

and absolutely other is now reconstituted as a sign of sameness and contiguity because of the traditional signification of the kiss as a mark of equality or near equality. Certainly this kiss is and remains a very public act that resonates through a variety of social and theological contexts. But the way in which it is staged and performed here can help us see the ways in which private desire helps shape, and is in turn shaped by, such public performances.

Therefore, while I agree with Gardiner's statement that "the line between public and private was deeply etched in the Middle Ages," I would want to add, "but no more so than that line is in our own time." Attempts to police such apparently stable boundaries, however vigilant, cannot erase the private and institutional forces (like the ones I try to describe in *The Canterbury Tales*) that cross, recross, and blur them. We therefore should be wary of the desire to view the Middle Ages as a kind of mythical site of discursive purity whose lines are naturally and deeply etched in stone. This desire to stand objectively apart from engagement in the modern debates we are always already part of can produce its own, dangerous kind of discursive unconsciousness. Impeding that necessary denaturalizing of the past we study, such an effort thereby reduces the ability of our analysis of the past to denaturalize the present we inhabit and so to make the present too, in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's phrase, "less destructively presumable" (*Epistemology of the Closet*, Berkeley: U of California P, 1990, 48).

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### A Renaissance Scene-Stealer

To the Editor:

Long before William Kemp danced from London to Norwich, this clownish Renaissance actor, portrayed in Max W. Thomas's "*Kemps Nine Daies Wonder: Dancing Carnival into Market*" (107 [1992]: 511–23), may have been the object of Robert Greene's scorn in the epilogue to *Groats-Worth of Wit* (1592). As a playwright Greene would have been angered by this kind of clown, who jiggged and sang and shook the stage and ad-libbed ribald lines of his own and who was a "Johannes factotum" in general, as Thomas notes, "prone to deviating from the script to aggrandize his part" (515). Greene's deathbed epithets for self-promoting actors seem justified by Kemp's later publicity stunt. Greene calls the type "apes,"

"puppets," "cleaving burrs," "antics garnished in our colors," "rude grooms," "peasants," and "painted monsters," the worst of whom has a "tiger's heart," is so conceited that he thinks he is the only "shake-scene" in the country, and is an "upstart crow."

Shakespeare's Hamlet likewise complains about the "clowns" who speak "more than is set down for them" and who "set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh," even while "some necessary question of the play be then to be considered." Using somewhat less derogatory epithets than Greene, Hamlet nevertheless sees such clowning as "villainous" and showing "a most pitiful ambition in the Fool that uses it" (3.2). Shakespeare would seem to have agreed with Greene that the disruptive actor who believed that his own bombastic blank verse was superior to the playwright's verse was a self-deluded fool. Shakespeare himself perhaps encouraged the replacement of Kemp in 1599 in the Lord Chamberlain's Company by Robert Armin, who, according to Thomas, "emphasized verbal and conceptual dexterity" in contrast to "Kemp's physical knavishness" (511).

In "The Crow Sits upon the Wall," a broadside ballad of 1592, signed "R.T."—Richard Tarlton, according to Joseph Lilly, in *Black-Letter Ballads and Broad-sides* (London, 1867)—the refrain urges men to please all women, no matter what they ask: "Please one and please all. / . . . So pypeth the crowe, / Sitting upon a wall." In a 1972 Johnson facsimile reprint, the ballad is combined with *Tarltons Jestes* and *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder*, indicating that the ballad was associated with Tarlton and Kemp and making it seem logical that if Tarlton, who died in 1588, engaged in crowlike pantomime while jiggging and improvising verses for the ballad, Kemp, who took over after the great clown's death, would be Greene's "upstart crow." In the prologue to *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder*, Kemp addresses the "witless beetle-heads," the "impudent generation of Ballad-makers and their coherents," as "notable Shakerags." If Kemp's vitriol in regard to writers is typical of his onstage performance, he seems a likely target of Greene's insults.

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### Unheard Melodies

To the Editor:

I was pleased to see Marshall Brown's article "Unheard Melodies: The Force of Form" (107 [1992]:

465–81) not only because the subject matter is close to what interests me in literary theory and criticism but also because his essay betrays a refreshing will to compel some of the formalist concepts to serve rather than command. His metaphors have the analytic efficiency of the critical language and the marvelous freedom of poetry.

In approaching the subject from interdisciplinary angles, in setting Keats's text against Robert Schumann's *Humoresque* and its "inner voice," Brown demonstrates that the idea of "unheard melodies" is a traditional concept that has fascinated musicians and poets alike. Using familiar examples and models, like Keats and Mallarmé, Brown delivers much more than what is contained in that familiarity. Keats's "leaf-fringed legend" becomes at once the structural pattern of the poem-urn and the silent melody of thought.

Brown has a favorable opinion of formalism, but his thesis "that form is energy, expression, and movement" (479) and his article as a whole both go beyond any formalist dogma. For the concept of unheard melodies as it emerges from his presentation reflects neither the formal, New Critical aesthetics nor the speculative, Derridean metaphysics. Subtle, diverse, and multifaceted, the idea is more in harmony with Mallarmé's symbolist poetics. And unless I have misinterpreted his article, except in the way that all interpretation misinterprets, its evidence brings Brown's perspective near to the cognitive view I have advocated elsewhere (*The Dynamics of the Metaphoric Field*, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1992). This view is comprehensive enough to coordinate with any approach that respects the context of a text and heeds the manner in which memory processes signifiers. Thus the concept of unheard melodies emerges from a close analysis of what is under scrutiny, whether a musical score or an essay by Mallarmé. Brown's notion reflects a mnemonic principle of organization. For what are the unheard melodies that "are not unplayed"? What is "the undertone that makes its presence felt through its persistence" (473)? They are nothing if not the tension of a metaphoric field—a mnemonic space whose urgency determines the dynamics of interaction among various structures and metaphors. Merleau-Ponty speaks of "this meaning arising at the edge of signs" (*Signs*, 1964, 41); but one can go further and point to how the relations among dynamic patterns generate tension and meaning. And Brown takes that step when he says: "Music is, undeniably, relations and not sounds . . ." (478). The fact that "melodies are never heard" and "[o]nly notes are heard" (472) corroborates again the way memory

converts the incoming stimuli, sound first being processed in the auditory modality and afterward, at the higher interpretive levels, being transformed into "melody," or into new metaphors and more stylized dynamic patterns.

The concept Brown suggests could be further explored. The questions that remain involve its function and range. If "[u]nheard melodies are structure, skeleton, attitude, feeling" (473), should the concept be comprehensive enough to include "the very essence of the mind's structuring activity" (477)? Or should it perhaps be restricted to a more specific "shape and pattern" (478), to throwing light on the complex relations of sound and silence and on the special quality of the temporal distance between them? Both Keats and Mallarmé use dynamic patterns of silence, with variations, to create centers that may appear paradoxical and that control the metaphoric fields of their poems "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and "Sainte." In that sense silence is also eloquence of the highest order.

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#### Reply:

Nicolae Babuts's sweet words are music to an author's ears. I would like to add only one note, in the form of a reminder or a memo about memory. Kantian epistemology institutes form through a set of virtual, inapparent mental acts called (in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*) the syntheses of apperception, reproduction, and recognition. Even where the labels have a dynamic ring, as in the subsequent "Anticipations of Experience," product prevails over process. No memory is activated, because no time is perceived.

Conversely, to predicate form on mnemonics is to reinstate the whole curve of temporality. Memory harks back but also points ahead. "Memento mori" recalls and anticipates. Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory in Keats's *Hyperion*, becomes Moneta, the foreboding and warning spirit of *The Fall of Hyperion*. The English "I remember" masquerades as a simple, transitive movement, but the equivalent expressions in other languages are indirect or temporally intricate, with the Greek roots of mnemonics offering a particularly complex network of aspectual variants. Therefore, while welcoming any meanings that can be teased out of my essay's reticences, I want to caution against any misreading of Babuts's letter that