

# Studies on Themes and Motifs in Literature

## *Recognition: The Poetics of Narrative*

Interdisciplinary Studies on Anagnorisis

Edited by  
*Philip F. Kennedy*  
*and Marilyn Lawrence*

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of Anagnorisis

江苏工业学院图书馆

藏书章

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PETER LANG

New York • Washington, D.C./Baltimore • Bern  
Frankfurt am Main • Berlin • Brussels • Vienna • Oxford

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Recognition: the poetics of narrative: interdisciplinary studies  
on anagnorisis / edited by Philip F. Kennedy, Marilyn Lawrence.  
p. cm. — (Studies on themes and motifs in literature; vol. 96)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Recognition in literature. I. Kennedy, Philip F. II. Lawrence, Marilyn.

PN56.R33R43 808.81'3—dc22 2008035929

ISBN 978-1-4331-0256-1

ISSN 1056-3970

Bibliographic information published by **Die Deutsche Bibliothek**.

**Die Deutsche Bibliothek** lists this publication in the "Deutsche  
Nationalbibliografie"; detailed bibliographic data is available  
on the Internet at <http://dnb.ddb.de/>.

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability  
of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity  
of the Council of Library Resources.



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29 Broadway, 18th floor, New York, NY 10006  
[www.peterlang.com](http://www.peterlang.com)

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Printed in the United States of America

## Preface

Recognition, the subject of this book, is as large as narrative itself. It can be defined succinctly (Aristotle defines it in a sentence, in essence), yet it is prone to extraordinary reuse and reinvention, often as the very signature of a narrative—perhaps of narrative *tout court*. A handful of excellent and distinct monographs exist about the concept; inevitably they reflect the interests of individual authors. This volume is different: it is the product of a dialogue between a number of scholars—birds of a feather, in one sense, but magpies collecting baubles of extraordinary variety. Their goal has been to demonstrate that recognition exists, and has always existed, in different cultures and traditions across genres and media of narrative. It is a concept that colors perspective; in a very palpable sense it *is* perspective, for it is the most conspicuous vehicle of that which is hidden coming into view.

The scope of this book, and the nature of the treatment of materials, moves us beyond the current state-of-the-art in the study of recognition. This claim is intended with humility, as an encouragement for further study, for this book does not pretend to be exhaustive, which would demand an encyclopedic, and therefore unreadable, volume.

Contributors are established scholars and writers in the fields of cinema; opera; religion; medieval and modern English, French, and German literatures; comparative literature; and Indian (Sanskrit) and Islamic (Arabic) literatures, both classical and modern. It is our hope that the range of literary, philosophical, political, and cultural issues, and the array of periods, genres, and disciplines examined in this volume will be of interest to a broad readership of scholars and students, and of use in undergraduate and graduate courses on narrative and poetics, as well as in research.

## Acknowledgments

In this endeavor, we are grateful for the support of New York University, in particular the Graduate School of Arts and Science, the Humanities Council, the Medieval and Renaissance Center, the Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Department, and the Office of the Vice Chancellor of NYU Abu Dhabi. Our special thanks are due to Mary Carruthers, Michael Gilsenan, Judith Miller, Catharine Stimpson, and Mariët Westermann for encouraging and facilitating our work on this topic.

We are indebted and grateful to Jacob T. Mathew of Jayvee for the professional diligence and expertise that went into the typesetting of this volume. Thank you also to Galadriel Nair for copyediting.

Philip F. Kennedy and Marilyn Lawrence  
New York, 29 September 2008



"Ulysses" by Ugo Attardi, Battery Park, New York (photo by Philip F. Kennedy)

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# Introduction

## Philip F. Kennedy and Marilyn Lawrence

*Down in Trinidad there was a family  
With much confusion, as you will see:  
A mama, and a papa, and a boy who was grown,  
He wanted to marry and have a wife of his own.  
He found a girl; she suited him nice.  
He went to his father to ask his advice.  
His father said, "Son, I'll have to say 'No':  
The girl is your sister, but your mama don't know!"*

*O, misery! Shame and scandal in the family!*

*He went to his mama; he covered his head:  
He told his mum what his father had said.  
His mother, she laughed; she said, "Go, Man, go!  
Your daddy ain't your daddy, but your daddy don't know!"  
O, misery! It's shame and scandal in the family!"*<sup>1</sup>

Lord Tanamo bases his song "Shame and Scandal," recorded on the 2005 cover album *The Dangermen Sessions, Volume 1* by the British ska band Madness, on the recognition of previously unknown kinship ties. Though potentially deeply irrational, as well as shockingly—or humorously—scandalous, such recognition scenes are among the strongest surviving genes of narrative form. Recognition propels plots of stories sung, spoken, written, acted, or filmed—from the tragedies of antiquity to the ska music of today.

This book explores recognition, or "anagnorisis," a concept fundamental to Aristotle's *Poetics* and vital in narratives throughout the world and throughout the ages. Various translated as recognition, discovery, or disclosure—depending on how broad a view one takes—anagnorisis is the one Greek term of the *Poetics* that is literally, manifestly, and unassailably invested with the idea of knowledge:

*Recognition [anagnôrisis], as in fact the term indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, disclosing either a close relationship or enmity, on the part of people marked out for good or bad fortune.*<sup>2</sup>

Because of the epistemic aspect inherent in Aristotle's definition, there is a strong case for recognition as a central concept of the *Poetics*.<sup>3</sup> Anagnorisis, peripeteia, hamartia, and catharsis are all, to some extent, epistemologically laden and

therefore can relate to each other within a coherent view of the cognitive mechanisms of drama.<sup>4</sup> If we borrow the *Poetics* as a helpful—though not prescriptive—conceptual tool to consider narrative in general from antiquity to the present, recognition becomes key to the way we make meaning and to the way we read.

Both in themselves and in the connections between them, the essays collected here provide insight into the way anagnorisis works and modulates as a general operating feature of narrative and dramatic art. Each essay provides a discrete analysis of some aspect of anagnorisis, but the volume as a whole gives a sense of the exfoliations of anagnorisis in various artistic media: narrative fiction, film, and music. Because anagnorisis is about disclosure, focus upon it in any given work or text lends itself to disclosures of various social and, we might say, disciplinary kinds of knowledge: issues of gender, identity, class, truth, and morality can each be made to come to the fore, depending on particular perspectives. And because anagnorisis is itself about knowledge, according to Aristotle's poetically particular—yet epistemologically inconclusive and polyvalent—coinage, the study of it can open up portals upon the general and social epistemology, both cognitive and moral, of any narrative under scrutiny.

This book investigates the nature of narrative structure and epistemology by reexamining, building upon, and broadening the studies of anagnorisis that already exist, and in particular upon the groundbreaking and foundational work of Terence Cave, himself a contributor.<sup>5</sup> Cave's analyses illustrate two sides of a coin: that artists and writers create variously, both in the light of and quite independently of formal poetics. The consistency of anagnorisis, at least as a formal structural feature of narrative and drama, also emerges in tandem with its chameleon-like nature. The predicates of recognition—whom or what we recognize (essentially, its themes)—have been changing ever since antiquity, oscillating backwards and forwards, from text to text and period to period, between the relative simplicity of unveiled kinship ties, on the one hand, and psychological—even broadly philosophical—facts pertaining to the human condition, on the other.

Uncertainty emerges as a chief dividend of Cave's argument, and this casts its shadow continuously back upon Aristotle. Because anagnorisis is about knowledge, it would seem to promise the generation of certainty. Yet a strange contrary specter then rears its head: suspicions about the very nature of the knowledge that is yielded, or about the irrational way we may have arrived there, or even about the instability of whatever apparent certainty may have briefly accrued. Fundamentally, the issue falls back on the fact that the space devoted to irrational recognitions in Aristotle's typology in chapter 16 of the *Poetics* in effect diminishes the chances that, as he counsels in chapter 15, "there should be nothing irrational in the events themselves."<sup>6</sup> It transpires that the essential paralogism inherently part of anagnorisis challenges the very edifice upon which Aristotle tried to build his *Poetics*: syllogism, reason, naturalism, and probability.

We must constantly grapple with the nature of such incertitude. The studies in this volume do so in various ways, looking at distinct genres of storytelling from

different narrative and artistic traditions. Recognition should apparently be the moment of narrative satisfaction, when problems and tensions are resolved. But can one in fact be so complacent when the device of recognition is so jaded (the most sophisticated texts share this feature with soap operas, folkloric tales, and children's fables)? When the knowledge one arrives at is so barely credible according to probability and the logic of unfolding human events? When what recognition so often discloses is that knowledge itself is precarious? Or when the image or the face that comes into focus exists as a virtual simulacrum in a hall of mirrors challenging our confidence that any single image we see is truly there? Resolving and palpable certainty is constantly deferred, promised at most in a sequel of events, as part of the narrative surplus.

That the recognition scene may be a problem moment is a difficult issue to grasp. Narrative knowledge and anagnorisis are quite unstable, and recognition scenes can have all the permanence, before and after the fact, of mushrooms that sprout after rain. But because knowledge is always implicated, and because some meaning may arise, however subjective that meaning might be, it is desirable to see how artists, writers, and scholars of various narrative traditions navigate through the shoals of recognition's knowledge, meaning, and uncertainties.

Recognition as a problem moment is only one aspect of Cave's complex study. Complementary issues relating to structure-versus-theme, parody, and recognition and the hermeneutics of reading are all laced into the analysis of anagnorisis. In addition, the notion of synecdoche is important when we consider the proposition that recognition is the "figure of poetics as a whole" or, similarly, that it is "the mark or signature of a fiction."<sup>7</sup> Cave also follows the tracks of the "hunting model" or "cynegetic model" of writing: the object of recognition is the prey that is bagged after being stalked according to the semiotic clues inscribed in a given narrative. The essays in this book touch upon all of these issues, though inevitably to varying degrees.

It would seem that anagnorisis defers to, and is even subsumed in, our more familiar, and to some extent related, sense of suspense (witness our characterizations of Hitchcock). But suspense, while doubtlessly important, is less complex and loaded as a concept in a lay poetics since it does not carry in its etymology the very meaning of knowledge. Unlike recognition, therefore, suspense cannot provide the conceptual nexus for the analysis of both structure and theme, nor does it facilitate a textual hermeneutics—which, in the case of anagnorisis, both inheres in the definition of the term and engages the reader. One of the most striking details to emerge from the work of contributors Piero Boitani and Cave is that the ancient Greek terms for "recognition," "reader," and "reading" (respectively, *anagnôrisis*, *anagnôstês*, and *anagignôskein* or *anagnôsis*) are closely—phonetically and conceptually—related.<sup>8</sup> The study of anagnorisis, when its definition stretches out beyond the clichéd sense we have of the classic (jaded even) recognition scene, provides important insight into how to read, in every possible sense. Accepting the last proposition, anagnorisis can be understood to furnish part of the essential humanism of art and literature.

Anagnorisis exists in all cultures, not simply in those that can claim Aristotle's *Poetics* as their own, closely or distantly. Anagnorisis is rife in Islamic culture, which cherished Aristotle, but which had no real idea of what the *Poetics* were about (though not for lack of trying). And recognition scenes pervade literature of the European Middle Ages, before vernacular writers widely rediscovered Aristotle in the Renaissance. Aristotle provides some cohesive gravity and a frame for a feature of storytelling that would flourish quite independently of whether the *Poetics* had existed or not. Thus, whereas some scholarly discussions of anagnorisis are closely and literally Aristotelian, married to the details of what Aristotle actually said in his exiguous comments, other studies extend understanding of anagnorisis such as to dissipate almost to the point of disappearance any sense that what is actually being talked about is truly Aristotelian.<sup>9</sup> Because Aristotle in fact left his discussion in ellipse, which is filled out both in theory and practice, we are obliged to stick tightly to his text only when we are interested in seeing how his comments were received—the so-called afterlife of the *Poetics*, and how, in tandem with such a literary self-consciousness, it might have influenced narrative. Cave's study gives a magisterial tour of how this has been the case in the Western tradition, hence the absence in his *Recognitions* of literature that was probably created with little sense at all of Aristotle. The essays that follow here include examination of these latter narratives.

We should also consider another spread: the generic range of anagnorisis. The movement from ignorance to knowledge implied in anagnorisis is a simple dynamic paradigm of narrative that operates in a gamut of genres: tragedy, of course, but also comedy, epic, scripture, romance, the picaresque, and the novel. Most of these genres are represented in the repertoires of opera and film, as well as in literature. Furthermore, recognition exists both in "high" and "low" literature, which is to say, in works of quite differing literary status. "High" literature delights in—or rather cannot escape—the influence of a device that some circles esteem proper to "low" literature, the modern soap opera now being the best example. The issue here is that in certain commentaries on the *Poetics* the recognition scene acquired a bad name. It became the black sheep of *Poetics*—a stale, implausible, and unsightly way of resolving a plot in which the author has simply lost his way or of which he has even lost control. It contravenes Aristotle's basic desire that the optimal story should unfold according to rational laws of cause and effect.

However, the prejudice is somehow rash: for we should remind ourselves that some, perhaps a majority, of the founding texts of the Western canon are utterly dependent on recognition. Genesis, the life of Jesus (the Gospels), the Greek tragedies, the Hellenistic novels, the plays of Shakespeare, and the whole romance tradition taking us up to the eighteenth century—as well as texts that choose to undermine romance—are often themselves recognition stories. It is like an unshakable, selfish gene of literature. This volume shows that anagnorisis is, as one would suspect, fundamental to an entire range of narrative traditions; for instance, of Islamic literature from pre-Islamic Arabia to the present—a literature

riven with tension between transcendental truth and material incertitude. It is more essential to discern consistently the difference between a simple structural point in the highly determined morphology of, say, a Russian folktale (*pace* Vladimir Propp) and the extraordinary potential for humanistic interpretation that inheres, for example, in the long, drawn-out recognition scene in *Babette's Feast* (the Oscar-winning film based on the novella by Karen Blixen) in which anagnorisis is layered, cognitive, affective, spiritual, and forgiving, but also preserves its surplus of doubt and the inevitable potential that humans have for not quite understanding things fully.<sup>10</sup>

Much narrative material of various kinds—novelistic, dramatic, and cinematic—from diverse periods and traditions remains to be analyzed. This book of essays demonstrates the varied and mottled nature of recognition, a concept that is innately familiar to readers and audiences, yet seldom talked about outside of classes in poetics.

## The Essays

Wendy Doniger opens the volume's analysis of anagnorisis in "Narrative Conventions and Rings of Recognition." Many myths are simply the narrative embodiment, sometimes an exaggerated embodiment, of a cliché. The recognition scene in narratives is itself a cliché, which promises fullness but actually leaves great emptiness. This sense of emptiness is precisely what is experienced not just by the reader of a recognition story, outside the frame of the story, but by the people inside it: the person the protagonist thought he was, or was with, turns out, at the moment of fullness, to be empty of the desired identity. On the other hand, one could argue that it is precisely the known quantity of the clichéd plot of the recognition story that makes it satisfying, filling: when the victim of a masquerade finally recognizes the masquerader ("Oh, it's my wife!"), the reader of the story recognizes the plot ("Oh, it's a recognition story!"). If the species is the recognition narrative, a subspecies is the narrative of recognition by means of a signet ring, a very old chestnut, indeed. A survey of stories within this subspecies—two ancient Indian plays in Sanskrit, a medieval Welsh tale, and select contemporary films—demonstrates that the audiences for these texts were just as capable as we are of seeing the logical flaws in the use of a ring as a proof text. But still they go on using it and, even in the texts that point out its inadequacy, it often functions as a proof. This is because it represents an antiscientific, antilogical argument that is often essential to the narrative. And so the convention generally prevails: the ring rings true.

In his "Islamic Recognitions: An Overview," Philip F. Kennedy traces recognition through various genres of Arabic storytelling, from the Qur'an and Hadith (traditions of the Prophet), through a number of medieval genres (spanning high-brow to popular), to the modern novel (glancing at both traditional and experimental forms of writing in the oeuvre of Egyptian Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz). Arabic literature has a rich indigenous and multivolumed tradition of

poetics (which flourished particularly from the eighth to eleventh centuries CE), however, it is entirely confined to poetry, which, in the case of the Arabic genre, is almost entirely nonnarrative. There is no equivalent in medieval Islamic culture of Aristotle's *Poetics* that comments on aspects of narrative art. Furthermore, the early Arabic translations and commentaries of Aristotle's *Poetics* (produced between the tenth and twelfth centuries) did not understand his work to be essentially about narrative; rather they took it to be a treatise on logic, and, to complicate matters even further, sometimes illustrated it through poetry in the medieval Arabic (nonnarrative and nondramatic) sense of the genre. Thus, the history of the reception of the *Poetics* into the Arabic literary milieu is a curious and fascinating cul-de-sac of cultural influence. Nonetheless, many of the categories of Aristotle's *Poetics* can shed light on aspects of Arabic (Islamic) narrative literature and storytelling generally; the contrary would almost defy the essential humanism in both the mechanisms of, and meanings conveyed by, stories in any culture. In other words, Aristotle observed, but did not invent, recognition. Recognition, as well as being an instructive hermeneutic tool, exposes essential formal and structural issues of narrative in the Arabic literary tradition, and, through the lens of anagnorisis, a variety of moral, ethical, spiritual, and sectarian issues come to the fore in ways that are often particular to Islamic history.

In "Non-recognition in *Sir Triamour*: The Reversal of Romance Expectations," Elizabeth Archibald concentrates on a late-fourteenth-century Middle English romance of the accused queen/separated family variety. The first part of the romance is apparently based on the French story of Sebilla, Charlemagne's queen, who was falsely accused of adultery. However, no specific French source is known for the second half of the romance, the part that interests Archibald here: the adventures of the calumniated queen and her son after exile, and the eventual family reunion. In this essay Archibald compares *Sir Triamour* with analogous French and Middle English romances in which both the mother and the father-hero survive to the end of the story, and finds *Sir Triamour* unusual in its use of recognition and related themes. In the analogues, successful closure requires that the husband and wife, or lovers, be reunited with each other and also with their child(ren). The extent to which the mother is foregrounded varies from text to text, but her role is generally passive. Where she is the main character, her son is still a young child at the end of the story, and they stay together throughout; if her son grows up to have chivalric adventures, they are separated, and she tends to be marginalized. Father and son usually recognize each other in the course of a battle, towards the end of a narrative. In *Sir Triamour*, however, although the son does grow up and have adventures, mother and son remain together throughout the narrative and their close relationship is important. There are repeated opportunities for father and son to discover their true relationship, but the recognition is put off until the very end, and the mother controls it in such a way as to make the father look ridiculous. Although the son is the main protagonist of *Sir Triamour*, his mother plays an unusually large part in the story, and the handling of anagnorisis, through a series of nonrecognition scenes, is unique.

Marilyn Lawrence's "Recognition and Identity in Medieval Narrative: The Saracen Woman in the Anglo-Norman Epic *Boeve de Haumtone*" examines how the anonymous author of this late-twelfth-century narrative uses recognition to address and emphasize complex issues concerning the identity of the Arab Muslim (Saracen) heroine and her Christian lover—including issues of religious, racial, class, social, gender, and sexual identity. Study of recognition in *Boeve de Haumtone* gives insight into the perception authors of medieval French epic promote of the Saracen world, of the Christian realm, and of the women who occupy these separate spheres. Episodes of delayed recognition, partial recognition, or failed recognition provide a narrative space within which the Saracen heroine reshuffles, rejects, or revamps signifiers indicating identity to construct for herself a new social identity. Consequently, the female Saracen does not reinforce static relationships with other characters, but rather renegotiates relationships through recognition. Although the redefinition of the heroine that transpires in recognition scenes ostensibly occurs in relation to the Christian French court without redefining the world of that court itself, it nonetheless undermines its rigid social hierarchy and subtly opens up to questioning medieval cultural assumptions regarding such issues as race, religion, and class; gender and sexuality; and the place of Muslim women in respect to medieval Christian court life.

In "Recognition: A Challenge for Opera Studies," Jessica Waldoff explores the question of why recognition has been neglected in opera studies and suggests how a focus on recognition with its emphasis on disclosure and knowledge in narrative can illuminate the dramatic workings of opera. Notions of opera as drama go back as far as the invention of the genre in the learned societies of Renaissance Italy. Yet opera studies have almost entirely ignored recognition—a category of events crucial to understanding operatic drama—and recognition scenes, even though these scenes appear in opera with such regularity that they may be taken as a standard feature of the form. To view opera as drama requires not only a conception of it that joins analytic interest in the music with attention to verse, plot, and theme, at the level of the whole operatic action, but also a conception that explains the role of recognition. As in spoken drama, recognition marks moments where major themes and ideas are dramatized and the action is brought to a climax. However, operas also represent and realize recognition in musical terms. The challenge for opera studies, therefore, is to find a way to understand recognition in terms appropriate, perhaps exclusive, to opera. In this essay, Waldoff presents some initial observations about the role of recognition in opera, drawing chiefly on the works of Mozart, Verdi, and Wagner. What may appear to be purely musical phenomena associated with issues of period, style, or genre (recurring themes, for example) are really complex operatic events involved in the dramatization of recognition scenes. Critical thinking about recognition, as she demonstrates, provides a new perspective for opera studies.

In "Singing with Tigers: Recognition in *Wilhelm Meister*, *Daniel Deronda*, and *Nights at the Circus*," Terence Cave examines the *Bildungsroman*. It can



hardly be surprising that anagnorisis has a significant role to play in such a genre, by definition a novel of education and enlightenment. This is indeed the case in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the novel deemed in literary history to mark the inception of the genre. On the whole, discussions of anagnorisis have neglected the *Bildungsroman* as a narrative category, a fact addressed (and redressed) in this comparative study of novels by Goethe, George Eliot, and Angela Carter. Cave's essay describes distinct kinds of enlightenment that the genre articulates and, more particularly, presents a complex case study of intertextuality, tracing three striking literary incarnations of Mignon and the roles that moments of anagnorisis play in this recurring figure. In *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* the posthumous recognition scene that resolves Mignon's own sub-narrative, explaining her identity, is at first blush peripheral to Goethe's principal narrative—though there are painful lyric echoes of it in Goethe's sequel. The recognition scene is more central to Eliot (who creatively plays Mirah's destiny off against Mignon's) in whose novel it coalesces with that of her eponymous hero, Deronda himself (an anagnorisis of marked historical significance). It is finally given an unexpected twist in Carter's highly allusive novel of magic realism, where Mignon and her music are given a new life; here, as Cave comments already of some eighteenth-century novels, "an ultimate recognition scene seems to hover over the narrative, but it fails to materialize"—as if long prefiguring essential characteristics of the postmodern novel.

Alfred Hitchcock was acutely aware of established manners of artistic construction (witness the classic tokens of recognition that he features in *Vertigo* and *Shadow of Doubt*) and the way experience may structure knowledge, especially evident in the psychoanalytic films such as *Marnie* and *Spellbound*. In "Hitchcock, Knowledge, and Sexual Difference," **Richard Allen** remarks that Hitchcock orchestrates the deceptiveness of appearances and the misattribution of guilt to an innocent protagonist—the so-called "wrong man"—so consistently that his films may seem to confirm a deconstructive view of recognition, in which the very form recognition takes undercuts the possibility of certainty. However, such a conclusion ignores the frequency with which guilt and innocence are resolved in Hitchcock's works, especially in his narratives of romantic renewal, such as *North by Northwest* where the innocence of the male protagonist is never in doubt. Doubt arises in Hitchcock's work not because of the inadequacy of knowledge, but because of the way knowledge is keyed to the force of sexual desire that drives the formation of the couple. Allen argues that the relationship between knowledge and human sexuality in Hitchcock's work manifests distinct differences according to gender. In Hitchcock's male-centered plots of detection, recognition may fall short—not because it is in error, but because it appears complacent and coercive, especially where the object of investigation is a woman. However, in Hitchcock's female-centered gothic romances, it is typically less self-interest than an intuition of a threat to a relationship entered in on faith that motivates the heroine's investigation. The knowledge she gains arises out of a relationship of attachment, as opposed to the knowledge of the man that is won from the pursuit



of attachment. In emotional terms this knowledge is hard won, it is deeper, and it often leads to a radical disenchantment of the world.

In “Looking for Patterns in Static: Recognition, Reading, and Detecting in G. K. Chesterton and Paul Auster’s *City of Glass*,” **Gina Welty Parkinson** discusses the scandalous nature of recognition, and its unique parallels with the act of reading itself. Using the metaphysical detective story as a point of entry, Parkinson delves into the murky relationship between recognition and the reader, treating the recognition structure as a synecdoche of literature itself, and revisiting the question of signs and their meanings as they evolve through the history of the genre. Specifically, Parkinson focuses on two particular moments within the chronology of the metaphysical detective story: its genesis and development in the works of G. K. Chesterton, and its continuation and distortion in Paul Auster’s *City of Glass*. Beginning with an examination of the nature of recognition and its effect on the reader, she limns the importance of recognition in metaphysical detective stories in terms of structure and meaning. By investigating ways in which recognition operates internally within the text on a narrative level, as well as externally between the reader and the text on a hermeneutical level, Parkinson alternately proposes and problematizes an analogous relationship between the criminal/author and the detective/reader.

**Rebecca Carol Johnson’s** “The Politics of Reading: Revolution and Recognition in Jabra Ibrahim Jabra’s *In Search of Walid Masoud*” takes its cue from the trajectory of development in the novels of the great Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz that Kennedy traces in the latter part of his essay. The Arabic novel represented in the work of Mahfouz moves from the epistemological model associated with romance, tragic melodrama, and the *Bildungsroman*, towards multiple experiments in literary form that gnaw consciously away at the integrity of narrative and the epistemologies that might traditionally be associated with it. Johnson shows how the characteristics of postmodern creative writing, broadly understood, are adapted in the case of each successful work of narrative art to specific historical, political, and social circumstances that have given rise to it and to which it, in turn, responds vocally. The assurance and the sense of conviction that may come with a well-honed recognition scene is precisely what Jabra’s Palestinian novel *In Search of Walid Masoud* cannot deliver. The fractured socio-political condition of a people wearied in diaspora, and their growing sense of impotence and disillusionment in the power of the word (and all forms of writing) to change the world, give rise to the recalcitrant and shy emergent truths about the lost Walid Masoud, a troubled and uncertain figure for the Palestinian struggle.

Paranoia and conspiracy have come to acquire a certain pedigree in contemporary American literary culture since the beginning of the Cold War. **Daniel Beaumont’s** essay, “The ‘Lone-Nut’ Theory: Paranoia and Recognition in Contemporary American Fiction,” examines a number of examples through the work of William Burroughs, Thomas Pynchon, and Don DeLillo, arguing that issues of anagnorisis are central to the narratives. In Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49*, the heroine’s struggle to determine the real nature of “Tristero” leads her to what can