

with verbs, a practice they borrowed from Alfred Hart, even though Hart acknowledged that it was inconsistent and adopted for the sake of convenience, not accuracy (see Foster, *Elegy by W. S.* 134). Shaxicon remedies that problem. More oddly, while criticizing procedures that he and his brother have carefully observed, Kent Hieatt cites examples that do not occur in Shaxicon, such as the gerund “defeating” (which Shakespeare never uses) and the noun “sum” (a common seventy-one-token word that falls well outside Shaxicon’s purview).

Having neglected to observe multivariate procedures of verification, both Hieatts are confused about the significance of particular character distributions. Charles forgets that token:type and type:type distributions are of increased significance, not decreased, if they converge on the same character as a “remembered” role, as for Egeon. Further study shows also that repetitions in the source text (whether the poet is reading it or rehearsing it for the stage) tend to exert increased relative “influence” on the dependent (newly written) text, since repeated words are more likely to occur in the poet’s new writing than are words that appear once in the source. (In fact, the single procedure challenged by Charles Hieatt is more effective than any other in culling Shakespearean sources from a text archive.)

In my *PMLA* essay I present Egeon as a single example. Though it is indeed “trivial” in itself, only the Hieatts consider Egeon in isolation. Laboring to discredit this one representative instance, Kent cites the lugubrious thematic material shared by the elegy and the Egeon role. His hypothesis can be quickly checked with Shaxicon. The results show that there is nothing mournful in the elegist’s measurable surplus of Egeon words, which includes only such nonlugubrious words as *embracement, to fasten, helpful, inn, to retain, twin, and wished* (adj.).

I thank Kent Hieatt for noting that the formula and key were misprinted (see the erratum below). The charts and data on pages 1090–91 are entirely correct as printed.

None of these four letters raises cogent objections to a Shakespeare attribution for *A Funeral Elegy*. I welcome the continuing debate on this text and look forward to the 1997 volume of *Shakespeare Studies*, which will provide a scholarly forum on the Shakespeare elegy.

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Erratum. Corrected wording for page 1091 of the October 1996 issue of PMLA:

The data mapped on the vertical axes were obtained with the following formula:

$$\frac{\frac{n \times 1,000}{p}}{t}$$

n = the number of rare words (tokens) in the canonical plays written in the period of rare words appearing in the text

p = the number of rare words (tokens) in the canonical plays written in the period

t = the number of rare words (tokens) in the text

The Visual and the Verbal in *Middlemarch*

To the Editor:

Abigail S. Rischin deconstructs Will Ladislav’s “disparagement of the visual arts” and “exaltation of the verbal arts” without ever using the word *deconstruct* (“Beside the Reclining Statue: Ekphrasis, Narrative, and Desire in *Middlemarch*,” 111 [1996]: 1121–32). Her essay is therefore enlightening for those not initiated into the arcana of poststructuralist argot. Because I value that accomplishment, I’d like to contribute a few ironizing gestures that ultimately valorize Rischin’s work.

The essay ends, “[I]t is the act of seeing—the experience of outward vision to which painting and sculpture most directly appeal—that works its magic on Eliot’s protesting beholder [i.e., Ladislav]” (1130). The act of seeing also works its magic on Rischin’s protesting beholder—her reader. For when I saw the reproductions of *The Sleeping Ariadne* included with the text, much of *Middlemarch* magically fell into place for me.

As Rischin notes, the novel’s narrator “does not make explicit the parallels” between the Ariadne sculpture and Dorothea, who stands before it in Rome’s Vatican Museum (1128), but I believe that the rest of the novel makes the parallels clear. For example, several chapters after the scene in the museum, there is a reminder of the Ariadne statue when Will Ladislav describes Dorothea as having “horrible notions that choose the sweetest women to devour—like Minotaurs” ([Signet, 1964] 217; ch. 22)—an apt metaphor, since Dorothea marries Casaubon with the “notion” that she’ll gain intellectual fulfillment from him, believing that his mind “reflected . . . in vague labyrinthine extension every quality she herself brought.” However, just as Theseus used Ariadne’s clew of thread to wend his way through the labyrinth only to marry and then betray her, Casaubon, enclosed in his “great work . . . of attractively labyrinthian extent” (25; ch. 3), marries Dorothea only to abandon her (first emotionally, then through death).

Rischin notes that Ladislav becomes Dorothea's second love but not how the text subtly reinscribes the Vatican statue—a "reclining *marble*" of "*marble voluptuousness*" (186; ch. 19; emphasis mine)—in the process. For when Dorothea finds herself in a type of Ariadne "sleep" between a "repulsion from her departed husband" and a "strange yearning heart towards Will Ladislav" (whom she cannot yet marry), Dr. Lydgate observes that "Dorothea's *hand* was of a *marble* coldness" (476–77; ch. 50; emphasis mine). Throughout the novel Eliot's narrator repeatedly describes poses of Dorothea's hands that are reminiscent of the sleeping Ariadne's unusual hand positions—probably the most striking feature of the statue and evidently of Dorothea as well. Indeed, the second sentence of the novel introduces her "finely formed" hand and wrist as the primary evidence of her "beauty." This hand explicitly connects the statue and Dorothea when her "beautiful ungloved hand pillowed her cheek" while she stands before it (186; ch. 19), as Rischin affirms (1128). It fits the thesis of the essay that, after Casaubon has died but before Dorothea is able to receive Will's love, she makes a similar gesture: Dorothea "took the little oval picture [of Will's grandmother] in her palm and made a bed for it there, and leaned her cheek upon it" (529; ch. 55). This reminder of the Vatican pose (Ariadne's and Dorothea's) follows a visit from Will in which he and Dorothea become statuelike, "two creatures slowly turning to marble" (526; ch. 54). During their next meeting Dorothea is set up against a statue once again, as she takes "off her gloves and bonnet while . . . leaning against a statue in the entrance-hall." And when Will is presented to her, he "thought that her face looked just as it did when she first shook hands with him in Rome"—the city where he saw her in front of *The Sleeping Ariadne*. During this meeting Dorothea suddenly realizes that Will loves her, but immediately before the realization she "sat just like a statue while images and emotions were hurrying upon her" (611, 612, 616; ch. 62). The verbal text continually reminds readers of the visual moment in Rome, "exploit[ing] that moment's dynamic implications" (Rischin 1124) in ways that Rischin has yet to explore.

Ekphrasis in *Middlemarch*, then, not only re-presents "the frozen moment" of sculpture while exploiting "that moment's dynamic implications"; it also imposes the stasis of a statue on the temporal flow of the text. As the narrative repeatedly returns to the Vatican moment, "it converts its chronological progression into simultaneity, its temporally unrepeatable flow into eternal recurrence." The words are by Murray Krieger ("The Ekphrastic Principle and the Still Movement of Poetry; or, *Laocoön* Revisited," *The Play and Place of Criticism* [Johns Hopkins UP, 1967] 105), who believes that the genre of ekphrasis

"institutionalized" the use of "an object of spatial and plastic art"—like the Ariadne statue—"to symbolize the spatiality and plasticity of literature's temporality," so that "the object of imitation, as spatial work, becomes the metaphor for the temporal work even as the latter seeks to free it from space" (107). To tie this insight into Rischin's thesis, then, one could say that the narrative of *Middlemarch* echoes Ladislav's role, foregrounding its (and his) commitment to the power of the word while subordinating the word to the frozen moment of visual experience.

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The Trumpeted I

To the Editor:

At an international colloquium in the Paris area that I recently attended, *je* made its appearance from time to time in the French-language papers. The European *je* was modest, slipped in by a subordinate clause. It seemed natural in comparison to the *je* that came out of the only American mouth using it. This *je* was trumpeted at the beginning of each major statement, constituting one of the "annoying and embarrassing narcissistic spectacles" that Sylvia Molloy seems to downplay ("Mock Heroics and Personal Markings," 111 [1996]: 1073). This example, with statements in the October 1996 issue of *PMLA*, shows that the current use of the personal is a matter of fashion, neurosis, dehumanization, and *nombri*lism.

When I wrote my dissertation, my director asked me why I did not use *I* in formulating the project. My explanation was accepted without comment, but it was clear from the tone of the question that I was "supposed to" use *I* and that its absence was disconcerting. The director gave no reason for this assumption; nor do Norman N. Holland (1147) and Deborah Tannen (1151) for their similar predispositions. All the "reasons" given in the letters to the Forum that advocate the personal are *ex post facto* rationalizations of a new fad. It is indeed "one tactic among others" (Richard Dellamora; 1161), a rhetorical convention (Jane Gallop; 1150) that requires no "decision" (Cathy N. Davidson, "Critical Fictions," 1072).

The fashion of the *I* is linked to a neurosis of our profession that comes from overconsciousness of the problems of language (our occupational hazard). Although it is a natural law that language can only partially convey what the sender wants to express, literary scholars cannot escape the urge to "put it all" into words. Tyrannical overconsciousness of the word creates false binary oppositions