Metaphors and Transfiguration: A. S. Byatt's "Morpho Eugenia" and Philip Haas's *Angels and Insects*

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Introduction

A. S. Byatt's "Morpho Eugenia," first published in 1992 in a volume also including "The Conjugial Angel" under the joint title of *Angels and Insects*, was, at an almost unimaginable speed, adapted to film by 1995. Directed by Philip Haas, music composed by Alexander Balanescu, and starring Mark Rylance, Kristin Scott Thomas, and Patsy Kensitt, the film version was given the title *Angels and Insects*. This great speed, to me, would suggest that there must be something special, perhaps even provokingly cinematic in Byatt's text that invites a film adaptation. Whereas I maintain this claim, as a point of departure for my discussion of these literary and cinematic texts, I must make two personal statements: first, that out of the two, I had an encounter with the film first; second, that on reading the text I could hardly recognize the film and the text as "the same," so much so that I started reading "The Conjugial Angel" in (a vain) search for further details that I thought I remembered from the film (this mistaken guess of mine can obviously be traced back to Haas's change of title as well).

After having read the text and seen the film several times I must admit the shortcomings of my first impressions: the text and the film are not so very different, after all.[1] Yet the apparent, and at first sight shocking discrepancy between the two raises questions that keep recurring when discussing film adaptations of literary texts: how can a literary text be transformed into a cinematic one, how do the obviously different modes of representation compare, and how does the complex interaction of the inevitable selection from the literary text and the two distinct sets of representational tools (those of literature and film) contribute to the creation of a new filmic text that, to a great extent, is independent of the literary piece?

Without claiming to have found the ultimate answer to all the above questions, in this paper I set out to explore the reasons why *this* transfiguration from literature to film has produced two, perhaps deceptively different texts which are undeniably related to each other, yet have an existence of their own. I propose that the reason for this difference resides in the highly metaphorical structure of Byatt's text, which, although a mode of transfiguration itself, paradoxically did not find its way in its complexity into the cinematic transfiguration, but was rather replaced by a greater emphasis on narrativity, and particularly on a special narrative focus: the rivalry between William Adamson and Edgar Alabaster and the incestuous relationship

between Eugenia and Edgar Alabaster, both of which make an essential component of Byatt's "Morpho Eugenia," but are less dominant and explicit till the very end of the text. "Morpho Eugenia," in turn, contains an element completely eliminated from the film version: Matty's—or Matilda Crompton's—fairy tale, which is fully written up in the literary text. Its disappearance significantly affects the mode of discourse of the film since, as I will argue, Matty's tale can be considered as the *mise-en-abyme* of the text that also includes several self-reflexive comments on language, narrative, metaphor and metamorphosis/transfiguration. In this way, there is a greater emphasis on narrativity in the film at the cost of certain elements that indicate the text's awareness of itself as a mode of representation; as a result, Byatt's postmodern Victorian pastiche is transformed into a heritage film whose main and undeniable interest lies in the story and the spectacle. Put in another way, in terms of representation, both Byatt's "Morpho Eugenia" and Haas's *Angels and Insects* are bound and, at the same time, empowered by the differring mediality of textual and filmic representations.

Metaphors of Transfiguration in "Morpho Eugenia"
Meaning and Metaphor

Byatt's text is obviously metaphorical—perhaps excessively metaphorical. In her article "The Double Voice of Metaphor" Heidi Hansson analyzes the general aspects of metaphoricity in Byatt's text, and her insights will serve as a basis for my investigation. As she points out,

> Byatt uses common, even trite metaphors, but she uses the same metaphor in different ways, which draws attention to language itself and means that readers will have to reevaluate their interpretation of the text over and over again. Both the figurative—or the hackneyed—meanings and the literal meanings are present at the same time, and so metaphors and analogies become more than embellishments: they become tools for emphasizing the double voice that is an integral part of language. (455)

Following Hansson's suit, I will argue that the narratives of natural history and human history are inseparably entangled in the text via its metaphorical structure in which, after a certain point, the tenor and the vehicle keep shifting into each other's positions, thus creating a fictional world in which natural history does not simply reflect upon human history; rather, various modes of representation comprise a (Darwinian) continuum. In my view, the abundance of metaphors, and the chain of meaning that the metaphorical and the literal bring about in "Morpho Eugenia" create not only a double-voiced, but a many-voiced discourse, and thus a multivalence of meaning. This aspect, indeed, points into the direction of what is usually referred to as the postmodern instability of meaning, "the postmodern distrust of accurate representation" (Hansson 455), and as the shifting signifier that never coincides with the

signified. What is special in this text, though, is the apparently "innocent" use of language and representation which makes the text a Victorian pastiche: the narrative is clearly set in the past, narrated chronologically in an omniscient way, without any obvious discrepancy in the perspective between the fictional world and the narrator, and without any self-reflexivity in the narrator's voice. The *sjuzet*, thus, is metonymical—or realist, Victorian fiction if you like.

Yet, it is not an ungrounded claim to call Byatt a "*postmodern* Victorian" as does one reviewer (qtd. in Hansson 453; emphasis added): in spite of the lack of explicit concern with language and representation, the text, in my reading, *is* about language and linguistic representation, and this is the aspect that seems to be lost in the film adaptation (or transfiguration). What happens in/by the text is the same as what "carrie[s] away" (141) Matty when writing her own book: her inspiration is Linnaeus and the Large Elephant Hawk Moth (considered to be a lizard by one of the servant girls, Amy). Seeing the moth, knowing its name, and hearing how Amy identifies it, Matty "thought that the thing was a kind of *walking figure of speech*," and she "was dragged along willy-nilly—by the language, you know" (141).

This is exactly how Byatt talks about the inception of the text:

> I began with a visual image. I wanted to write a story which combined my obsession with television naturalism with my obsession with the Victorian Gothic. I thought you could make a really good film which compared the ant heap to a Victorian mansion. And in the middle of the ant heap there is this large fat white queen simply producing children. The question is: is she the power center, or is she the slave? I did not have a plot for a long time—it was just this metaphor, which is a very simple one but works. And it got bigger and bigger. I had this vision of all these silently sexless female servants, scurrying along the corridors of the Gothic mansion like the worker ants. I read a lot of books about Victorian servant life. [...] But then I had this further metaphorical idea that there should be a man who wanted to marry a butterfly and found he'd married the queen of the ants by mistake. ("Interview")

By way of conclusion, she succinctly defines the textual dynamism of "Morpho Eugenia": "It's driven by the story and the metaphor" ("Interview"). The abundance of metaphors in the text—more precisely the mode of writing that consciously carries one idea into another—, however, goes much beyond the extent Byatt mentions in the interview: human life is seen through ants, bees, moths and butterflies, butterflies through mythology, science through theology, both science and theology through fairy tales, England through the South American jungle, insects through embroidery, etc.—and all these vice versa; moreover, all these transfigurations are possible by and through language. Mistress Mouffet, the saviour heroine in Miss Matty's embedded story says the following: "Names, you know, are a way of weaving the world together, by relating the

creatures to other creatures and a kind of *metamorphosis*, you might say, out of a *metaphor* which is a figure of speech for carrying one idea into another" (131-32).

Whereas Hansson thinks that this "prominence of comparisons, analogies, and metaphors places the novella in the tradition of allegorical writing" (454), I argue that instead of the allegorical structure that supposes binary oppositions and relatively fixed referents, what we have in this case is a system of *multiple* binaries which, as a result, ceases to be a system of binaries. The reason for this lies in the two features of metaphors: on the one hand, metaphors are tropes that open up two "worlds," or frames of reference (that of the tenor and that of the vehicle), whereas, on the other hand, they are supposed to function in terms of *similarities*. But because of the plethora of the potential connotations of both the tenor and the vehicle, metaphors also create *dissimilarity*, and open up perspectives that are *not* related to the associative field of the other element or frame of reference that serves as a basis for the identification or comparison. This is why "the drive towards divergence and diversification survives through metaphor. [...] The polysemism of metaphor means that it is hard to control its implications" (Beer 92). It is the uncontrollability of metaphor that this text of Byatt's utilizes, or—as I would claim—is even based upon. This polysemism, however, disrupts binarism, which is a structural element of allegory, and so polysemism disrupts allegory as well.

Another factor that plays a role in the multiplicity of binaries, or rather multivalence of meanings is that "Morpho Eugenia" offers so many binaries that are related to one another in such a complex way that the assumed oppositionality of binaries ceases to exist in the text: instead, it results in a constantly shifting continuum of meanings and referents. In this process, after a time it is not even clear how and which meaning is transferred upon which signifier, and so there comes about a circular logic in which the boundaries of meanings are blurred and no distinct meaning exists any more. I am putting special emphasis on this aspect of the text because, in my opinion, this textual strategy is parallel to what the novella is partly informed by: the Darwinian theory of evolution, which is conceptualized—to use the words of Byatt's Darwinian naturalist, William Adamson—as a process of "the gradual action of Natural Selection, of slow change, over unimaginable millennia" (Byatt 33)—of accidental changes that first look as if they were deviations from the norm (that is, a binary opposition), yet turn into structural changes: they affect the whole system of beings by restructuring their mutual relations. Or, in Gillian Beer's view, in Darwin's concept there is an "insistence that chance is the name we give to as yet unknown laws" (85).

As Beer points out, "in Darwin's argument, *variation* is the key to evolutionary development. Varification, not truth to type, is the creative principle, as he emphasises throughout the first chapter of *The Origin of Species*" (150). This variation/diversification implies both growth and potential transformation, a process in which a new species—and, in semiotic terms, new meaning—is created. This transformation, in turn, is described by Darwin in a highly metaphorized, moreover, anthropomorphic language, in spite of the contemporary tendency to create a univocal scientific lan-

guage and to avoid the use of metaphor for its very "uncontrollable element" (Beer 89). Yet Darwin's text is special not only because of its metaphoricity but also because "the effect of [his] metaphors in *The Origin* derives not only from each of them individually, but from their interplay between them"; put in another way, "interaction and the formation of significance takes place not only within a single metaphor but between metaphors sustained in narrative" (Beer 96).

Double Visions

In my view, this characterization of Darwin's text is perfectly applicable to the process which creates multivocality in "Morpho Eugenia." Nevertheless, to see properly the multiplicity of meanings, first I will have recourse to the binaries that create oppositional structures in the text. The text starts off with a ball at Bredely Hall, where Lady Alabaster encourages William Adamson to dance, more exactly to dance with her daughters. Adamson is apologetic, saying he is not used to ballroom dancing, to which Edgar Alabaster's response is: "Not much dancing in the jungle" (3). At this, Adamson is overwhelmed by his memories of dancing in South America, which in themselves seem to imply a series of other transfigurations and oppositions: the passage describing these memories shifts from "Christian festivals" through "communal dancing" that last for weeks and "Indian dances where you must imitate the hops of the woodpeckers, or the wriggle of the armadillos" to the most erotically charged dance "with the *Juiza*, the lady of the revels" (3).

Yet the text is organized by this basic opposition that Adamson finds himself in on his return to England, his double consciousness, as the text puts it: "Nothing he did now seemed to happen without this double vision, of things seen and done otherwise, in another world" (7). This double vision takes various forms in the text, ranging from explicit explanations of what it was like "out there," through comparisons, similarities and similes to metaphors—either articulated by Adamson or used in the narrator's descriptions. In this double consciousness, however, neither the South American experiences, nor the ones in Britain take precedence of normality or standard over the others: instead the basis of comparison disappears: "He felt he was doomed to a kind of double consciousness. Everything he experienced brought up its contrary image from *out there*, which had the effect of making not only the Amazon ceremonies, but the English sermons seem strange, unreal, of an uncertain nature" (24). Instead of the typical logic of comparison, which is based on the One and the Other, in this text the two elements mutually read and inform each other.

Apparently, nothing in the text can be self-identical, even at the most obvious level of naming: the double vision takes numerous forms. When Adamson dances with Eugenia, "her shoulders and bust rose white and flawless from the froth of tulle and tarlatan like Aphrodite from the foam" (6); as a response, Adamson feels,

> to his shame and amazement, unmistakable stirrings and quickening of bodily excitement in himself. He [...] reflected—he was, after all, a scientist and observer—that these dances were designed to arouse his desire in exactly this way, however demure the gloves, however sweetly innocent the daily life of the young woman in his arms. He remembered the palm-wine dance, a swaying circle which at a change in rhythm broke up into hugging couples who then set upon the one partnerless scapegoat dancer. He remembered being grabbed and nuzzled and rubbed and cuddled with great vigour by women with brown breasts glistening with sweat and oil, and with shameless fingers. (6-7)

In this "uncontrollable"—and, for the reader, almost irresistible—passage there are several shifts from one discourse to another, from one frame of reference to another: it starts off with a mythical comparison, followed first by the personally more involved description of his bodily experiences, then by the anthropologist's pretended detachment in presenting his sexual arousal. The logic of the passage works both ways: forward and backward as well—in the same way as the highly elevated, deified figure of Aphrodite both veils and reveals what she "symbolizes" (the goddess of love and beauty, but in Botticelli's painting she emerges from the foam ambiguously, partly modestly, partly in shameless—and for that reason "innocent"-looking—nudity), so do Eugenia's clothes make her "both proudly naked and wholly untouchable" (6); similarly, the ballroom dance under the surveillance of all the guardians of chastity seems to veil the aims of dancing, which is revealed in its "nakedness" only in the anthropologist's description of the natives' dance. Yet the passage reveals not only the function of dance, but dance as a ritual, a more or less disguised social event that is regulated by the rules of the community concerned: the difference lies only in the extent of explicitness concerning sexuality—quite like the case of Aphrodite's mythological image and representation, and in the case of Eugenia's ballroom dress.

The passage indicates the impossibility—and, at the same time, the infinite number of potential discourses—of language when it comes to (not) speaking of sexuality, which is made even more obvious by the following dialogue between Eugenia and Adamson. Eugenia discovers William looking far away and she supposes that he is thinking of the Amazon as "that [which] is far away" (7). The man responds appropriately—in a highly disguised, but at the same time highly coded language that utilizes not only almost cliché-like Freudian symbols but also metaphors that pervade this text:

> I was thinking of the beauty of everything here—the architecture, and the young ladies in their gauzes and laces. I was looking at this very fine Gothic fan vaulting, which Mr Ruskin says is like the ancient imagination of trees in a forest, overarching, and I was thinking of the palms towering in the jungle, and all the beautiful silky butterflies sailing amongst them, high up and quite out of reach. (7)

In his discourse, William Adamson shifts back to the idea of "beauty" everywhere, which, by way of Aphrodite, is the starting point of the previous passage as well; and whereas he puts emphasis on the architectural beauty of Gothic vaulting and its aesthetic interpretation by Ruskin, the very fact that the comparison used for the Gothic vaulting coincides with the "jungle," the obvious place of sexuality—quite like the Gothic castle in the Gothic novel (including "Morpho Eugenia": in this text, too, sexuality, in its most forbidden, taboo form, that is, incest, takes place under the Gothic vaults)—indicates that whatever he says functions only as a "fan" to cover what he cannot say explicitly—or, in another way, functions as a fan vaulting to maintain the structure of whatever the Gothic mansion stands for.

In the context of the novella, not even the closing part of the passage is as innocent as it looks: the butterflies are related to Adamson and Eugenia in an intricate way. The butterflies flying high up in the jungle are the obvious metaphors for Eugenia's unreachability as she is often identified with butterflies. When Adamson shows her his rare species that he managed to save in the shipwreck, it is not only its name, Morpho Eugenia, that creates identification between the woman and the butterfly, but even Eugenia identifies herself as the female butterfly: she prefers the male, and by way of explanation she adds: "But then I *am* a female, so that is natural" (20); once, she dresses in the colours of Morpho Eugenia (53).

Even the incident most traumatic for Eugenia is caused by moths: the cloud of male Emperor moths that Adamson surprises her with consider her their mate, fly on her—or attack her, as she experiences them. Appropriately, it is this "terrible" (54) incident that brings to the surface one of the Gothic elements of the text (let us not forget that Gothic novelists were first called terrorists): Eugenia breaks down and admits that Captain Hunt's death "wasn't really an accident. That is only what they say. He did it because he didn't—want—to—marry—[her]" (55)—but at this moment Eugenia does not admit yet the real cause of the suicide: her incestuous relationship with her stepbrother.

The intricate link between Adamson, Eugenia and butterflies is made literal in the text: Harald Alabaster has also purchased butterflies from Adamson previously, and Eugenia has made them up into an intricate—and at the same time metaphorical—pattern. As a response to Adamson's comparison of the fan vaulting to the jungle, Eugenia says: "I have made a beautiful display—a kind of quilt, or embroidery almost—out of the earlier specimens you sent my father. I have pinned them out very carefully—they are exquisitely pretty—they give a little effect of a scalloped cushion, only their colours are more subtle than any silks could be" (7).This display is described by the narrator and Harald Alabaster in images and terms that open up the significance of Eugenia's creation in several directions: it can be found in Harald Alabaster's hexagonal-shaped, Gothic study, where "above the cases hung texts, written out with careful penmanship in Gothic script, and bordered with charming designs of fruit, flowers, foliage, birds and butterflies." Harald is aware that "it is not done upon quite scientific principles, but it has the intricacy of a rose window made of living forms" (14-15).

The hexagonal-shaped study in Perpendicular style resembles a chapter house, and obviously leads us back to Adamson's image of the fan vaulting as jungle, an image also invoked by the butterfly arrangement as the rose window; the hexagonal shape functions as another point of departure made explicit in the text as well: the ceiling resembles "a honeycomb of smaller hexagons" (14), that is, the beehive, which is a recurrent metaphor—that of the social insects—to render the society of humans. Both the mythical name of the butterflies and the very fact that Eugenia is a creator—furthermore, a creator out of diverse materials that are close to hand—establish a link to Matty, who keeps emphasizing to Adamson that her "sphere is naturally more limited. [She] look[s] naturally closer to hand" (77)—quite like Eugenia does in her "bounded existence" (29). Both of them have a Gothic script in the centre of their "text," surrounded by visual images from nature, yet transformed into a special design.

Silk also works in a polysemic way in the text. Here it is declared that the silk knots in the embroidery inspire the design of butterflies and green scarabs; at the same time silk and silkiness are associated with Morpho Eugenia, the rare butterfly specimen (one of the species that fly really high up in the trees, which is why they are so difficult to catch, so rare to possess): it is like lavender silk (20). Silk, in turn, is a metaphor for female flesh as well: Eugenia's body is silky, and so is Lady Alabaster's, who is first described as moving "some of her black silk roll of flesh" (3). In this context, it is not even surprising that the two young brides, Eugenia and Rowena, when prepared for their joint wedding are "standing still, cocooned in silk" (60): it obviously suggests their clothing, but beyond that, their metamorphosis into femininity in their "flesh." Moreover, the "cocooned in silk" image creates an implosion of meaning: in the silk cocoon Eugenia *is* a butterfly, and a rare species at that. As another return to an "original" metaphor's tenor and vehicle, the design of butterflies and scarabs—that of "natural" elements—is admittedly made on the analogy of embroidery, more exactly of its silk knots, a most refined part of the embroidery, whereas silk itself is "nature," a natural part of the would-be metamorphosis of a silk worm, a "relative" of the butterfly. Cocooned in silk, therefore, means flesh and death, both the birth and death of the female flesh, at the same time natural and "art(ificial)".

Harald Alabaster's comment that Eugenia's design may not be based on scientific principles opens up yet another aspect of the text: that of multiple perspectives, multiple consciousness or vision. As has been pointed out, William Adamson suffers from double vision: he sees everything both from the perspective of the verdant English fields and the South American jungle at the same time. This doubleness, however, is not his only double vision: as Harald Alabaster's apologetic remark indicates, there are other binaries as well: next to the scientific (which he supposes is the superior one in Adamson's eyes), there is the aesthetic (e.g. Adamson's recurrent vision of nature through the arts) in addition to his incapability of speaking about "his ruling passion, the social insects" [10] in any but human, anthropomorphic terms (and vice versa: his vision of the Gothic mansion, Bredely Hall and its inhabitants is permeated by images of the social insects.[2]

In turn, the insects are anthropomorphized: the worker ants, when deprived of their queen, "become immobile and listless, like young ladies in a decline, then give up their ghost" (37); the Mother Nest of their observed ant community is a series of metaphors in itself: it is "nicknamed irreverently Osborne Nest, for Queen Victoria's summer retreat [...]. There were its satellites or colonies, Elm Tree Bole, Bramble Patch Colony and Stonewall Nest, and [...] The Deserted Village" (78). Further names are taken from the "human" world, which in itself displays a discursive multiplication: some ants are called "Blood-red slave-makers" (79), some other names are taken from literature like Pandemonium, the "city of demons" from Milton's *Paradise Lost* (79), and quite often, when the characters discuss "nature" what comes to their mind (mostly Matty's) is a literary quotation. Even an apparently "natural name" like Elm Tree Bole is less "natural" than it looks: the name is not taken from nature as such, but is "a reference to Robert Browning's poem 'Home Thoughts from Abroad' describing the expatriate nostalgia for an English spring" (78). In this discursive context, it is not even surprising that the "battle" fought between the wood ants and red ants is—and can only be—described in terms of human military history (raiders, defenders, capturing slaves, etc. [e.g. 38, 95]).

The anthropomorphic descriptions of the battles between the ants, at the same time, are often the points of departure for the shift back to human society, and for contemplating on its working mechanisms. Another ironical indication of the mutual reversibility of names (metaphors) is that the ant-queen's personal space is rendered in human terms: "the brood-chamber" (39), whereas the personal space of the human "ant-queen," Lady Alabaster, is called a "a *nest* of cushions, all embroidered with flowers and fruit and blue butterflies and scarlet birds, in cross-stitch on wool, in silk thread on satin" (26; emphasis added). It is a further switch in this swapping of names that not even the "nest" does originally belong to ants: it is transmitted metaphorically from the life of birds, so the passage describing Lady Alabaster's room is implicated in the transfiguration of "the natural" in numerous other ways: from the production of various kinds of cloth to human (aesthetic) representation of "nature."

As a further split, or double vision, William makes a clear distinction between how he sees the world and its phenomena *spontaneously*, as a result of which he "feel[s] instinctively drawn to agree" with Harald Alabaster's anti-Darwinist—and highly theological, and teleological—argument, whereas, "from the *scientific* viewpoint" (19; emphasis added) he can but disagree with him. A similar split—and the irreconcilability of perspectives, without attributing any exclusive right of "truth" to either or any of them—is exemplified in the following passage: "William found himself at once *detached anthropologist* and *fairy tale prince trapped* by invisible gates and silken bonds in an enchanted castle" (21; emphases added)—and, as an enchanted prince, he is oppositionally related to the "dragons": Edgar and Harald Alabaster. The narratives, images, metaphors and perspectives of the anthropologist's report and those of the fairy tale are supposed to exclude each other—in the same way as his South American memories and life in England. Yet, as a result of his "double consciousness," these

memories keep coming to the surface at the most inopportune moments, e.g. during his "very bucolic wedding" (64), when

> [i]rrelevant analogies poked their way through the curtains of his eye, even at the most sacred moments, so that, as he stood beside Robin Swinnerton, under the booming organ of the parish church of St Zachariah, and watched Eugenia and Rowena advancing along the aisle on the arms of Edgar and Lionel, he thought of the religious festivals at Pará and Barra, the puppet-images of the Virgin, decorated in laces and silk floss and silver ribbons, smiling perpetually on their way to the church, and beyond that to the dances in Indian villages, where he was dwarfed by masked beings with the heads of owls, or ibises, or anacondas. (63-64)

The structure of this sentence, with its embedded modal-temporal subclause describing the wedding, and its smooth transition into various cultural layers of the Amazonian experiences, corresponds to the ambiguity of exclusiveness and parallelism between "South America" and "England": whereas the images of irreverent dances seem in genuine opposition with the bucolic "English" wedding, the image of the Virgin functions as an intermediary that connects the two cultures not only by the apparently shared rituals, but also by establishing clear links between the Virgin in silk and silver and the (virgin?) brides in silk and silver. In the same way as the South American procession points towards other dances and rituals, so do the wedding ceremony and feast point towards the wedding night, and, in Eugenia's case, towards her forbidden and hidden sexuality: the only difference between the South American and English rituals lies in their explicitness, in the degree of veiling and/or revealing instincts and sexuality.

Textual Metamorphoses

Yet—or for this very reason of veiling and revealing at the same time—all these binaries and double visions can coexist parallel with each other. Furthermore, one of the main features that this text seems to suggest is that although "analogy is a slippery tool" (100), this is the only way how language can function: by carrying one concept into another, by transfiguration, by metamorphosis—this process of language is inevitable, what is more, as Harald Alabaster remarks, "[t]ransfiguration is not a bad thing. Butterflies come out of the most unpromising crawling things" (49). Transmission of meaning (including its most obvious trope: metaphor) is a crucial aspect of the linguistic, discursive system: it does not come as a surprise, then, that when Adamson sets out on his task to arrange Harald Alabaster's infinite piles of natural collection, he is totally paralyzed. He is supposed to make order, to label, to impose names, and thus meaning; yet he fails to "devise an organising principle, but went on doggedly making labels, setting up, examining" (25).

This task, which finally turns out to be impossible, can be compared to what Casaubon and Lydgate set out to do in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*: both of them want to find an ultimate and all-encompassing organizing principle—Casaubon for all the mythologies, whereas Lydgate wants to find the arch tissue to all kinds of tissues. They are doomed to fail, and the reason is the same: what they want to project on phenomena is a univoiced discourse, a single vision that would claim absolute priority for itself, at the expense of the exclusion of all others. William Adamson also sets out on this road, but only half-heartedly: as opposed to Casaubon's obsession, all through the text his multivocality is emphasized, and made explicit by the metaphorical transmissions of meaning. Whereas Harald Alabaster instructs him to make sense—to carry out a hermeneutic process—by creating an all—encompassing, univocal order, the text, by its recurring linguistic metamorphoses, goes against this instruction, and rather "proves" the impossibility of such an attempt.

What he manages to do, instead, is writing his book on the "ant city," based on the observations he, Matty, Miss Mead and all the younger Alabaster girls carry out, sometimes with the help of Amy and a stable boy. Its title—and all the details of the text (108-09)—perfectly fit in the anthropomorphizing metaphorical structure of Byatt's text: "THE SWARMING CITY—*A Natural History of a Woodland Society, its policy, its economy, its arms and defences, its origin, expansion and decline*" (108). Matty even makes the comment: "Do you not think you may have been anthropomorphic in your choice of rhetoric?" (104). Adamson's response makes it clear that it was a conscious decision of his: "I thought that was our intention, in this History. To appeal to a wide audience, by telling truths—scientific truths—with a note of the fabulous" (104). The text at this point loses its univocal quality: as a result of the anthropomorphic metaphors, it turns into a double-voiced discourse.

Adamson's final book, however, is more complex from the perspective of discourse, and for several reasons. First, it is not even written by Adamson exclusively: Matty adds details both of the process of observation and how the children participated in it, and of how the ants responded to the human beings' interference. Matty's presence is so pervasive in the text that William cannot even use a first-person singular narrator for telling the history: he "used a narrative voice that was a kind of royal, or scientific We, to include both of them, or either of them, at given points in time" (108). Secondly, apart from writing some of the text, Matty is also the illustrator of "William's" book: he agrees with this idea of Matty's as illustrations "might add greatly to the human interest" (95). Thirdly, the text can be considered as heterogeneous discourse because it is interspersed with relevant literary quotes that are Matty's contributions; and, fourth, it is heteroglossic because in spite of William's attempt to make a linear narrative of the ant city, it cannot contain everything: the historical narrative of the ants is followed by "some more abstract, questioning chapters. He debated with himself on various possible headings. Instinct or Intelligence; Design or Hasard; The Individual and the

Commonwealth; What is an Individual? These were questions that troubled him, personally" (109).

The complexity of William's "scientific" text, therefore, partly derives from its metaphoricity, partly from heteroglossia—features that are not supposed to be attributes of scientific discourse. Yet as Beer points out, in the very age when Byatt's novella takes place, that is, the mid-nineteenth century, "instead of ignoring or rebutting attempts to set scientific writing and literature side by side, [...] both novelists and scientists were very much aware of the potentialities released by the congruities of their methods and ends" (91). Beer draws this parallel between Darwin and some major Victorian novelists like George Eliot and Thomas Hardy, but her claim is applicable to Byatt's fictive "scientist," William Adamson, and fictive "novelist," Matty Crompton as well. Apparently they write two different kinds of text, two different kinds of discourse: one science, the other fiction, yet even at the level of intentions we can discover a continuity, and the classification of these texts depends on the *proportion* of "truth" and the "fable," (as William wants "to appeal to a wide audience, by telling truths—scientific truths—with a note of the fabulous" [104], whereas Matty wants to "writ[e] some *real* fables of [her] own" [104]), or, "an instructive fable around these strange beasts" (119).

Nevertheless, the two texts greatly differ from each other in their consciousness of how language works. If there is any self-conscious creator or narrator in "Morpho Eugenia," it is not the narrator of the text, but Matty—or, by that stage, Matilda Crompton—and Mistress Mouffet, a fairy in her tale, who can be read as her textual alter ego: at one point, William sees Matty as a good Fairy, waving her wand (156). William also admits some of his reservations concerning language and the hermeneutic process of interpretation. Typically, he takes his two examples from the two major areas of his double vision, South America and the ants: he refers to the example of "the universal incapacity of the Amazon Indians to imagine a community which did not reside on the banks of a vast river. They are not capable of asking, 'Do you live near a river?' but only 'What is your river like?'" (117). In his book, in turn, he raises the question of scientific interpretation, and tells the story that a scientist "claimed to have observed ants at play like ancient Greeks." On closer observation this activity turns out to be "war in earnest" (115), and he articulates doubts concerning his own comprehensive vision and perception: "And it led me to wonder what do *I* not reflect upon, of what important facts am *I* ignorant in my picture of the world?" (117). In this way, compared to Harald Alabaster's instruction ("'Set it all in order, don't you know? Make sense of it, lay it all out in some order or other'" [25]), William's concept of language as all-encompassing "order" that can neatly and unambiguously accommodate everything is more ambiguous; still, it is Matty's text that carries the potential multivocality of language, and draws its hermeneutic conclusions.

Both when handing over the manuscript to William to read, and on receiving it, Matty apologizes that she "got rather carried away" (119, 141), and while reading the fable, William is

> much surprised by Miss Crompton's flight of imagination. It made him uneasy, in ways he could not quite analyse, and at the same time his own imagination could not quite see her *writing* this story. She had always seemed dry, and this tale, however playful, was throbbing with some sort of emotion. (140)

Undoubtedly, William is surprised at what he sees as Matty's metamorphosis (perhaps from an "unpromising crawling thing" into a butterfly), which may actually rather be the result of his own previous misrecognition of who Matty might be. This feeling of surprise is supported by the title of Matty's fable, "Things Are Not What They Seem" (119), which can be read as Matty's camouflage, or transformation, but also refers to Matty's text, in which she indeed *is* carried away—but not really by her emotions and imagination. Rather, she is carried away by the "carriers" in language, primarily by metaphors. Matty's fairy tale is based on the idea, suggested by "poor mad John Clare" and by "Milton's Pandemonium-beehive," that our image of "the fairies may be only an anthropomorphising of insects" (104). Her tale abounds in insects/fairies and in their constant metamorphosis that is carried out by their metaphorical names, which destabilize their "meaning" and identity. Very often what the names suggest does not bear the slightest resemblance to those creatures; instead, the names, which, as Mistress Mouffet says, "are a way of weaving the world together" (132), open up links to other discursive fields by the dissimilar aspects of the metaphors.

As Matty explains, the logic of her text is informed by etymology: she "began to look up the etymologies—and found it was all running away from [her. . . . She] was dragged along willy-nilly—by the *language*. [… Her] *Hermes* was Linnaeus" (141), whose naming in Matty's view added "mystery" and "fairy glamour" to the creatures (118). William is fully aware of the consequences of this process. When recalling how Linnaeus "bound the New World […] to the imagination of the Old" (118) by giving Greek mythical names to creatures in the Americas, he says,

> The imagination of the scientist had colonised the untrodden jungle before I got there. There is something wonderful in *naming* a species. To bring a thing that is wild, and rare, and hitherto unobserved under the net of human observation and human language—[…] of our inherited myths and tales and characters.' (118)

William, however, does not make use of the potentials of the "net of language": his narrative does not go beyond the anthropomorphization of the insects. Matty, on the other hand, allows herself,—what is more, is even willing—to be carried away by the chain of signifiers that etymology offers, so that by the end "things are not what they seem"; they undergo a metamorphosis carried out by metaphors.

Thus Linnaeus, as Matty's *Hermes*, initiates a genuine hermeneutic process of "making sense" of the world (which is what Harald Alabaster orders William to do as

well), but instead of creating an all-encompassing univocal universe, Matty's text often establishes incongruent sets of meaning and their associations: another moth is called Sphinx Deilephila Elpenor, "an elephant and a swine and a lover of twilight and a desert monster all at once" (134). In this way, Matty's text, in spite of its intention to be an "instructive fable," can only lead into "thickening mystery, like the riddle of the Sphinx" (141)—which is the "mystery" of language, of metaphors, of metamorphosis and semiotic transfiguration in an endless chain.

For this reason, Matty's text can be considered as the *mise-en-abyme* of Byatt's text—even if I maintain my claim that Byatt's text, and particularly the frame story of Bredely Hall can be characterized by an "innocent" use of language and representation which makes the text a Victorian pastiche. Indeed, the frame story seems to utilize the inevitable metaphoric potentials of language in a way that almost looks "natural": what makes the reader suspicious is the overabundance of trite, cliché-like metaphors. William's text, in this respect, together with Matty's dry, sometimes even ironic comments on its anthropomorphizing metaphors, can be interpreted as a middle stage concerning the consciousness of how much metaphors pervade language; whereas Matty's embedded tale is indeed an "instructive fable," but primarily not in the sense of presenting scientific knowledge in the form of an animal fable. The main interest of her story lies—at least for a literary critic—in its self-consciousness of how language and metaphors function, in its obvious self-reflexivity in the light of which the reader starts reinterpreting the metaphoric use of language not only in her embedded fable, but expands this approach and consciousness upon the other elements and layers of what—as a result of this investigation—turns out to be a postmodern Victorian pastiche. Until finally, instead of seeing the element of similarity in metaphors, one tends to agree with William that "[a]nalogy is a slippery tool" (100).

Transfiguration of Metaphors in Angels and Insects
Transference and Adaptation

The metaphoric quality of the text (which perhaps rather functions as the deconstruction of metaphor as a trope of association based on similarity), together with Byatt's claim in the interview that her first idea for the novella originates in a visual image, what is more, in the idea of "a really good *film* which compare[s] the ant heap to a Victorian mansion" ("Interview"—emphasis added), raises the question of whether the novella she finally wrote is transferable or not as smoothly on the screen as her interview would suggest. Formulated in another way, one can ask the question of how the text and the film relate to each other, if the film can preserve the metaphoricity of the text or not, and if not, how the film functions, and what it is about.

There might arise certain doubts about the transferability of a metaphoric text to screen, particularly if the metaphoricity is so self-consciously about the infinitely shifting quality of the linguistic sign, as we have seen in "Morpho Eugenia," even if the writer of the text claims that her inspiration was a visual, and at the same time metaphorical

image. In his monograph on modernism, David Lodge categorizes the modes of modern writing, but he also includes some visual arts. In his typology, film—aligned with prose, epic, realism and cubism—is located on the metonymic pole (81). Similarly to him, Brian McFarlane states that "film first established itself as a pre-eminently narrative medium" (3), though he also calls our attention to the paradox that the great modernist novels (which, one could add, are found on Lodge's metaphorical pole) have been highly influenced by "techniques of Eisensteinian montage cinema," which "draws attention to its encoding process in ways that the Victorian novel tends not to" (5). As a further paradox, though, "the modern novel has not shown itself very adaptable to film. However persuasively it may be demonstrated that the likes of Joyce, Faulkner, and Hemingway have drawn on cinematic techniques, the fact is that the cinema has been more at home with novels from—or descended from—an earlier period" (6).

Put in another way, the transfiguration of the metaphorical and the self-reflexive between literary and cinematic texts is primarily a one-way process; thus, the question may be asked once again: if Byatt's text originates in a visual, furthermore, cinematic but at the same time metaphorical image, can it find its way "back" to the language of the cinema? Will (can) the filmic text be driven by the story and the metaphor in the same way as we have seen it in the case of the literary text? When asking these questions, my intention is far from requiring fidelity to the literary text in the way that I would want to see my own mental images of the literary text in the film adaptation. Instead, along McFarlane's lines, I am making an attempt at considering "adaptation as an example of convergence among the arts," as an instance of intertextuality with "the original novel as a 'resource'" (10), and I will apply his notions to Haas's cinematic text.

McFarlane makes a crucial difference between transfer(ability) and adaptation (adaptability) of a literary text to film. In his terms, "'transfer' denote[s] the process whereby certain narrative elements of novels are revealed as amenable to display in film, whereas the widely used term 'adaptation' [...] refer[s] to the processes by which other novelistic elements must find quite different equivalences in the film medium, when such equivalences are sought or are available at all" (13). What needs clarifying at this point is which elements of the literary text count as "amenable," and which ones need "adaptation" in this narrower sense of the word. In his categorization, McFarlane uses Roland Barthes's structural analysis of narratives, which distinguishes between distributional functions (or, in another phrase, functions proper) and integrational functions (or indices). Functions proper include cardinal functions, which are the linch-pins of narrative, and catalyzers, that is "small actions" which "root the cardinal functions in a particular kind of reality," and "account for the moment-to-moment minutiae of narrative" (13-14). In McFarlane's view, these functions, "in the sense that they denote aspects of story content (actions and happenings) which may be displayed verbally or audio-visually, [...] are directly transferable from one medium to the other" (14).

Barthes's integrational functions are more problematic from the perspective of transferability. They are subdivided into indices proper and informants, and in

McFarlane's view it is rather the informants ("pure data with immediate signification" like names, ages, professions of characters, etc.) that are amenable to transfer from literature to film, whereas "indices proper," which are related to character and atmosphere, are more diffuse, and need adaptation (14). Further questions are raised by various kinds of narration, including omniscient narration (as in Byatt's text), which raises the problem of whether the camera can be considered as the narrator of the film narrative, if the camera can take over all the functions of textual omniscient narration. I can but agree with him when he claims that

> [c]learly, certain functions of the narrating prose, such as establishing setting and physical appearance of the characters, can be achieved through the film's mise-en-scène. Other functions, such as those which enable us, through the writer's tone, to evaluate a character's speech, seem less immediately amenable to the camera's eye. The camera in this sense becomes the narrator by, for instance, focusing on such aspects of mise-en-scène as the way actors look, move, gesture, or are costumed, or on the ways in which they are positioned in a scene or how they are photographed: in these ways the camera may catch a 'truth' which comments on and qualifies what the characters actually say. (17)

McFarlane, however, uses not only Barthes's set of terms, but also Émile Benveniste's categories of "enunciated" and "enunciation," particularly their application to film by David Bordwell. In this sense, the "utterance [...] as a coherent set of events enacted in a series of syntagmatic units, as the sum of its narrative functions" (20), is enunciated as opposed to which "enunciation [...] characterizes the process that creates, releases, shapes [...] the 'utterance'. Enunciation, that is, refers to the ways in which the utterance is mediated" (20). In the light of this distinction, McFarlane reminds us that essentially, it is narrative that is transferable from one medium to another, as narrative is "not tied to one or other semiotic system," whereas enunciation "involve[s] intricate processes of adaptation because [its] effects are closely tied to the semiotic system" (20).

It is in *this* terminological framework that I wish to analyze the transfiguration of Byatt's literary text "Morpho Eugenia" into Philip Haas's filmic text *Angels and Insects*. As pointed out above, various elements of narratives are amenable to film adaptation in various degrees, so simply by considering the basic features of Byatt's text, one can assume that its strong narrative—the aspect that can be called the Victorian pastiche—can easily find its way to film, primarily considered as a metonymical and narrative medium. The transferable aspects may also include some of the indices: the informants by all means, but even some indices proper, particularly because Haas's film was made in 1995, when the heritage film as a genre had already been established, and created a set of cinematic tools that the audience had learnt to read as "heritage" or "country house" atmosphere.

Considering Byatt's text as discussed above, however, I can assume the opposite as well: that some other aspects of the text do not lend themselves so easily to adaptation. Both the text's metaphoricity and its self-reflexive qualities, which are primarily present in Matty's text and in her comments on her own and on William's text (sometimes articulated by William as well), are less easily and directly transferable into film: what they need is adaptation proper—if they are (can be) adapted at all. I can even make a general assumption that Byatt as a "postmodern Victorian" is ambiguously transferable onto screen: its Victorianness directly, whereas its (post)modern features after necessary adaptation; however in the film version several of these features are simply eliminated.

The Plot: Additions and Omissions

As one can expect, Haas's film follows the narrative of Byatt's text quite closely. It not only naturally preserves its chronology and linearity in the cardinal functions, but even in the catalyzers as well: this is why I could provide a joint plot summary for both texts. There is hardly any change in chronology, or in the sequence of events and situations. Because of the length of the text, however, certain changes—primarily omissions and condensations—are needed even at the plot level, but due to the text's descriptive and contemplative quality, certain additions and what I call transpositions have also been made.

The omissions, in my opinion, are quite consistent and contribute to creating an even sharper conflict between William and Edgar Alabaster than in Byatt's text. The first change is striking: whereas in the text the ball takes place in an ordinary way, without any turbulent interruption, the ball scene of the film brings to the surface potential conflicts and reveals Edgar's perhaps more than ordinary investment in Eugenia. In the novella, there is a "cut" in the text after Eugenia says she does not like suspense and William promises never to surprise her; they conclude the dialogue with William's "feel[ing] privileged to be allowed to be a temporary part of the family," to which Eugenia's response is that she loves her family, they are happy together, and very fortunate (8). In the film, however, at the word "surprise" Eugenia runs out of the room almost in tears, whereat Edgar runs at William furiously, since he supposes that William has "done" something to Eugenia, and claims his right over her saying: "I am her brother, and thereby her protector." Significantly, this open conflict takes place in the opening scene of the film, whereas in the text the first open conflict between them takes place in the evening before the wedding—up until this point in the novella William has only a vague suspicion that Edgar does not like him (25).

The film reinforces this open conflict between Edgar and William with some additions: after Harald Alabaster employs William to sort out his collection, Edgar enters William's study and "catechizes" him, saying "just don't get too comfortable: you're not one of us," and even makes an ambiguous hint (disguised as if merely humorous) that his father saved William from the poorhouse, so organizing his endless collection

may last for a lifetime, which is convenient insofar as William has nowhere to go. This scene is entirely missing from the novella, as is the one on the night of the wedding. On the way to his new bedroom, William is stopped by Edgar, who, as if offering some reconciliation, says "we are both men of the outdoors. That's an *interest* we share," to which William responds optimistically that he hopes in time they will find some other common *interests* as well. His comment creates dramatic irony for two reasons: obviously because of Edgar and Eugenia's incestuous relationship, yet partly because of Amy. When William wants to save Amy from Edgar, and later on, when Amy is found pregnant and sent off to a workhouse and William requires some compensation for her, Edgar cynically provokes him, saying he did not know William had an *interest* in the girl. In the text, what we have instead of this innocent-looking, but in its effect complex dialogue between Edgar and William on the wedding night is Harald Alabaster's conventional but goodwilling "God bless you, my boy" (65).

The other addition that increases the conflict between Edgar and William takes place during family dinner (of which there are two in the film, whereas none in the text). Edgar starts telling a story about his pure-bred Arab horses, and provokes William's response by making a double-edged remark: "There's no substitute for pure blood, Robert. Keep the breeds separate, and you can't go far wrong. That is the cardinal rule. God made creatures distinct. It is our job to keep them that way." This remark provokes not only William to Darwinist arguments, but even Harald Alabaster to act as a true Victorian patriarch, and to stop Edgar by saying, "Think, Edgar, before you speak." Edgar's provocative comment has a context beyond this scene, and establishes a link with his ongoing argument about William as "underbred," "bad blood," "vulgar blood"—a directly provocative comment he makes before the wedding. This is the only open conflict between the two men in Byatt's text (62), and it is an aspect of the text that the film multiplies by introducing four more scenes that enhance this effect.

The most radical change in the plot is the death of Lady Alabaster, and no matter how marginal her role looks in the plot (she is an apparently silent presence all through and does not initiate anything), she is obviously the centre of the family, as a queen of the bees or ants should be, and this is how both discursively and iconographically she is represented in both texts: surrounded by numerous servants who keep bringing her food and drink; she is perfectly immobile (she is never seen walking, only sitting or lying, but always eating and drinking). Yet the film makes her function clear: she is needed as long as she can produce children. Her fertility over, she has to give way to the following queen, in this case to Eugenia. This take-over is gradual, represented by Eugenia's entrance into her mother's spaces. First, both of them are lying on the lawn, Eugenia in her first pregnancy: at this point they are distinguishable, whereas when Eugenia is being fed on the lawn the next time, at first sight she is indistinguishable from her mother. In her third pregnancy, her mother is no longer on the lawn: she is dying inside her room; the camera moves directly from Eugenia outside to her mother inside just to capture her death. It is only upon her death that Eugenia enters her room, symbolically taking it over, so that in the last scene, when William announces

to her his decision of leaving her and Bredely Hall, she is sitting in her mother's room (which she has rearranged according to her own convenience) on her mother's sofa like an ant queen, in her black dress of mourning. In this way, although the mother's death as an addition to the text appears a major change in the plot, its real significance—because of the mother's non—participation in the conflicts that move the story along—can much more be considered an adaptation of certain indices proper in the text, and the adaptation of the text's enunciation: the adaptation of those aspects that, via her fertility, render Eugenia in terms of the queen.

The addition of one more scene reinforces the potential tension and rivalry between the women: the two married daughters and their husbands play cards in the evening, and Rowena would like to go on cuddling Eugenia's twins, but they have to be taken away to be fed, so the childless Rowena, deprived of the babies, breaks down, and runs out of the room. Eugenia, who is pregnant again in this scene, is contrasted in her fertile sexuality with the sterility of Rowena and Robert Swinnerton's marriage—and, thus, in the metaphorical context, with Rowena's absolute uselessness: Rowena can neither be a queen, nor a useful sexless female. The scene, at the same time, provides the opportunity for Robert Swinnerton, Rowena's husband to make a comment that in the text is made by the narrator: how blessed William and Eugenia are in their marital happiness with children, a comment which is an honest, genuine comment at that moment, but gains ironical overtones when it turns out that the incestuous relationship makes rather doubtful not only their marriage and happiness, but even *their* children.

The other family dinner is not less tense, and ends up in a woman's running out again: the argument concerns "nature" once more. That Eugenia is seriously wounded psychologically is indicated in the film in another family dinner scene which I will call "transposition." A conversation between Harald and William in which in the text only the two of them participate is shifted over to a family dinner. In both texts, Harald raises the question of Design in Creation, to which William responds with his Darwinian arguments. In the novella, he keeps enumerating his points, including the example of the butterflies in whose case it is the males which are brilliantly coloured, whereas the females are drab and unobtrusive. Whereas in the text he carries on giving the possible reason for this (19), in the film it is "clever Matty" who discovers that the drabness of the female may be protective coloration. At this moment, Matty is wearing—as usual—a brown-drab dress, the colour of a female butterfly or a moth. Eugenia—as usual—is wearing a rather colourful dress, in this case pink. Hearing Matty's point, she tumbles a glass of red wine into her lap, and runs out of the room. This is another running out that has no trace in the text; the implications, however, provide a contrast between Matty, who is partly the sexless female ant, partly the female butterfly with the protective drab coloration, and Eugenia, who flaunts her colours, making her vulnerable--not in the way that butterflies are vulnerable but as human females are vulnerable in their sexuality or sexual appeal (of which the red wine in her lap is a more than obvious symbol). This scene, together with its *mise-en-scène*, the family dinner,

contributes both to the dramatic tension and the atmosphere of the film, since it replaces a relatively static and far less picturesque dialogue between the two men in Harald Alabaster's study.

In this way the change in the first scene, the addition of five others, and the transposition of a dialogue between two men to a family dinner strengthen one aspect of the plot: the dramatic tension partly between the two men, their more or less admitted rivalry over the woman (or women), even though William is utterly unconscious of it till the end. These partially bring to the surface the hidden tensions and differences (related to their sexuality) between the women: Eugenia and Rowena, Eugenia and Matty, and Eugenia and Lady Alabaster. Put in another way, whereas they can be defined as catalyzers in the plot (certainly none of them change the basic story), they primarily contribute to the effects that rather belong to indices proper: to character and atmosphere.

The other changes in the plot that indirectly contribute to the more dramatic script of the film are the omissions, which point in the same direction as the additions: into creating a more dramatic plot, with obvious and hidden tensions. The omissions and reductions pertain primarily to what may be called the subplot: William, Matty, Miss Mead and the children observing the ants, William having scientific-theological arguments with Harald, William writing his book and Matty hers. The observations are present in the film to a certain extent, but their significance is greatly decreased by the fact that the participants hardly discuss their findings with each other: except for naming the Red Fort, the observations are accompanied by music only, and visually either function as images of "television naturalism" (something Byatt visualized as well before writing the text), or as picturesque *mise-en-scènes* that start off with a panoramic view of the landscape, with the members of the observing team scattered on the lawn or riverbank in colourful dresses, and then zoom in on what they are observing. The picturesque panorama of a bucolic English landscape undoubtedly contributes to the atmosphere and general appeal of the film as a heritage film—but as the observations are presented in this way, several aspects are lost, including their enunciation, their anthropomorphic-metaphoric features, and the development of the two emerging writers: Matty and William.[3]

Several elements that make the text heteroglossic are also omitted from the film. Apart from William's and Matty's embedded texts, there are other "manuscripts" in Byatt's "Morpho Eugenia." One can see the point in not including Harald's manuscript and more details of his conversations with William in which he argues for the Design in Creation in an ambiguous way that partly accepts Darwin, partly rejects him. Further embedded texts are Miss Mead telling the story of Cupid and Psyche, some parts not only of William's book, but of his diary as well, and, what to me is the most significant omission: the full text of Matty's fairy tale (twenty pages out of 160). All these texts counterbalance the love-rivalry plot in Byatt's novella, and, as I argue above, create a multivocality that is almost totally lost in the film, whereas at least some of these could have been adaptable to film: if there is any *visual* material apart

from the aristocratic mansion and the picturesque landscape in the novella, it is Matty's fairy tale. The utter omission is all the more surprising as excerpts from William's text can be found in the film, with William's voice-over—the utter deletion of Matty's imaginative fairy tale, particularly as it is the text's *mise-en-abyme* (in my view at least) is a great loss compared with the complexity of the text.

The other major deletion in comparison with the text is the lack of William's double—or even multiple—vision. The film opens with an ingenious series of shots: tribal music is accompanied by certain brownish visual effects that at first are hardly recognisable; then—as if coming to consciousness—the details become more and more recognisable: half-naked human bodies dancing, then as a new element, dancing around William Adamson, who feels a bit uneasy in the situation. In the meantime, *Angels*, the caption of the first word of the title, swims through the screen; then, after a hardly noticeable transition, we can see the Alabasters' ballroom, where the young ladies are dancing in surprisingly brightly coloured dresses—and *Insects*, the second part of the title, swims across the screen. This ironic contrast between the words in the title and the images provides the only scene in the film when William's double vision is present in the film: at no other time does Pará Manáos feature in the film. This omission, on the basis of the interpretation of the text above, grossly alters the potential interpretation of the *film*: apart from this moment, when the tribal women can be read as angels, and the Victorian young ladies as insects indeed, which is also a moment of identification between the jungle dance and the ballroom dance, in the film—in this *visual* medium—there is no other indication of this double *vision* of William's that so emphatically permeates Byatt's text.

At this point, one can seriously raise the question concerning the visual solutions of this film. True, film is considered a pre-eminently narrative medium. Yet, via editing, film is one of the most flexible of media, capable of creating parallel worlds through the oscillation of visions. It is a critical cliché that modernist fiction has taken various devices from film (flash-back, camera eye, etc.) which lead to the disruption of temporal and causal linearity and spatial contiguity of realist fiction—and of film. Taken to an extreme, such cinematic solutions may look mannered, but *Angels and Insects* could have accommodated more shots like the opening one that ingeniously presents William's "double vision," Thereby creating a cinematic text that would have been not only more "faithful" to its literary source, but could also have been more exciting.

Angels as Insects

There is one aspect of the adaptation that deserves appreciation: how at least one aspect of the metaphoric quality of enunciation is carried over into the texture of the film via the almost shockingly colourful dresses and head-dresses of the young women. Most of the dresses in the film imitate the flaunting colours of the bees or butterflies/moths: at the end, by association, the clothes of mourning resemble the

ants. In the opening shots mentioned above, the scene in the jungle imperceptibly flows over into the ballroom scene, but apart from dancing itself one more element is preserved: the design of Eugenia's dress is first noticeable in the jungle scene. On the other hand, the design and the colour of the dresses (at one point, on the riverbank, Eugenia is dressed as if in a wasp-costume made for a masquerade), clearly evoke the parallel imagery of the life of the insects, which in the film is reinforced by displaying the internal life of the anthill, and by the other ingenious visual solution of the representation of servant life in Bredely Hall. The servants are always in black and white, they "scurry" faceless along the corridors: they even turn their faces away when they meet someone; the corridors look like an endless maze (like an anthill), and the servants hurry up and down the corridors, but in an extremely organized way (as e.g. during the preparations for the wedding)—as if one body indeed, with the spirit of the nest as the basic mode of their existence, is formulated in Byatt's text.

This visual solution is undeniably successful in evoking the metaphors of the discourse—or enunciation—in Byatt's text, and it must be emphasized that the novella does *not* offer this as an easy solution: there, the young ladies wear dresses with quite conventional colours and designs, whereas here, dresses overtake the function of the highly metaphorized language. No matter how successful this solution is, the other aspect of the metaphorical metamorphosis is missing: whereas the viewer can obviously start thinking of human life in terms of insect life, the transfiguration does not function the other way round, due to the relative lack of those parts in which the insects are anthropomorphized (the most significant scene of that kind is when William reads out his description of the life of the drones, and Matty makes the acidly ironic comment that never before has she seen the life of poor drones in such a light).

Similarly lacking are several, to my mind at least adaptable but even transferable features of Byatt's text. One starts wondering why the so central butterfly quilt created by Eugenia on the pattern of silk embroidery, the details of Gothic architecture and their correlation with the jungle could not find their way into the film. Surprisingly, not a single shot presents details of Gothic architecture: the film only provides panoramic views of Bredely Hall and close-ups of human faces inside the buildings, and as a result, no metaphorical transmission of meaning is possible between the Perpendicular fan vaulting and the jungle, or the hexagonal honeycomb and the rose window. These two kinds of absence are all the more surprising since both could have contributed to the general effect of Victorianness and decorativity that the film otherwise creates (perhaps intends to create); furthermore, they could have contributed to the very multiplicity of vision which the narrator formulates in the text when William releases the cloud of butterflies for Eugenia in the hothouse:

> The vegetation belonged to no place on this planet, and in some sense to all. *English* primroses and bluebells, daffodils and crocus shone amongst the evergreen luxuriant *tropical* creepers [...]. *She* turned round and round, and the *butterflies* circled [...]. He thought he would always remember her

> like this, whatever happened to her, to him, to them, in this glittering *palace where his two worlds met.* (51; all emphases added)

The multivalency of this sentence is never produced in the film, and so due to the one-direction insect metaphors, the lack of William's double (or even multiple) consciousness and to the lack of mythological-literary references, quotations and allusions, most of the metaphorical multiplicity is lost.

At the same time, with all these functions that seem to be missing when compared with the text, the film establishes a powerful and impressive visuality, which enhances the effect of the plot which, as we have seen, has become more dramatized due to the additions and omissions. Even apparently minor details contribute to a consistent visuality, and thus to the atmosphere and enunciation of the film as heritage film. Several of these concern colours and women's dresses, and can be read as adaptation proper. The surprisingly bright colours and rich head-dresses made of fruit that have a tropical effect are adaptation proper: they function to bring together the English, the tropical and the insect imagery—with an inevitable touch of the imperial and the colonial as well. A similarly effective tool is how Matty's dress changes in the film. In the text she has a very meagre wardrobe, just one or two skirts and blouses, all of them very practical, very closed, very "sexless" as William sees her. In the film, Matty's clothes play a significant role as well: it is only at the beginning that she wears unrecognizable clothes buttoned up to her chin. At one of the family dinners, although she wears "moth-brown," the design and the sleeves of her dress also evoke butterfly imagery (like the bottom of Eugenia's silvery dress when she goes to the conservatory in the evening to see the release of the moths).

Further alterations can also be recognized: when Matty is making drawings of the insects, not only her dress and hat (which she wears at no other time in the film) but also her positioning, the *mise-en-scène*, turns her into the image of a painter (turned into a painting herself)—practically the only remnant of the *Künstlerroman* aspect of Byatt's text. Her midway-status to a fully developed "butterfly" is signified in the charade, where she preserves her dark brown dress, but assumes brightly coloured, striped wings and head-dress. And, finally, in the film it is her dress that signals her ultimate metamorphosis into a fully sexual female (moth), but preserves her "protective drab coloration": whereas in the novella she is "still in her day clothes, which consisted of a long black skirt, and a grey poplin shirt" (154), even in the night scene, when she calls William into her own room, in the film she is wearing a shimmering brown dress (an adjective that in the text characterizes Eugenia's dresses only) with a floating silk scarf around her shoulders.

Bright red patches tend to indicate, in turn, the gradual revelation of Edgar's transgressive sexuality, and all those who are affected by, and implicated in it. First, it is Amy who wears a bright red cloak as the observer of the ant heap—the only occasion when a servant is dressed in anything but black and white —, then Eugenia and Edgar ride out in the same bright red jackets, and finally, on the day when the incest is

revealed to William, all the hunters, William included, wear the same riding jacket. This image on the one hand is the most common image we have of English hunting, yet, together with the other two images, and with William wearing the red jacket in Eugenia's room when the brother and sister are caught in the act, these red patches on the screen create a very strong visual impact that thematically establishes a link between Edgar, Eugenia, Amy and William, and their intricate connection via Edgar's sexual transgressions. The film would certainly require and deserve a more detailed analysis in terms of these visual affects; nevertheless, the above examples may indicate how, on the one hand, they can be read as adaptations of directly untransferrable elements to screen, and how, on the other hand, they establish an idiosyncretic system of signs in this cinematic text.

A Cinematic Dialogue

The visual effects of the film, including not only the symbolic ones but also the setting (Bredely Hall, the aristocratic mansion in Surrey, the surrounding hills, dales, forest and lawn, and the typical panoramic shots of the film), altogether create another obvious intertextual link for the film (apart from Byatt's text): *Angels and Insects* is undeniably a heritage film. This genre emerged in the 1980s, and gained instant international success (Street 102). Sarah Street's concise common-sense definition calls "quality historical films" heritage films (103); and in his monograph, Andrew Higson attributes the following characteristics to heritage films. They

> engage with subject-matter and discourses that have traditionally played a major part in determining how the heritage and identity of England and Englishness have been understood. These films are set in the past telling stories of the manners and proprieties, but also often the transgressive romantic entanglements of the upper and upper-middle class English in carefully detailed and visually splendid period reconstructions. The luxurious country-house settings, the picturesque rolling green landscapes of Southern England, the pleasures of period costume, and the canonical literary reference points are among the more frequently noted attractions of such films. (1)

This general description of the genre could also be the succinct, no matter how vague, thematic, stylistic and visual summary of Haas's *Angels and Insects*, particularly because in Higson's view, further typical "heritage-film" features also include a relatively "slow-moving" narrative, "organised around several central protagonists," in a narrative structure that "typically creates a space in which character, place, atmosphere and milieu can be explored [...] within a naturalistic framework, consolidated by picturesque imagery" (37).

Reading this list of attributes, one starts recalling each of these elements in the film, and starts considering them as potential points of departure for further analy-

sis. Some of my arguments concerning the adaptation, however, like slow movement and conscious literariness seem to contradict certain aspects of this definition, since I claim, on the one hand, that all the changes point in the direction of making the script more tense and dramatic, whereas on the other hand I find lacking the literary aspects of Byatt's text. I must, however, emphasize that the plot of *Angels and Insects* is "action-centred" only when compared to "Morpho Eugenia," and, similarly, writing and conscious literariness (which Higson also claims as a significant feature [20]) are missing only in comparison with their dominant role in the novella. Both William and Matty *are* producing books, and the viewer also comes to learn that Harald Alabaster is involved in writing the book of his life, although he has become bogged down in it; in addition, because of the constant references to Darwin and natural history in general, the film is permeated by the atmosphere of Victorian erudition and culture.

The film's deviations from the generic features of the heritage film may, however, be more interesting than its fitting into the paradigm. Here I will call attention to only three of them. First, I will return to the insect-like dresses of the young women, with their surprisingly bright, tropical colours. As I have argued above, they are primarily the adaptations of the metaphorical enunciation in Byatt's text, but they can be read as such *only because* heritage films by 1995[4] had brought about a set of tools that make the viewer aware of what "normal" ladies' dresses in the Victorian period look like, and established the tradition for their visual representation. In this vein, I would also claim that the frequent close-ups of the minute details, in addition to the opening shift from the patterns of the jungle into the design of the dresses, is an idiosyncretic feature of this film, which creates the meaning of these shots by their very deviation from the standard, established mode of representation.

The possibility for the other deviation from the established set of tools of the genre is rooted in "Morpho Eugenia": in its oscillation between the various layers of the house (the "visible" masters, the "invisible servants," and those between the two, invisible for both—like Matty and William for a while), and in the metaphorical representation of the servants as hosts of sexless female ants. It is undeniable that several heritage films are involved in revealing the servants' work "that goes into creating and maintaining the picturesque facade of the country house and the comfortable life-style of its inhabitants," and this "may also reveal the precarious position of the leisured classes," as Higson argues (27). In other heritage films, though, the primary narrative focus tends to be *either* on the "leisured class," *or* on the servants who maintain the facade (the most famous example is *The Remains of the Day* [1993]), even if the other layer also has a prominent role. In *Angels and Insects*, however, because of William's positional shifts in the hierarchy of the house, the narrative focus is unstable in terms of class, so the film offers several points of identification for the viewer. (At this point, I cannot resist making the comment that a more consistent inclusion of Matty in the film would have made these shifts even more complex, not only in terms of class, but in terms of gender as well.)

The metaphorical representation of the servants as hosts of sexless female ants in Byatt's text, on the other hand, facilitates another unique solution in this film. As mentioned above, the servants, scurrying along the corridors in their black and white dresses, are faceless: they either turn their faces to the wall when one of the "masters" approaches, or their faces are covered by their caps and bonnets. Together with the curious mixture of the geometrical, constructionist/cubist images created by the light effects of the corridors, the representation of the servants bears only a slight resemblance of how servants are rendered visually in other heritage films, in which—if present—their representation preserves their humanity. In *Angels and Insects*, however, they are dehumanized, and because of the close correspondence of their caps and their body movements with the handmaids in the film adaptation of Margaret Atwood's *A Handmaid's Tale*, in which the handmaids have to behave uniformly, and constitute a separate caste, they evoke images of dystopia. As a result of this strong visual resemblance, the servants' mode of existence is a definitely disturbing presence behind the facades of the country house, which, in this way, is turned into a Gothic castle for this reason *as well*. But in the same way as the colours of the young women's dresses gain their meaning in comparison with the usual representation of contemporary dresses, so is *this* meaning (the dystopia of the servants' life) created in a double move: both in the way it is implicated with the genre, and in its allusion to a film that is out of the bounds of the genre.

Angels and Insects istherefore involved in an intertextual dialogue, partly with its "source" text, and partly with the heritage film as a genre. In its dialogue with the text, we can certainly claim that all the changes in the plot point in the direction of tightening the dramatic structure of the text, and the adaptations proper of the metaphorical mode of enunciation in Byatt's text cannot counterbalance the fact that the emphasis is shifted over on the aspect of the literary "source" that is the Victorian pastiche. At the same time, the film's thematic concerns and visuality establish a dialogue between Haas's *Angels and Insects* and the heritage film as a genre, into which the film fits almost perfectly, including its mode of representation, which is relatively free from the self-consciousness and metaforicity of (post)modernist texts. In conclusion I can therefore say that whereas Byatt's "Morpho Eugenia" is about angels and insects and their incessant metamorphosis, Philip Haas's *Angels and Insects* is rather about insects and incest. Or, put another way, whereas Byatt's text is "driven by the story *and the metaphor*" ("Interview"; emphasis added), its transfiguration into Haas's film is primarily driven by the story.

Notes

[1] The contrast between "Byatt" and "Haas" as articulated above creates a puzzle, as if the two texts did not even share the same planet. Yet, at the story—even the plot—level they do. What are they about, then? In 1861, William Adamson, a butcher's educated son, a Darwinist natural historian, after spending years in South

America among the natives, suffers a shipwreck on the way home in which he loses practically all the property he has: his rare specimen collection he had wanted to make money from; he can save only one rare species. On his return to England, he is generously invited to Harald Alabaster's aristocratic mansion, Bredely Hall, where, as a return for his keep, he is asked to make order in Sir Harald's infinite piles of natural collection. He irresistibly falls in love with Eugenia, the eldest daughter, who has just lost her fiancé, under circumstances no one talks about. Aware of the social differences, all William attempts to do is to give Eugenia a transient present: a cloud of butterflies. Yet, while sitting in the hothouse in this cloud, Eugenia proposes that William should talk to her father, and thus there is a double wedding: that of Rowena, the second daughter and that of Eugenia. As the day of the wedding approaches, the eldest son, Edgar, Eugenia's stepbrother makes it clear to William that they will never be on equal footing. The Adamsons' conjugal life is rather erratic, its rhythm dictated by Eugenia's recurrent pregnancies (she gives birth to twins, then a son, then twins again in three years' time) during which William is always excluded from the marital bed. In the meantime, he gets engaged in other duties and activities. He is asked by Lady Alabaster to contribute to the tuition of the smaller children by teaching them natural history. Matty Crompton, a female dependant in the house is at help in this activity; furthermore, she proposes that William should write a book on their observations of the ants, and she even offers her assistance in making drawings and in copying the manuscript. However, she herself is also secretly engaged in writing a book of her own: a combination of fairy tales and natural sciences, which she can sell and make money from. William manages to find a publisher for his book, and by this time he learns that from their childhood on there has been an incestuous relationship between Eugenia and Edgar (the cause of suicide in the case of Eugenia's former fiancé, Captain Hunt), but before he decides to do anything, Matty Crompton—by now transformed into Matilda—informs him that she has ordered two berths on a ship leaving off for South America the following week, for the two of them.

[2] Lady Alabaster is seen as the ant or bee queen (26-27), the servants of the house coming as "a cloud of young wasps from under the roof of the house, pale-faced and blear-eyed" (49); Amy, the kitchenmaid, is perceived as "a diminutive little black sprite" (74), often as a "beetle-sprite," and later on, when it turns out that Edgar regularly rapes her, "she became confused in [Adamson's] memory with her imprisoned Coleoptera, struggling and hopeless" (74).

The male members of the family are not exempt from metaphoric representations either, which derive their frame of reference only partly from the insect world; partly they are taken from Greek mythology (as in Eugenia's case), and also from the imagery of fairy tales: whereas William sees himself more and more as a male ant, whose life pattern is "dictated by the regularity of the rhythms of the nest" (100), his vision of Edgar, Harald Alabaster and himself is that of the drones (105). The Alabasters are rendered as dragons as well: Harald, with his piles of natural collection, "feel[s] like the dragon in the poem, sitting upon a hoard of treasure" (17); and

Edgar, the most sexual and masculine one deserves some more, not very flattering metaphors as well: "an angry dragon" when trying to provoke William into a duel (62); referring to his insatiable sexuality, Edgar Swinnerton, Rowena's husband characterizes him as a "veritable centaur, or [...] satyr" (106).

[3] As I argue in another paper on Byatt's "Morpho Eugenia," the text can be considered a female *Künstlerroman*, furthermore, as a Darwinian evolution of the woman writer in the nineteenth century (awaiting publication in the *Festschrift* celebrating Sarolta Marinovich's 60th birthday).

[4] Higson considers *Chariots of Fire* in the cinemas and *Brideshead Revisited* on television (both in 1981) as the origins of "the contemporary fascination with period drama" (15).

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