Visual Intertextuality: Drawing Comparisons in *The Wings of the Dove*

By Judith Seligson

"If you remember anything of this book, it will be because your brain is slightly different after you have finished reading it."

—Eric Kandel, *In Search of Memory* (276)

This paper will attempt to demonstrate deep and coherent relationships between Henry James's *The Wings of the Dove*, the Hebrew Bible, *Hamlet*, and Sigmund Freud's *Dora*. In the process, it will suggest fundamental analogies among writing, weaving, and the communication of neurons in the brain. I first recorded these observations in 2000 and 2001 in a series of over forty graphite drawings called *Secrets*. Most of the drawings are about 10 x 13 inches; a few are 8 x 10 inches. They are composed of handwritten quotes from *The Wings of the Dove* interspersed with text from the Hebrew Bible, *Hamlet*, *Dora*, various other texts, and my own comments. I will read two of these drawings.

From the beginning, I saw these drawings as pictures of thinking. I saw the lines of text as neurons and the spaces between them as synaptic gaps (see fig. 1). Just as a neurotransmitter fires across the gap, so do our thoughts and interpretations—yours or mine—link these separate strands. These austere drawings even look like "gray matter," the myelin sheaths wound around neurons to increase the speed of connection. They look like pathways, especially when seen from an angle. One observer has called them "cities of words," since the handwritten quotes can resemble buildings and the space between them the streets, like "the grey immensity of London" (*WD* 176).

In the spring of 2000, I returned from a week in London visiting my daughter, going to the theater, roaming that glorious city, and reading *The Wings of the Dove*. I returned to my painting studio, rearranged it, and sat down to think about two issues in this book. I chose a pencil and started writing down quotes. Anyone who has ever taken pencil to paper knows that this medium is a very direct channel for thought.

The Henry James Review 31 (2010): 68–84.
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Figure 1. Detail of *Deluge*, a graphite drawing by the author on Aquarelle Arches, 16 1/4 x 12 1/4 inches, 2000, with superimposed photograph of neuron. The tiny dots are synapses, the nodes at which the cell communicates with adjacent cells. (Reprinted by permission of the author.)

Here was the "germ" or "grain" of the "origin" of my project, as James terms it in his preface to *The Awkward Age*.

> I recall with perfect ease the idea in which *The Awkward Age* had its origin, but re-perusal gives me pause in respect to naming it. This composition, as it stands, makes, to my vision—and will have made perhaps still more to that of its readers—so considerable a mass beside the germ sunk in it and still possibly distinguishable, that I am half-moved to leave my small secret undivulged. (3)

Curiously, James uses the words "re-perusal," "vision," and "secret"—all words that could apply to these drawings and to this essay about them. Further, he calls his "re-perusal" a "copious commentary," another apt word for these pictures of thinking. This "re-perusal" of my drawings marks the hundredth anniversary of Henry James's remarks in the prefaces to his novels in the New York Edition. The drawings themselves were completed in 2001, exactly a hundred years after James wrote *The Wings of the Dove*.

First, I wanted to trace the intricate path of the secret that killed Milly Theale. Densher asks Kate about Lord Mark: "How in the world did he know we're engaged?" (*WD* 487). Lord Mark comes to Venice with the sole purpose, it appears, of telling Milly that Kate and Densher, all along, have been secretly engaged. The effect on Milly, we guess, is to break her trust in Densher, with whom she has fallen in love. She "turned her face to the wall," gave up her hope for life (*WD* 410). Is Lord Mark just a good guesser, as Kate glosses, or are there hints of more direct communication? I was astounded that James would take up a subject so closely connected with Jewish law. The Biblical commandment reads: "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people" (*Jerusalem Bible*,[1] Lev. 19:16). Further, Miriam is expelled from the congregation for seven days because she speaks *lashon harah*, literally "evil tongue," about her brother, Moses. She simply "reports" that he has married a Cushite woman. Prohibition of gossip, the unauthorized transmission of information about a third person, is a fundamental principle of the Jewish tradition. There are elaborate laws regulating what, in good faith, one person can say about another. "The diffusion of rumour was of course always remarkable in London," James writes at the outset in *Wings* (42). Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, in his book *Words that Hurt, Words that Heal*, writes,

> For unlike slander, which is universally condemned as immoral because it is false, *lashon ha-ra* is by definition true. It is the dissemination of *accurate* information that will lower the status of the person to whom it refers; I translate it as "negative truths." Jewish law forbids spreading negative truths about anyone unless the person to whom you are speaking needs the information. (21–22)

James singles out Densher as one who is known not to spread "negative truths," even to get a story. "It was just because he [Densher] didn't nose about and babble, because he wasn't the usual gossip-monger, that they had picked him out" (*WD* 85).

Densher himself assures the guests at Mrs. Lowder's dinner party, "But I never," he lucidly maintained, "chattered to others about her," that is, about Milly (245). Nevertheless, by the end, "passive" though he might feel, he had been drawn into "exquisite London gossip" (463). "The gossip—for it came to as much at Lancaster Gate—wasn't the less exquisite for his use of the silver veil, nor on the other hand was the veil, so touched, too much drawn aside." It is the socially sanctioned transfer of information from "friend" to "friend," with the "use of the silver veil," that wreaks such damage.

Second, I wanted to document and explore the parallel constructions, the syntactical similarities, I was seeing between *Wings*, the Hebrew Bible, and *Hamlet*. As soon as Densher tells Kate of "his German university," I saw Hamlet at Wittenberg (66). I will often see a single word in common between works or within works form invisible strands linking the disparate texts. The rabbis have used this method to analyze texts for two millennia. Michael Fishbane calls it "the exegetical imagination" (1). James himself insists on the luxury of attention in the preface to *Wings*.

> (Attention of perusal, I thus confess by the way, is what I at every point, as well as here, absolutely invoke and take for granted; a truth I avail myself of this occasion to note once for all—in the interest of that variety of ideal reigning, I gather, in the connexion. The enjoyment of a work of art, the acceptance of an irresistible illusion, constituting, to my sense, our highest experience of "luxury," the luxury is not greatest, by my consequent measure, when the work asks for as little attention as possible. It is greatest, it is delightfully, divinely great, when we feel the surface, like the thick ice of the skater's pond, bear without cracking the strongest pressure we throw on it. The sound of the crack one may recognise, but never surely to call it a luxury). (*WD* 18)

The rabbis, believing as they did in the perfection of the Hebrew Bible or the Torah, as they would call it, applied the strongest pressure they could exert on this document. Michael Fishbane writes, "I referred to the need for attentiveness—attentiveness to the texture of the text the exegetes interpret, along with its patterns and forms" (4). These drawings are a particularly apt and fluid form for showing the multiple and subtle relationships among quotes from disparate places in a single text and in multiple texts. My own "exegetical imagination" found *The Wings of the Dove* a work of complex interaction with these two major works of the Western tradition: "The exegetical imagination in Judaism rises and falls to the cadence of citations. For a given speaker, the words from one context call to mind like-sounding words from another, and new meanings are generated through their intertextual association" (Fishbane 1). The imaginative exegete also attends to similarities between disparate parts of the body of its own text. For example, one of the *Secrets* drawings collects the multitude of sentences in *Wings* that include the word "difference"; another collects the hundreds of quotes containing "know." The attentive reader weaves mental threads across the Pentateuch, Writings, and Prophets, the three works that together comprise *The Jerusalem Bible*.

> Similarly, when a Pentateuchal homily "opens" (as the text says) with a particular passage from the Writings (the book of Psalms, for example, or Proverbs), the apparent remoteness or difference of this passage from the target verse in the Torah only teases the listener to anticipate a closure of this gap through mediating rhetorical strategies. This sense of expectation is one of the many pleasures of Midrash. (Fishbane 2)

James calls it "luxury," Fishbane the "pleasures" of attention. James takes the corpus of Western literature as his "Bible," inserting citations and adding to the reader's pleasure by "the apparent remoteness or difference of this passage from the target verse" (Fishbane 2). For example, James weaves elements of *Hamlet*'s "To be or not to be" soliloquy into *Wings*. Kate and her siblings had to pretend that Aunt Maud gave them too much, when in fact, she gave too little. "There was the rub!" (*WD* 19) is a close iteration of Hamlet's "Ay, there's the rub" (3.1.65). James transforms Hamlet's

> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And by opposing end them? . . .
> Thus conscience does make cowards of us all; (3.1.58–60)

into Densher's, "Thus was kept before him the question of whether it were more ignoble to ask a woman to take her chance with you, or to accept it from your conscience that her chance could be at the best but one of the degrees of privation" (*WD* 68). Milly sees herself "quitting the blue gulf of comparative ignorance and reaching her view of the troubled sea" (321) as Hamlet debates whether "to take arms against a sea of troubles" (3.1.59). Densher simply knows he will never have "life" or "fortune": "Having so often concluded on the fact of his weakness, as he called it, for life—his strength merely for thought—life, he logically opined, was what he must somehow arrange to annex and possess" (*WD* 36). "His fancy could be admirably active" but he sees himself marked with "the pair of smudges from the thumb of fortune, the brand on the passive fleece" (45). These words echo and reorganize Hamlet's "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" (3.1.57) as well as

> And thus the native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
> And enterprises of great pith and moment
> With this regard their currents turn awry,
> And lose the name of action. (3.1.85–89)

Both Densher and Hamlet are readers and writers; both are obsessed with a play. In Hamlet's case, it is the play within the play that reveals Claudius's guilt; in Densher's case, Kate's performance piece: the play she is writing in which he is a character. I have begun to think that the Hamlet figure in *Wings* is split among Densher, Kate, and Milly—Densher, the anxious man for whom action is problematic; Kate,

the budding author, like Hamlet, of the play within; Milly, the one for whom the will to live is such a question.

The first drawing, *Source of Knowledge*, plays with the idea that transmission of knowledge, by definition, is an act of intimacy. There are quotes from *Wings*; the Hebrew Bible; Freud's *Dora: Fragment of an Analysis*; Woody Allen's film, *Hannah and Her Sisters*; a comment on Freud by Neil Hertz, a Torah commentary; and my comments interspersed (see fig. 2). The missing quote—from Genesis, "And Adam knew his wife Eve" (Gen. 4:1)—is in another drawing. Knowledge is a sexual matter. When private knowledge about a third person is transmitted, we call it gossip. Who writes to whom, who talks with whom, conversely, can reveal bonds of intimacy. Gossip establishes intimacy between the two people communicating about a third party. The source of knowledge becomes conflated with the object of affection.

Quotes from the three sources interweave and juxtapose like neurons in the brain, like threads in a three-dimensional weaving. The points of proximity are like synaptic gaps, across which our thoughts further weave the structure. The reader, in fact, weaves the text as she weaves her brain. Each drawing is meant to cohere both visually and semantically. That is, it claims to generate meaning both as a work of art and as a text. As I worked, I saw that both of the initial impulses for the drawings—to record the transmission of gossip and to articulate structural similarities—translated into neurons. In the first case, secrets become like neurotransmitters, crossing gaps between people, and forming neural networks. In the second case, synaptic gaps formed at the points of similarity between two quotes.

Gossip, this illicit transmission of knowledge about another, becomes a substitute for, displacement, or sign of illicit sex. In Woody Allen's film, *Hannah and Her Sisters*, Elliot, Hannah's husband, is having an affair with Hannah's sister, Lee. He tells Lee a private matter, in this case, a discussion that he and Hannah had about adoption. Here is Hannah's plaintive, perplexed cry, echoing Densher's: "I don't see how you could know about these things unless Elliot's been talking to you" (*Hannah*). He has not spoken about their sex lives. Simply by telling a *private* matter, he has ruptured their intimate bond. "Private parts" is a term for genitals. The transmission of this private matter traces the path of illicit sex, just as Mark Lombardi's drawings trace the path of illicit funds used for terrorist activities. One commentator observes that "Lombardi wrings visual poetry out of dirty secrets" ("Mark Lombardi").

Lord Mark "had heard—what more natural?—from their friends, Milly's and his" of Milly's whereabouts (*WD* 321). Milly muses: "Aunt Maud had written to him, Kate apparently—and this was interesting—had written to him" (321–22). Who writes to whom in *The Wings of the Dove* is a highly codified system, which reveals the links of intimacy. Densher gives Milly's letter, addressed to him, to Kate to open. (She tosses it in the fire.) It is as if Densher does not permit himself to open a letter from a woman with whom he is not intimate. Writing and reading imply intimacy. Peter Brooks writes, with regard to young girls reading "dirty French novels" in *The Awkward Age*, "The fact of having read this 'revolting' French novel is in itself a defloration" (211). Will Aunt Maud allow Densher to write to Kate from America? Kate tells Densher that she will not put her letters on the hall table. Densher asks Kate permission to write to her from Venice—definitely not. Lord Mark receives letters from "Kate apparently" (321). This implies an intimacy between Lord Mark and Kate that

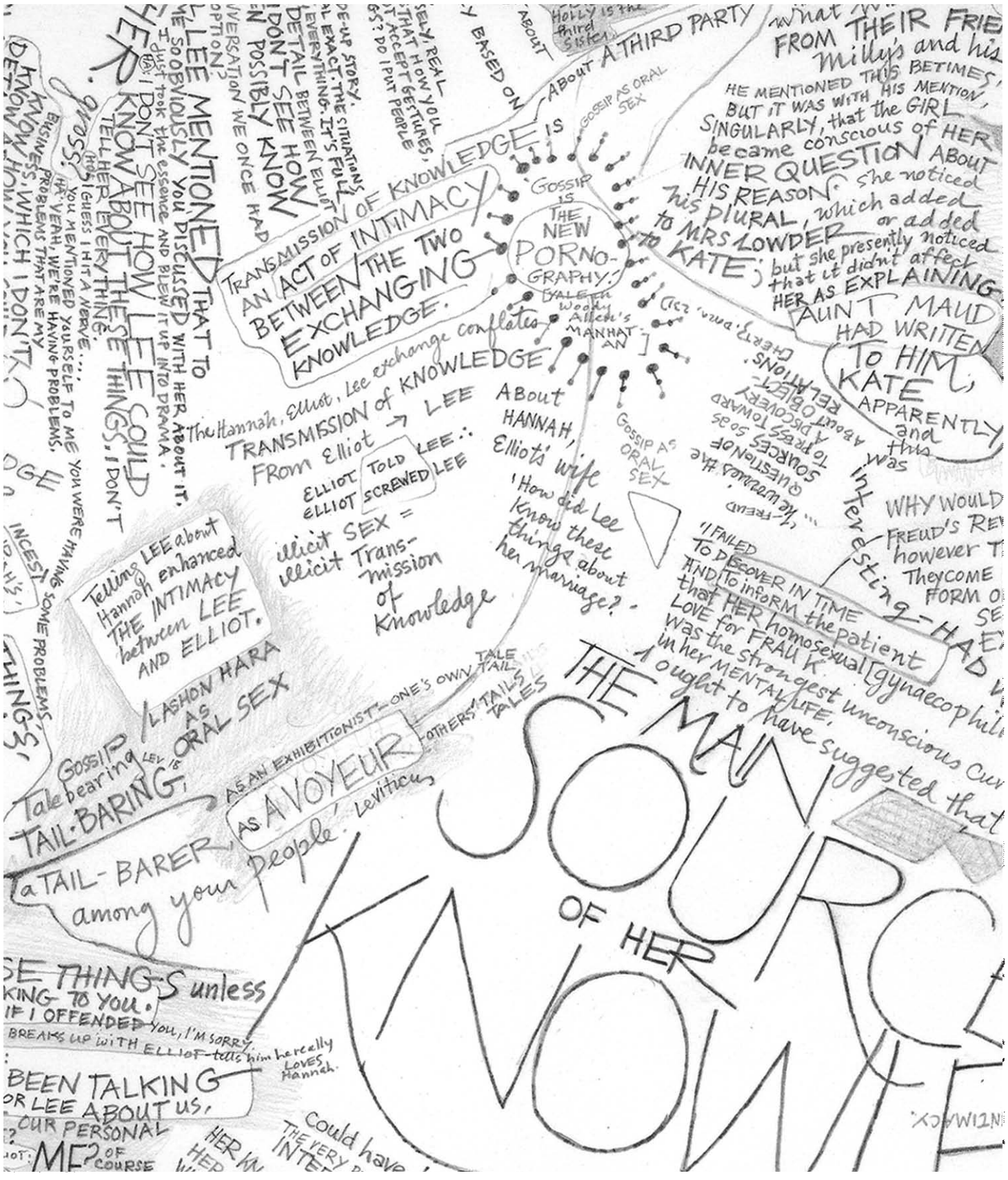

Figure 2. Detail of *Source of Knowledge*, graphite drawing by the author, on museum board, 11 x 14 inches, 2000. (Reprinted by permission of the author.)

haunts the book. Further, the passing of information about Milly from Kate and Aunt Maud to Lord Mark allows him to make his fatal blow. But then, Susan Shepherd, in order to intensify her intimacy with Mrs. Lowder, tells her Milly's secrets. What could be the harm in telling her old friend Maud that Milly had known Densher in America or that she was seeing Dr. Strett? Sir Luke and Densher, on the other hand, never talk about Milly with each other; they preserve their actual intimacy with her.

Freud wrote, in a footnote to *Dora*: "I failed to discover in time and inform the patient that her homosexual [gynaecophilic] love for Frau K was the strongest unconscious current in her mental life. I ought to have suggested that the main source of her knowledge of sexual matters could only have been Frau K" (110 n. 2). The source of Dora's sexual knowledge is the sex anatomy book she had read with Frau K. As in *Wings*, reading is a sign of intimacy. The source of her knowledge about sexual matters identifies the object of her affection. In all three texts, exchanging knowledge establishes intimacy and is a sign for secret intimacies.

James and Freud wrote *Wings* and *Dora* contemporaneously in 1901. *Wings* was published in 1902 and *Dora* in 1905. There are fundamental structural similarities between them. They are both mysteries, for they both reveal and seek to fill gaps in knowledge. Freud writes, "No mortal can keep a secret," but then later acknowledges an "unknown quantity in me" (96, 141). As each character in *Wings* avidly pursues knowledge of the others, the reader wonders if the author can know the fate of Densher and Kate any better than she.

Not only do both texts equate sources of knowledge with intimate relations, but also, most obviously, they both narrate the story of an ambiguously sick girl. On the one hand, Milly is dying; on the other, we read this exchange between Mrs. Stringham and Milly about Sir Luke, the doctor Milly consults:

> "Most certainly it's all right. I think you ought to understand that he sees no reason—"
>
> "Why I shouldn't have a grand long life?" Milly had taken it straight up, as to understand it and for a moment consider it. But she disposed of it otherwise. "Oh of course I know THAT." (291)

On the one hand, Dora is an hysteric. Rather than speak, she (unconsciously) writes her thoughts on her body—to be read by Freud. On the other, Freud treats her virtually as an equal adversary in his pursuit of his—or is it her—knowledge. At one point, Sir Luke acts like a psychotherapist, asking her numerous questions about her friends and affections. Milly easily divulges to her doctor secrets that she has told no one else. She tells him that she has an interest in Densher "enough to hope" that "there may be then some chance for him"—with her (*WD* 310). James and Freud use several key terms in common, further reinforcing the structural similarities between *Wings* and *Dora*. These include "without a flaw" (*WD* 285, Freud 70), "unconscious" (*WD* 440, Freud 115), "symptom" (*WD* 365, Freud 46), "motive" (*WD* 181, Freud 65), "guess" (*WD* 62, Freud 65), and "displacement" (*WD* 47, Freud 23). James uses "chain of association" (171), while Freud writes "chain of interpretations and recollections" (4). They both use "divine" in both senses: as a verb, "to perceive intuitively" (*WD* 129, Freud 71), and as an adjective, "heavenly" (*WD* 345, Freud 18).

The intertextuality of *Wings* with works written hundreds or thousands of years ago is very different from the relationships between works written in the same year. What did James and Freud know about each other's work? Even if they knew about the other's previous work, how could they know about works they were writing contemporaneously? I invented this method of drawing and writing to allow the reader's interpretations and answers to cross the gap between juxtaposed quotes, just as a neurotransmitter transmits an electrical current across the synaptic gap between cells. The gaps are crossed, but not closed, to permit another crossing, another interpretation. This method is particularly indebted to Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, unfinished when he died in 1938, and Derrida's *Glas* (1974). Hannah Arendt, in her introduction to other Benjamin writings, describes his radical method:

> From the Goethe essay on, quotations are at the center of every work of Benjamin's. This very fact distinguishes his writing from scholarly works of all kinds in which it is the function of quotations to verify and document opinions, wherefore they can safely be relegated to Notes. This is out of the question in Benjamin. . . . The main work consisted in tearing fragments out of their context and arranging them afresh in such a way that they illustrated one another and were able to prove their *raison d'être* in a free-floating state, as it were. It definitely was a sort of surrealistic montage. Benjamin's ideal of producing a work consisting entirely of quotations, one that was mounted so masterfully that it could dispense with any accompanying text, may strike one as whimsical in the extreme and self-destructive to boot, but it was not, any more than were the contemporaneous surrealistic experiments which arose from similar impulses. To the extent that an accompanying text by the author proved unavoidable, it was a matter of fashioning it in such a way as to preserve "the intention of such investigations," namely, "to plumb the depths of language and thought . . . by drilling rather than excavating" . . ., so as not to ruin everything with explanations that seek to provide a causal or systematic connection. (Arendt 47–48)

Benjamin wants to clarify the gap between cause and effect by removing the "explanations that seek to provide a causal or systematic connection." In this light, are the syntactical and semantic similarities between *Wings* and *Dora*, between the dove and Dora, "causal"? Essays are typically composed of arguments. An argument, in the classical tradition, implies causality. Hume ruptured this continuity in his 1772 work, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. He simply said that a pitcher tips over, milk spills out, but no "chain of reasoning" can prove that tipping the pitcher *caused* the milk to spill. "In a word, then, every effect is a distinct event from its cause" (460).

The space between two lines of text in these drawings is the gap that Hume discovered between cause and effect. The reader provides the "connecting proposition or intermediate step" (461). Derrida's *Glas* structures itself around the gap. John Sturrock describes, in his 1987 *New York Times* review of the English translation, the "narrow corridor of white space down the middle":

> Inside, "Glas" is not as other books are; there are echoes in the format of what was once called concrete poetry. Each page contains two slender columns of prose, set in different sizes of type, with a narrow corridor of white space down the middle. Let into these columns at the side are interpolations, in bold type, some of them short, some long. These are like footnotes insofar as they relate to matters raised on the page in question, but they are unlike footnotes in that they do not relate to any particular word or sentence. Mr. Derrida's side notes float free and can be read at whatever point you fancy.
>
> Reading "Glas," in fact, is a scandalously random experience, for, quite apart from when to turn aside to these insets, there is the larger question of how to read the two main columns of print.

One could apply numerous quotes from John Sturrock's review to *Secrets*: "Or you can enter into the spirit of the thing and read both, hoping to discover what these two weirdly different figures are doing face to face like this . . . [the text] is so made as to impose a certain vagrancy on the eyes and attention of whoever reads it and to break us of our nasty linear habits." These words could also apply to a page of the Talmud, which *Glas* and *Secrets* resemble. The Talmud is composed of a central block of text, which is itself a commentary on the Hebrew Bible. Surrounding this block are smaller blocks of text in varying dimensions, each formed by the remarks of a different commentator. The gaps between these cells of commentary ask for yet another interpretation. Derrida's thought in *Of Grammatology* aptly describes how we read both *Glas* and *Secrets*: "We must begin wherever we are and the thought of the trace, which cannot take the scent into account, has already taught us that it was impossible to justify a point of departure absolutely. Wherever we are: in a text where we already believe ourselves to be" (162).

Roland Barthes's term, "writerly" could be used to describe both *Glas* and *Secrets*. "Why is the writerly our value? Because the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but the producer of the text" (4). Barthes imagines:

> This new operation is *interpretation* (in the Nietzschean sense of the word). . . . In this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend *as far as the eye can reach*, they are indeterminable. . . . (5–6)

Sturrock echoes Barthes's vision of the writerly text, which "is *ourselves writing*, before the infinite play of the world" (5). *Secrets* is the work of one reader re-*writing* James's text woven through with the reader's thoughts and its intertextual links.

> We are not allowed to call "Glas" a book either, because Mr. Derrida would have it that, as a literary category, the book is dead; the egregious

> "Glas" is something more futuristic, a text. The text does not pretend to the coherence, rationality or authoritativeness of the book, but rather collaborates joyously with the anarchy of language and starts semantic hares running in all directions. "Glas" goes on a joy ride into the great unconscious of language in an orgy of "dissemination," or the uninhibited scattering of meanings. . . . (Sturrock)

The quotation becomes the building block in the work of both Benjamin and Derrida. Like the florilegia of medieval monks and the fragments from Qumran, *The Arcades Project* and *Glas* combine quotes from various sources to make a new work. The very choice and arrangement of quotes identifies the author, even without any interposing personal or explanatory text. Quotations are fragments, sound bytes, bites, or cells. Gregory Ulmer in *Applied Grammatology* explains that "bite" is a key play on words for Derrida.

> To understand the rationale for all the interpolations, citations, definitions used in Glas, Derrida says, one must realize that "the object of the present work, its style too, is the 'morceau' [bit, piece, morsel, fragment; musical composition; snack, mouthful]. Which is always detached, as its name indicates and so you do not forget it, with the teeth" (*Glas* 135). The "teeth," as Derrida explained in an interview, refer to quotation marks, brackets, parentheses: when language is cited (put between quotation marks), the effect is that of *releasing* the grasp or hold of a controlling context." (Ulmer 57–58)

Both Derrida and Benjamin use images that release quotes from their origin. Derrida wrote in *Glas*, "I see rather (but it is perhaps still a matrix or a grammar) a kind of dredging machine" (qtd. in Ulmer 58). Benjamin wrote in *Briefe 1* that he wanted "to plumb the depths of language and thought . . . by drilling rather than excavating" (qtd. in Arendt 48). *Secrets* is composed of quotations, "dredged" (qtd. in Ulmer 58) or "drilled" (qtd. in Arendt 48) from several works, interlaced with my own thoughts. Juxtaposed quotations, fragments of text, become the cells of twentieth-century composition. Juxtaposition, in rabbinic hermeneutics, implies an analogy, *hekesh*. Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, in his Reference Guide to his English translation of the Talmud, writes: "HEKESH: Analogy. An important exegetical principle; When two cases are mentioned together in the same verse (or adjacent verses), the Talmud usually assumes that, since they were juxtaposed, they are analogous. Hence legal inferences may be drawn by comparing the two cases" (151). That is, there is a relationship between the two quotes to be discerned simply because they are contiguous. Juxtaposition implies analogy or a common element in two disparate verses. The space between the quotes becomes the place of interpretation, the synaptic gap across which interpretations fire. The interpretation reveals the common thread.

Text, as many have noted, comes from *textum*, the Latin "to weave." More fundamentally, *textum* refers to structure. I see *The Wings of the Dove* as an elaborate structure—or weaving—of strands of themes and textual transpositions. Julia Kristeva, in her original definition, called intertextuality, "this transposition of one

(or several) sign system(s) into another" (*Revolution* 59–60). She clarified elsewhere: "It has nothing to do with matters of influence by one writer upon another, or with the sources of a literary work; it does, on the other hand, involve the components of a *textual* system such as a novel, for instance" (*Desire* 15). The Hebrew Bible and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* can be seen as living tissues, which have been grafted into new locations in *Wings*. The analogy is less collage than of weaving independent, juxtaposed strands, communicating through nodes called synapses, or, more familiarly, web links. This particular kind of integration of one sign system into another is an intricate three-dimensional weaving. For example, Sheila Hicks pasted a three-dimensional weaving into her hand-written journal entry. She writes, in 1961, "Mexican orange weaving on frame of rusty nails. Picking, poking at the threads (yarns) with a crude stick, as if writing an uneven letter, forming the words with large and small alphabet . . ." (38–39). One could say that a fragment of the original cloth/text/tissue is extricated, threads hanging. To integrate it into a new work, its strands are woven over and through existing threads. It communicates through its points of contact with the existing tissue or text. In *The Awkward Age*, Mrs. Brookenham rings out: "Life is composed of many things, of such mingled intertwisted strands!" (48). *Secrets* is a visual fabric that itself is a transposition.

I see the brain as a text, as much as a text is a brain—each can learn, each builds itself by making new connections or strengthening existing ones. The brain weaves the text as it reads, as much as the text weaves the brain. Nobel Prize winner neurobiologist Eric Kandel wrote in his memoir, "If you remember anything of this book, it will be because your brain is slightly different after you have finished reading it" (276).

The second drawing I will discuss is named *Deluge* (see Fig. 1 and Fig. 3). It shows some of the words, phrases, and concepts that *Wings* has in common with the Hebrew Bible's story of Noah and the flood (see Fig. 3). God tells Noah, a righteous and whole-hearted man, that God is going to destroy the world because it is corrupt and violent. It rained, as we know, for forty days and forty nights. From *Wings*: "The weather had changed. The rain was ugly, the wind wicked, the sea impossible because of Lord Mark, it was because of him, *a fortiori*, that the palace was closed" (432); and further, referring to Milly, "She was in it, as in the ark of her deluge" (345). Noah sends out a dove to see if the waters have abated, which returns with an olive branch. Milly is the dove, but does she function also as Noah in his ark? I see connections forming and breaking up, like a kaleidoscope—an image that permits multiple analogies and relationships among intertextual pieces.

"Because of Lord Mark"—his "ugly motive"—becomes the ultimate sign of corruption—and violence—for which God sent the flood in Noah's time (*WD* 350). The word for corruption in Hebrew is *hamas*. The great nineteenthth-century commentator, Samson Raphael Hirsch, commenting on these verses, writes,

> *Hamas* is a wrong that is too petty to be caught by human justice. It is not brought before judges, but if committed continuously can gradually ruin your fellow-man. . . . By open robbery, it [the world] will never fall. It knows how to protect itself against that by prisons and penalties. But by *hamas*, underhand dealing by cunning, astute dishonesty, craftily keeping

Figure 3. *Deluge*, graphite drawing by the author on Aquarelle Arches, 16 1/4 x 12 1/4 inches, 2000. (Reprinted by permission of the author.)

> within the letter of the law, it goes to ruin, by wrong which justice cannot reach but which can only be prevented by self-judging conscientiousness before God. (139)

One could say that Lord Mark was only the most obvious practitioner, for the entire social fabric is tainted by the disease of *lashon harah*—the unauthorized transmission of secrets. Resh Lakish interpreted the words of Leviticus 14:2, "This shall be the law of the leper (*metzora*)," to mean, "This shall be the law for him who brings up an evil name (*motzi shem ra*)" (*Babylonian Talmud*). The rabbis make this analogy by demonstrating that "bringing an evil name," or transmitting negative truths, is an acronym for "leper." Further, one of the forms of leprosy attacks fabric: "And when the plague of leprosy is in a garment . . ." (Lev. 13:47). That is, transmitting "negative truths" infects the social fabric. And then there is simply lying.

Mrs. Lowder tells Mrs. Stringham: "'Kate thinks she cares. But she's mistaken. And no one knows it. . . . *You* don't know it—that must be your line. Or rather your line must be that you deny it utterly.' 'Deny that she cares for him?' 'Deny that she so much as thinks that she does. Positively and absolutely. Deny that you've so much as heard of it.'" Mrs. Stringham tells Maud that *she* "lies badly"; Mrs. Lowder, meanwhile "almost snorted," "*I* lie well, thank God." By the end, Susie is ready to lie because "she might help Maud too" (324). The transmission of lies and the unauthorized transmission of others' secrets in Henry James's penultimate novel weave an intricate web of *hamas*, the petty violence that ruins the social fabric.

> "The wings of the dove" is a phrase in two psalms.
> Because of the shout of the foe . . .
> My heart shudders within me,
> And the terrors of death have befallen me . . .
> O that I had wings like the dove I could fly off and find rest. . . .
> It is not my enemy who has magnified himself against me. That I could hide from.
> But it is you, a man of my measure, my guide, and my intimate friend. (Psalms 55:6)

That would be Densher—or Kate—or even Mrs. Stringham, rather than Lord Mark. The psalm "because of the shout of the foe" echoes in *Wings* as "because of Lord Mark."

The second psalm with the phrase reads:

> A father of orphans and defender of widows. . . .
> Even if you lie among the cooking pots
> you will be like the wings of the dove that is covered with silver and her pinions with brilliant gold. (Psalms 68:5, 13)

Milly further links to this line when she tells Sir Luke, "We're widows and orphans," which in fact describes the two older and younger women respectively.

Leon Edel points out that "Kate is named Croy—the crow, a blackbird"—or a raven (550). Noah, hoping to learn if the waters had abated, first sends a raven "which went forth to and fro until the waters were dried from the earth" (Gen. 8:7). Samson Raphael Hirsch comments on this verse: "Noah first of all sent the *ah'rev* (raven) out, a bird that normally does not seek the vicinity of men, *ah'revah*, the wilderness is its home. If it comes back, it must be quite homeless outside" (156). This is a rabbinic play on the raven/wilderness, which have the same etymological root. "Homeless" Kate—that fits.

Since making these drawings, I have developed a method of writing on the computer that lets me think and record that process to some extent the way the drawings do. The drawings have so many nodal points of contact; they establish such a constellation of relationships. I was willing to sacrifice some of those juxtapositions to gain readability. With it, I have written a book called *Gap Anxiety: A Book Built Like a Brain*. The gaps between brain cells, atoms, quanta, the building blocks of matter, were all discovered around 1900. Henry James built a facet of this new paradigm. Once we know that the world, including our brain, is made of pieces, there is always the possibility that the pieces will fall apart.

Hume's recognition of the gap between cause and effect was one step in breaking the chain. Another was the discovery that all living organisms were composed of discrete units called cells. In 1832, Matthias Jakob Schleiden wrote that organisms are made of cells that simultaneously have an independent life and also participate in a community.

> Each cell leads a double life: an independent one, pertaining to its own development alone; and another incidental, insofar as it has become an integral part of a plant. It is, however, easy to perceive that the vital process of the individual cells must form the first, absolutely indispensable fundamental basis. . . . ("Matthias Schleiden")

But the composition of the brain was another matter. "Unlike most other cells of the body which have a simple shape, nerve cells have highly irregular shapes and are surrounded by a multitude of exceedingly fine extensions . . ." (Kandel 62–63). Brain cells were long and difficult to isolate. Not until the 1890s, when Ramon y Cajal devised new techniques for viewing cells, was most of the scientific community satisfied that the brain, too, was composed of individual cells. Based on his observations, Cajal formulated the neuron doctrine, which stated that the brain is built with morphologically discrete cells that communicate at specific nodes, called synapses (Kandel 62–65).

The recognition of the discrete nature of brain cells ushered in the twentieth century. The fragment became the "cell" of the twentieth-century artist, writer, and philosopher. In 1908, Picasso invented collage, a work composed of fragments of other works and materials. The quote is a fragment or cell of a larger work. In 1900, Freud wrote *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In a later work, he described dream interpretation as a process of "reinserting the omitted relations" between dream fragments (*Introductory* 230). In between cells, fragments, and quotes are gaps.

In order for an organism made of individual, independent cells to function, those cells must communicate. Communication and interpretation virtually define life, and yet they require work and can fail. It turns out that what we once thought was a homogeneous, continuous world is actually made of discrete units—cells, atoms, quanta. Even though the neuron doctrine has been the foundation of brain science since the turn of the century, its proof penetrates recent history. Only in the 1950s, with the development of the electron microscope, could the human eye see, and therefore indisputably know, the discrete nature of brain cells. Cajal wrote in 1937: "To settle the question (of contiguity versus continuity) definitely, it was necessary to demonstrate clearly, precisely, and indisputably the final ramifications of the nerve fibers, which no one had seen, and to determine which parts of the cells made the imagined contacts" (qtd. in Cowan and Kandel 6). The filament-like quotes in *Secrets* resemble the "final ramifications of the nerve fibers." "Contiguity versus continuity" are the terms equally of modern art, physiology, and literary theory.

My thinking about the gap began with *Secrets*, a series of graphite drawings, pictures of thinking about Henry James's *The Wings of the Dove*. I have long pondered why my thoughts about the gap flowed out of thinking and drawing about *Wings*. One interpretation: Each of James's sentences in *The Wings of the Dove* is a world unto itself, like a cell. Each moves the novel forward by a small increment. "Sentence" means both judgment and "a grammatically self-contained unit." It is "a group of words so related as to convey a completed thought with the force of asserting something or of asking, commanding, exclaiming, or wishing . . . taken as a unit thought." Each sentence is "self-contained" and "completed," a delicately balanced judgment. Yet simultaneously, like Schleiden's cell with a double nature, it propels the movement forward with a "force," like the electrical force linking millions of neurons, to form a whole. There is necessarily a gap between sentences of such individual character.

The structure and morphological discreteness of the sentences in *Wings* made me think of the long, juxtaposed fibers of the neuron, called axons and dendrites. Neurotransmitters fire electrical impulses from cell to cell, just as James fires the imagination forward with each sentence. This neural network of inimitable, attentive sentences becomes a whole, living organism. Are these sentences different from those of authors before or after James? James deftly left an uncanny space for the reader in *Wings*. He set the example for works more familiarly associated with modernism. Henry James ushered in the twentieth century with a distinctive neuronal sentence, each propelled forward to the next by a tiny, propagating electric current. These sentences form intricate, reconfiguring neural networks, ready for the attentive reader to link disparate parts and structure new meaning. *The Wings of the Dove* can be read as a moral tale, but it always reconfigures into another interpretation. The gap is the space for every new interpretation.

NOTE

[1]All subsequent Biblical quotes are from *The Jerusalem Bible*.

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