin, Paolo Spedicato, Margaret Ganz, Jay Lemke, Kip Viscusi, Sharon Zukin, Thomas Hartmann, Leo Zanderer, and many other friends. It was completed as part of a larger project on the literary relations between England and Italy, pursued with the generous assistance of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The relation of English literature and Italy is of course a recurrent theme in scholarship, and I owe much enlightenment to Mario Praz, *Machiavelli in Inghilterra* (Roma: Tumminelli, 1945), and *Studi e Svaghi Inglesi* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1937); A. Lytton Sells, *The Italian Influence in English Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955); Roderick Marshall, *Italy in English Literature, 1755-1815: Origins of the Romantic Interest in Italy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934); and Kenneth Churchill, *Italy and English Literature, 1764-1930* (London: Macmillan, 1980). There is as well a host of studies of relations between specific English writers and Italy or Italian sources, which I will cite at appropriate places in the larger work of which this essay is a part, but it is certainly the case that much of what I have found most stimulating and useful has been in these works of narrower focus.

2. While it is not directly to my purpose, the argument of this essay has been much informed by the current debate on the structure of canons, from Frank Kermode, *The Classic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980) to the admirable sobriety of the essays collected in Robert von Hallberg, *Canons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). The entire discussion has had the effect of turning attention in the direction of the shape of literature as a public institution. The best treatments of the institutional question are Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *The Institution of Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) and Robert Weimann, *Structure and Society in Literary History: Studies in the History and Theory of Historical Criticism*, expanded edition (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984). A cornerstone essay in underlying many of the assertions about the social function of literature in the present essay is the magisterial

treatise of Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); see also Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* (New York: St. Martin's, 1981).

3. It ought to be remarked here that Anglo-Saxon and French so powerfully reflect their respective roots in German and in Latin as to render them almost indistinguishable for the kind of analysis which this essay intends. French, in particular, throughout the history of the past nine hundred years has retained its Latinity in language, religion, and even cooking, so that its place *vis-à-vis* England, like that of Spain, has always been in one large and consequential part that of a counter for Rome. The difficulty of discovering a French identity truly distinct from the Roman character of the language and customs of France is very powerfully reflected in Paul-Marie Duval, *Pourquoi "Nos Ançêtres les Gaulois,"* Collège de France, Essais et Conférences (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982).

4. On English as a Creole, see Charles-James Bailey and Karl Maroldt, "The French Lineage of English," in Jurgen Meisel, ed., *Langues en Contact: Pidgins, Creoles, Languages in Contact* (Tubingen: TBL Verlag Gunter Narr, 1977), pp. 21-53.

5. The most perfect exploration of this fault-line in English diction is Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky," the first stanza of which was written to represent "a fragment of Anglo-Saxon poetry." Carroll clearly understands the issue when he shows us Humpty-Dumpty explaining the words of this poem to illustrate the point that the question is not what do the words mean but which, reader or text, is to be master. See Lewis Carroll, *The Rectory Umbrella and Mischmasch*, ed. Florence Milner (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), pp. 139-41.

6. Despite the goldenness of this age of theory, really workable definitions of literature have been in short supply since the high days of Russian formalism. The boldest and most interesting attempts, in my view, have been those of Terry Eagleton in *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983) and *The Function of Criticism: From the Spectator to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984). In fact, however, powerful difficulties remain, which the present essay does not precisely solve but aims to discover in the intersection between *ostranenie*, heteroglossia, and a sober reconsideration of the machinery of literary transmission. That is, it does not seem adequate to point merely to the "estrangement" or "otherness" of literary language, any more than, on the other hand, it will do only to underline the complicity of literature with propaganda; it seems necessary, rather, to discover the modes of linguistic normalization of otherness that produce literary language. For a succinct account of Russian formalism, see Fredric Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972). On *ostranenie*, see R.H. Stacy, *Defamiliarization in Language and Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1977). For Bakhtin's use of *heteroglossia*, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 263 *et passim*.

7. The subtlest antagonists to this point of view are Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Contingencies of Value," pp. 5-40, and Charles Altieri, "An Idea and Ideal of a Literary Canon," pp. 41-64, both in von Hallberg, *Canons*. By far the most enlightening parallel to the present study, though far different in focus, purpose, and effect, is the brilliant essay of Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theatre in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

8. See Sheldon Sacks, ed., *On Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), for a representative sample of recent discussion of this question. See also Terence Hawkes, *Metaphor* (London: Methuen, 1972).

9. I am indebted to J. Hillis Miller for this information.

10. The classic essay is Roman Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," in R. Jakobson and M. Halle, *Fundamentals*

of *Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1956), pp. 55-82, which sits near the foundation of many arguments in Lévi-Strauss, Althusser, Derrida, Deleuze, Fish, and indeed in most theorists of consequence in recent decades.

11. See Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: Studies in the Nineteenth Century Historical Imagination* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) for a full discussion of theoretical issues supporting this statement.

12. The standard history of these peoples, on which I have drawn most frequently in the discussions of Roman Britain which follow, is Peter Salway, *Roman Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

13. See D. R. Wilson, ed., *Aerial Reconnaissance for Archeology*, CBA Research Reports, 12 (1975).

14. This plain assertion depends upon the lucid arguments of Frank Merrifield, *London: City of the Romans* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983).

15. See Peter Hunter Blair, *Roman Britain and Early England: 55 B.C.-A.D. 871* (1963; rpt. New York: Norton Library, 1966), pp. 222-37.

16. See the brilliant history of ideology in Hugh A. McDougall, *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons* (Hanover, N.H.: University Presses of New England, 1982).

17. The classic essay on this question is Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1976), I, 25-352.

18. Histories of Rome constitute a vast library. The ones I have found most useful in preparing this essay are the following: the still-indispensable Theodor Mommsen, *The History of Rome*, trans. W.P. Dickson (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1888); Karl Christ, *The Romans: An Introduction to their History and Civilization*, trans. Christopher Holme (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Finley Hooper, *Roman Realities* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979); on questions of origins, R.M. Ogilvie, *Early Rome and the Etruscans* (London: Fontana, 1976); Titus Livius, *Rome and Italy* (Books VI-X of *The History of Rome from Its Foundation*), trans. Betty Radice (London: Penguin, 1982); Michel Serres, *Rome: Le livre des fondations* (Paris: Grasset, 1983); and Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, trans. Leslie J. Walker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950).

19. Pierre Grimal, *Roman Cities*, trans. and ed. G. Michael Woloch (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), includes, pp. 111-301, a "Descriptive Catalogue of Roman Cities" by G. Michael Woloch, which instantiates in definitive detail the manner and extent of replicability in Roman cities.

20. Michael Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), provides a valuable conspectus of recent studies of imperial political, social, and economic structures, emphasizing at all points the reciprocal relationship between center and periphery that makes up the fabric of empire.

21. For parallel speculations to these, see Mario Perniola, "The Difference of the Italian Philosophical Culture," trans. Roger Friedman, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, 10, 1 (Spring 1984), 103-15.

22. See Margaret W. Ferguson, "'The Afflatus of Ruin': Meditations of Rome by Du Bellay, Spenser, and Stevens," in Annabel Patterson, ed., *Roman Images: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1982* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 24.

23. See William L. Vance, "The Colosseum: American Uses of an Imperial Image," in *Roman Images*, pp. 107-12.

24. The relationship of this process to the larger, or more abstract, dyads Being/time, Identity/difference, Order/chaos, as these are "broadly, if unevenly, articulated by such post-Humanist thinkers as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, and Derrida, and, on different registers, Gramsci, Adorno, Althusser, Foucault, Jameson, Said, and Frere," is outlined in William

V. Spanos, "The Apollonian Investment of Modern Humanist Education: The Examples of Matthew Arnold, Irving Babbitt, and I.A. Richards (part one)," *Cultural Critique*, I (Fall 1985), 7-72. Spanos at least partly demonstrates in the second part how this relationship has its sources in "that representational, imitative, and calculative thinking which authorized, enabled, and legitimated the Roman *imperium*," *Cultural Critique*, 2 (Winter 1985-86), 105-34.

25. See Salway, *Roman Britain*, pp. 141-43, *et passim*.

26. It seems likely that, as I am doing here, scholars will always need to address this epic subject in an epic manner—concentrating, that is, upon one or two strands that run through a vast arena with the aim of suggesting thereby the fullness of an extension that no readable work could ever cover. Robert M. Adams, *The Roman Stamp: Frame and Facade in Some Forms of Neo-Classicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) focuses upon "an act performed by a man with relation to his own past, his own givens . . . the distance between a man's root in nature and his redefinition of himself in Rome" (p.9) and, following this thread, produces a vivid sense of the self-transformation which is a leading motive of so many Roman careers.

27. As a sign that the identity between credit and creed is more than ornamental, one might recall that during the Middle Ages one could be excommunicated for defaulting on a debt. See Emanuel Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error* (New York: Vintage, 1979), p. 335. These intersections form a central theme in Agnew, *Worlds Apart* (see above, n. 7). Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood examine the meanings in exchanges in *The World of Goods* (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

28. An excellent narrative of the design and execution of Saint Peter's is James Lees-Milne, *Saint Peter's* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967). It is worth emphasizing that though this vast mole was many generations in the making, and though it reflects the family politics of several powerful ecclesiastical tribes, its overall plan is as ideologically lucid as it is visually harmonious. See also Peter Partner, *Renaissance Rome, 1500-1559: A Portrait of a Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

29. OED, "Angle." This attribution is not uncontested; see Peter Hunter Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), pp. 8-11.

30. Tacitus, *Germania*, 40.1.

31. This speculation is my own, but Blair, *Introduction*, 11-12, does discuss other possible names, and Blair, *Roman Britain and Early England*, 187-88, cites the *Life of Gregory* for one of the earliest examples of continental speculative whimsy with the name of England.

32. Frederick Baron Corvo (Frederick William Rolfe), *Hadrian the Seventh* (1904; rpt. New York: Dover, 1969), p. 321.

33. A succinct and accurate account of Roman surveying for new towns is J. B. Ward-Perkins, *Cities of Ancient Greece and Italy: Planning in Classical Antiquity* (New York: George Braziller, 1974), pp. 27-28. A wider view is provided by Grimal, pp. 10-27.

34. See Julius Caesar, *The Battle for Gaul*, trans. Anne and Peter Wiseman (Boston: David Godine, 1985), p. 93, for an excellent reproduction and discussion of this coin.

35. The standard history is C.H.V. Sutherland, *Coinage and Currency in Roman Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937). For the development of the use of coins for ideological purposes, see C.H.V. Sutherland, *Coinage in Imperial Roman Policy, 31 B.C.-A.D. 68* (London: Methuen, 1951).

36. Reproduced and discussed in Richard Reece, "Coins and Medals," in Martin Henig, ed., *A Handbook of Roman Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1983), pp. 176-77.

37. Recounting the exploits of Carausius, a man he thoroughly admires, Gibbon writes, "Under his command, Britain, destined in a future age to obtain the empire of the sea, already assumed its natural and respectable station of a maritime power." *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York: The Modern Library, n.d.), I, 309.

38. The best-informed account of the relationship between the various forms of Christianity and Paganism in the seventh and eighth centuries is Blair, *Roman Britain and Early England*, pp. 222-37.

39. "The Ruin," translation cited without attribution in Peter Arnott, *The Romans and Their World* (New York: St. Martin's, 1970), p. 311.

40. See MacDougall, *op. cit.*

41. See Robert Viscusi, "The Englishman in Italy': Free Trade as a Principle of Aesthetics," *Browning Institute Studies*, 12, *Italy and the Victorian Imagination* (1984), pp. 1-28.

42. Thomas Crump, *The Phenomenon of Money* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 3-9.

43. See Carlo M. Cipolla, *Money, Prices and Civilization in the Mediterranean World from the Fifth to the Seventeenth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). See also Howard H. Schless, "Chaucer and Fourteenth Century Italy," in *Chaucer and Dante: A Reevaluation* (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1984).

44. This assertion is easy enough to tease out of the kinship theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss; one example of how it can be done is Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in Rayna R. Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157-210.

45. A somewhat uncritical acceptance of this fear moves, surprisingly enough, through the very sophisticated and enlightening essays on the relation between money and language published by Marc Shell, *The Economy of Literature* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), which has superb discussions of the mythos of money in Herodotus and Plato, and *Money, Language, and Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). That even so subtle a writer can be led into received attitudes makes it less surprising when we find these attitudes even more evident in such less theoretically-oriented works as Kurt Heinzelmann, *The Economics of the Imagination* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), or R.A. Shoaf, *Dante, Chaucer, and the Currency of the Word: Money, Images, and Reference in Late Medieval Poetry* (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1983), where a very high standard of scholarship works its way uneasily among passages of unexceptionable sententiousness upon what is presented as the dangerous theme of the work. Derrida, as always, writes on a plane of his own; his most important essay on this question is "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University Press, 1982), pp. 207-71, but reflections on money and language frequently occur, money always under suspicion if not erasure, in his texts, as is also the case in the works of Michel Foucault, particularly *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1973). Another version of the suspicion of money often encountered is the easy historicism that locates as particular to one or another age effects of quantification and metonymization that in fact have wide and complex spectra; the most notable recent example of this often apocalyptic mode is Charles Newman, *The Post-Modern Aura: The Act of Fiction in an Age of Inflation* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1985), but even a far more thoughtful work like John Vernon, *Money and Fiction: Literary Realism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984) will sometimes mistake money as a cognitive algorithm for capital as an historic specificity of the industrial age.

46. Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1976), pp. 25-26.

47. Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, *Language as Work and Trade: A Semiotic Homology for Linguistics and Economics*, trans. Martha Adams and others (Boston: Bergin and Garvey, 1983), considers "the definition of the market as a system of equivalences and the definition of language as a system of differences" (p. 112) and concludes that "If we then consider the language and the market in their entirety, without discarding *a priori* any one of their dimensions, we begin to see the realization of the schema . . . according to which both the language and the market are at one and the same time systems of equivalences and systems of differences."

48. Still the most thoughtful and measured meditation on this question is Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1978). Against this sober background, even the original speculations in Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Vintage, 1983) take on an unmistakable glaze of nostalgia and even, occasionally, wishful thought.

49. No matter how ethereal or mathematical it is, money never loses its capacity as the conveyance of massive social force. Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labor: A Critique of Epistemology*, trans. Martin Sohn-Rethel (London: Macmillan, 1978), develops a methodology which allows him to outline the relationship between coinage and what he calls "the social form of thinking": "The role played by money and coinage in mediating the formation of the purely intellectual concepts according to our explanation can be likened to the part played by a medium of reflection. The real abstraction of exchange is reflected in coinage in a manner which allows intellectuals to identify it in its distinct elements. But first of all, the reflection itself is not a mental process; second, it is on a social scale; third, it is hidden to the consciousness of the participants; and, fourth, it is associated with the formation of false consciousness" (p. 76). *Eppur si muove.*

50. Henry James, "Browning in Westminster Abbey," in *English Hours* (1905; rpt. New York: Horizon Press, 1968), pp. 53, 54, 58.

51. This coinage of course rests upon the critical mass of reflection inspired in the past twenty years by Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967). The attentive, or at least the suspicious, reader will have guessed by now, however, that the present essay has more in common with certain forms of sunset structuralism than with a strict deconstructive method, having in view the notion that what is called deconstruction is the extreme skepticism of structuralism turned upon its own methods and representing, in consequence, rather a flourishing than a disappearance of the critique of social construction.

52. Joseph Conrad, *The Heart of Darkness*, in Morton Dauwen Zabel, ed., *The Portable Conrad* (New York: Viking, 1947), pp. 492-96.

53. *London: City of the Romans*, p. 132.

54. A fairly comprehensive survey of traditional Freudian money-theories is Ernest Bornemann, ed., *The Psychoanalysis of Money* (New York: Urizen Books, 1976).

55. William Shakespeare, Sonnet 30, in Stephen Booth, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 28.