

after all, given the strenuous resistance most people make to being eaten, an idle cannibal would starve. And so would a lazy anteater.

George Clark
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Reply:

Alas, the animal in the lower right corner of Jan van der Straet's engraving is an anteater (perhaps *Tamandua tetradactyla*). Only a noble delicacy regarding the author's feelings, however, must have prevented George Clark from disclosing the sloth's true location. The phlegmatic beast (likely *Choloepus hoffmanni*) may be seen—though not easily, even in contemporary prints—on the tree farthest right, in the shadows just below the point where large branches diverge from the trunk. (Those of acute vision or abundant leisure may also notice some cannibals in the background, grilling what seem to be human limbs in a space intersected by the reciprocal gazes of the two human subjects in the foreground.)

The attribution of lassitude to the metaphoric female figure of America follows an accepted and, to this observer, reasonable interpretation of the visual evidence. That is, the naked, unarmed woman seems not merely to be sitting, as Clark maintains, but to be rising from slumber, or at least from a supine position. (Incredulous readers may wish to consult their own experience with hammocks to confirm this assertion.) The erect male European, equipped scientifically (astrolabe in hand), militarily (sword peeking out from behind), and religio-politically (crucifix atop the banner) for conquest, has caught the lady by surprise.

Van der Straet's image does lend itself to more penetrating analysis (likewise, perhaps, the matter of the anteater's tongue), but to have included such would have taken the reader too far afield from the subject of the essay, which is, as the title intimates, Werner Herzog's film. In any event, sincerest apologies to *Choloepus hoffmanni*, *Tamandua tetradactyla*, Clark, and any other *Homo sapiens* who may have been

disgraced, impeached, or otherwise baffled by the inadvertent misidentification.

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The Anatomy of Allusion

TO THE EDITOR:

Gregory Machacek's "Allusion" (122 [2007]: 522–36) contains useful, thought-provoking terminology. Is it possible that on rare occasions "inherently uninteresting" allusions or a "non-allusive echo" (qtd. on 530–31) might be euphemisms for a more sinister term—plagiarism?

Near the conclusion of William Styron's *The Long March* (1952), a novella concerning a forced march at a marine training camp, the following passage contains a troubling phraseological adaptation: "Yes, they had had it—those eight boys—he [Lt. Culver] thought. . . . In mindless slumber now, they were past caring, though diadems might drop or Doges surrender. They were ignorant of all." Styron's source is an Emily Dickinson poem (number 216 in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* [Boston: Little, 1960]):

Safe in their Alabaster Chambers—
Untouched by Morning—
And untouched by Noon—
Lie the meek members of the Resurrection—
Rafter of Satin—and Roof of Stone!

Grand go the Years—in the crescent—above
them—
Worlds scoop their Arcs—
And Firmaments—row—
Diadems—drop—and Doges—surrender—
Soundless as dots—on a Disc of Snow—

Authors establish a relation between their text and another—intertextuality—through

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some link that enhances at least their own, if not the earlier text. Machacek's discussion of the William Wordsworth (spur)–Denise Levertov (reprise) connection shows that together the poems amplify the necessity for participation in the emotional, sensuous aspects of life. T. S. Eliot's use of "sweet ladies" emphasizes the irony in his and the Shakespearean text; his use of Prince Hamlet points to the similarities and differences between Hamlet and Prufrock and also, since Prufrock makes the allusion, characterizes Prufrock's self image. While the assumption that death is a finality links the Dickinson and Styron works (and that link is tenuous if Dickinson's word *members* is a pun), is that enough reason for Styron to use Dickinson's words rather than his own?

As an example of diachronic intertextuality, Styron's adaptation differs significantly from Machacek's examples. Levertov, in her poem, adapts a famous line from another poem. With similar affinity to genre Milton's epic contains learned references to and phraseological adaptations of the Homeric epics. Eliot's use of Hamlet's soliloquy for Prufrock's dramatic monologue stays within the perimeters of genre similarity, as does the poet's appropriation of Ophelia's lines in the second section of *The Waste Land*, which begins with a Shakespearean stage setting—a phraseological adaptation from *Antony and Cleopatra*—and refers to the playwrights John Webster and Thomas Middleton. In contrast, Styron's genre has no kinship with Dickinson's poem.

To consider Styron's phraseology adaptation as an example of synchronic intertextuality seems even less useful than seeing it diachronically, since diadems and doges as specific symbols of the protested military authority have little relevance to today's culture. (In Dickinson's poem, diadems and doges seem representative of human history, which, like cosmic events, loses its universal significance in the cold blankness of infinity.) As to the recontextualization—Dickinson is referring to bodies in their caskets and Styron is referring to eight men whose body parts are strewn about

a meadow—neither text seems to enhance the other by comparison or contrast (in Styron's historical present men are buried in caskets, and in Dickinson's historical present men were slaughtered on battlefields).

For effective intertextuality, Machacek stresses the importance of an audience that shares the author's culture (526). Readers of Levertov tend to be readers of poetry and would be more likely to recognize the significance of her adaptation of Wordsworth's line than, say, a reader of Tom Clancy. Similarly, readers of Eliot and Milton, authors known for their advanced literacy, would expect indirect or direct references to other highly literate works. But there would be little reason to expect such advanced literacy in Styron's work, especially after reading the 115 pages preceding the allusion, which contain no erudite reference. The line at issue comes to the reader through Culver's thought (as does the entire narrative), and although the reader can infer that Culver has probably had a liberal education—he likes Haydn, Mozart, and Bach, he is able to make a contrast between Booth and Bernhardt, he has some knowledge of Greek masks, and he is conscious of language, hating the word *respect*—there is only one other literary allusion in the book, and that comes not from the mind of Culver but from the voice of Mannix, the other main character: "None of this Hemingway crap for me, Jack." While this reference seems appropriate as a debunking of the courageous Hemingway code hero, it is general in nature. Nothing prepares us for the kind of diachronic intertextuality defined as "a textual snippet reminiscent of a phrase in an earlier author's writing but smoothly incorporated into the new context of the imitating author's work—[a snippet] distinguishable primarily by being brief, discrete, and local" that Styron's appropriation manifests. Machacek writes further that this snippet "evok[es] a single text that the culture of the alluding writer associates with an identifiable earlier author" (525); not so in Styron's work—few other than students or scholars of nineteenth-century American poetry would recall Dickinson's line. Moreover, there would

be little reason to expect Styron to be an allusive writer: *The Long March*, copyrighted in 1952, followed his first novel, *Lie Down in Darkness*, which, though an immediate success, was not an allusive work.

As Machacek points out, “phraseological adaptation is generally integrated unobtrusively into the alluding text, so that uninformed readers will generally not be aware that they are missing anything; they will simply take the phrase as the later author’s own” (526–27). If the echoed phrase is obscure enough for the author to expect his audience to take it as his own, is that a legitimate borrowing?

In *Religion and Philosophy in Germany* (1882), Heinrich Heine avers that “there is no such thing as plagiarism in philosophy.” Is that true of literature too? As an admirer of Styron, I would like my suspicion that he committed a literary misdemeanor dispelled. Otherwise, I would like it confirmed.

Jane Reed

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TO THE EDITOR:

I find practically nothing to criticize in Gregory Machacek’s splendid “Allusion,” but I would like to suggest a few supplements and alternative approaches.

Regarding terminology: *spur* and *reprise* are excellent. I’ve used *alluding text*, which doesn’t have anything special to recommend it, and *target text*, which I think does: it expresses the purpose and creative energy of both writer and reader, and since targets can be missed, it avoids the mechanistic determinism of *trigger*.

I’ve preferred “textual allusion” to “literary allusion,” since it doesn’t privilege “literature” as a source of spurs, but “phraseological adaptation” is certainly an improvement on this term as well as on its other predecessors.

It’s interesting to watch the evolution of M. H. Abrams’s definition of *allusion* in his *Glossary of Literary Terms*. In 1957, it ran as follows: “a brief reference to a person, place or event assumed to be sufficiently well known to

be recognized by the reader.” Not a hint of anything like “phraseological adaptation”! By the sixth edition (1993), Abrams was much closer to Machacek.

My taxonomy is a four-part classification: direct or indirect; and historical or textual (with “topical” as a subset of “historical”). Direct textual allusion involves a quotation indicated as such or mention of the name of an author, work, or character. Direct historical allusion names the event or person; indirect doesn’t (e.g., Margaret Thatcher once declared, “I was revolted by what I saw on television last night,” alluding to soccer riots). In all of these, even the last, readers who don’t know what is being alluded to are aware of their ignorance. What crucially distinguishes phraseological adaptations from these other kinds of allusion, as Machacek recognizes, is that they *can* be missed without readers’ knowing that they did so. In other words, the allusion can fail, can miss the target.

What needs more emphasis than Machacek gives it is the corresponding advantage: if readers do hit the target, they have made the discovery themselves and are thus more actively involved in creating the allusion’s meaning. (Cf. Joseph Addison’s *Spectator* 512 on the role of the reader in creating the meaning of works like John Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel*.) Identifying the spur by a footnote, necessary though it often is, impoverishes the experience to some degree, though the reader’s creativity still has plenty of scope in determining the relations between spur and reprise.

There’s some crossover between these categories. A phraseological adaptation can allude to a historical figure or event: if your chair says, “Le département, c’est moi!” he or she is alluding not only to what Louis XIV said but to Louis himself. And in many cases it’s moot whether a direct allusion is historical or textual; when Shylock says of Portia, “A Daniel come to judgment!” it doesn’t matter whether Daniel is a historical character or a fictitious one.

Allusion can also be related to quotation and plagiarism. In quotation, one repeats another’s words and acknowledges them as another’s.