

d i s p a r a t e

c o n n e c t i o n s

# MOTIF TRACKING

## CONNECTING IDEAS IN MULTIPLE TEXTS

Motif: a recurring (ongoing, multiple) idea, theme, symbol or colour in a variety of artistic (literary, fine arts, film or music) works.

Track the various motifs in the assigned texts. Look for similarities. Use direct quotes wherever possible.

motif	text:	text:	text:	text:
ideas / topics				

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July 23, 2012

# The Divine Miss M

By **FRANK BRUNI**

What I find most fascinating about Michele Bachmann — and there are many, many more where she came from — is that she presents herself as a godly woman, humbly devoted to her Christian faith. I'd like to meet that god, and I'd like to understand that Christianity.

Does it call for smearing people on the basis of flimsy conspiracy theories? That's what Bachmann just did to Huma Abedin, an aide to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, by essentially suggesting she might be a mole for the Muslim Brotherhood.

Does it endorse scaring young women away from immunizations that could spare them serious illness? Bachmann did *that* during her memorable presidential campaign, when she blithely [drew an unsubstantiated link](#) between a vaccine for the human papillomavirus and mental retardation.

Does it encourage gratuitously [divisive condemnations](#) of Barack Obama as “anti-American,” one of many incendiary phrases in her attacks against him in 2008? And does it compel a war against homosexuality waged with the language and illogic she uses?

She has said that gay men and lesbians are dysfunctional products of abuse and agents of “sexual anarchy,” and when the singer and songwriter Melissa Etheridge was battling breast cancer years ago, Bachmann helpfully [chimed in](#): “This may be an opportunity for her now to be open to some spiritual things, now that she is suffering with that physical disease. She is a lesbian.”

Bachmann's concept of Christian love brims with hate, and she has a deep satchel of stones to throw. From what kind of messiah did she learn that?

Over recent days she has drawn attention for the letter that she and four other Republican lawmakers sent to federal intelligence and security agencies last month. It expressed fears that the Muslim Brotherhood might be infiltrating the government, and [it mentioned Abedin](#). She's Muslim, after all.

My aim here isn't to re-litigate Bachmann's crimes against reason and decency, all widely documented.

It's to wonder why we accept her descriptions of herself, and in turn describe her, as a deeply religious woman. That grants too much credence to her particular, peculiar and highly selective definition of piety. And it offends the many admirable people of faith whose understanding and practice of religion aren't, like hers, confrontational and small-minded.

Bachmann is an evangelical, and has spoken rhapsodically about the experience of being born again. After that moment, she said, "I absolutely understood sin, and I wanted no part of it." She plunged into politics nonetheless.

We routinely place her in the "religious right," a phrase that frustrates me, tidily linking a certain set of political beliefs with profound devotion. We talk much less frequently of any "religious left," and that disparity implies that a seriously faithful person is most likely to land on just one end of the political spectrum.

Tell that to the [Nuns on the Bus](#), who rolled across the country last month focusing on social welfare and expressing alarm about the impact that cuts in federal spending might have on struggling Americans. Their politics line up more neatly with liberal than conservative policies, but the nuns reflect a Catholicism no less true or widespread than that of the bishops carrying on about gay marriage and birth control.

Speaking of gay marriage, both the Reform and Conservative branches of Judaism in this country have embraced it, and the Episcopal Church in the United States has developed a [special blessing](#) for same-sex couples. Leaders of these denominations would tell you not that they're flouting Judeo-Christian tradition but that they're doing full justice to their faiths, which hinge on more than reflexive fidelity to chosen passages from ancient writings. They hinge on the human intellect and its ability to filter timeless values through modern understanding.

Because he's a social liberal, Cory Booker, the Newark mayor, is seldom mentioned in terms of religion, but it turns out that he's made a study of the Bible, as well as other sacred texts, and given considerable thought to faith. [On his Facebook page](#) a few months ago, he mused thusly:

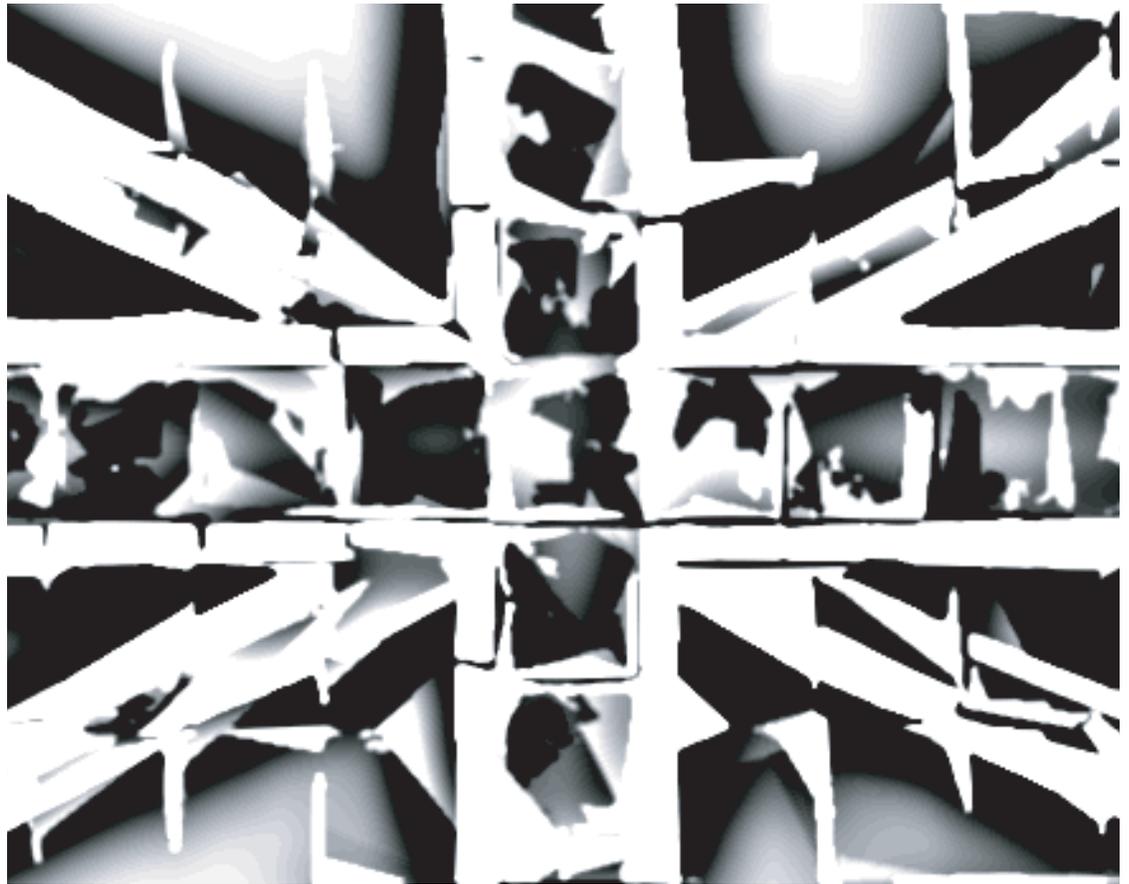
"Before you speak to me about your religion, first show it to me in how you treat other people. Before you tell me how much you love your God, show me in how much you love all His children."

I know many progressive, big-hearted Christians who rise to that challenge, and it's wrong for a single Christian label — without asterisk or annotation — to be attached both to them and to the likes of Bachmann.

So maybe it's time for annotations. Most of us distinguish, rightly, between Muslim extremists and other followers of Islam. Perhaps we should start noting the difference between Christians of real compassion and those of exclusionary spite.

Bachmann's on to something: dangerous fundamentalists have indeed set up camp deep inside the capital. She can find one in her office. She need only look in the mirror.

Bernadine Evaristo is the third link in our relay between Chinese and British authors, answering stories from Hari Kunzru and Zhu Wen with the story of an extraordinary exhibition in a post-western future



## A Matter of Timing

by bernadine evaristo

The Misty Mountain Heritage Complex was a three-hour drive out of the smoggy city of Shanghai. A vertiginous, winding road coiled breathlessly around miles of bamboo forest until arriving at the great stone walls of the fortified complex. Heavy electronic gates guarded the entrance, Kalashnikov-wielding soldiers stood high on the wall, and a long, patient queue of visitors snaked down the grey stone pathways, their tour buses parked along the side of the road. April clouds descended from the skies bathing the whole vista in a light drizzle before slipping off down the slopes to hover as thick mist.

The heritage complex opened soon after The Great Expansion resulted in a new curiosity about the countries which had been grasped by the colonial tentacles of the Republic. Several nations of the world were represented inside its walls through exhibitions which were assemblies of

plundered historical relics, monuments and human zoos. Britain, a country about which so little had been known during the period of The Long Isolation, soon emerged as the foremost object of interest for the millions of visitors who came up the mountain every year.

The citizens of the Republic were fascinated by the unfathomable British obsession with all things past and ancient. The Republic's own royal historical lineage had long remained in its rightful place – in museums, as evidence of a decidedly decadent and non-egalitarian past. Why, they wondered, walk with one foot chained to history when it made the long march forwards so slow? Why favour the old over the new, when the new was always better? Why choose to live in a draughty old house with so-called 'character', when one could live in a sleek, minimalist home?

Once they had paid to get inside and had their bags searched for weapons of minor destruction, they headed for the Exhibition of Britain, inescapably positioned to the right of the entrance and protected behind another high wall, this one plastered with pebble dash.

Here they encountered "Exhibit No 1", Charles. Formerly known as His Royal Highness, King Charles III, he could be seen pottering around the cage that had been his home for several years. His only furniture was his country's state throne, its once-bright crimson seat worn grey and threadbare, the wood of its golden frame scuffed and chipped. Charles was forced to wear, at all times, a heavy ermine cape and a rather tacky papier-mâché crown, painted yellow and studded with plastic diamonds and rubies. The perimeter of his

cage was fringed with rows of organic pot plants which Charles spent a lot of time cultivating.

Like every other specimen in the human zoo, Charles had been allowed to take one book into his cage. He had chosen *The Lost World of the Kalahari*, the most famous work of his long-deceased mentor, Laurens van der Post. Charles had fond memories of evenings spent in his rooms at Kensington Palace listening to Laurens's expert ruminations on the noble savage.

Most of the time he was oblivious to the visitors who jostled each other for a better view, the bolder ones trying to prod and poke him with pointed umbrellas through the bars. When Charles did look up at his audience, the wavy lines indented in his forehead, the perpetual frown of his bushy grey eyebrows, the transparent anguish in his eyes, his pale, ghostly face resembled those of a nineteenth-century tragedian.

The sign outside Charles's cage read: "Once chief of class system, worshipped by his all subjects."

Next to Charles's cage was that of Mr Thistlewaite (Exhibit No 2), formerly one of the legendary Beefeaters at the Tower of London.

Mr Thistlewaite was in his late fifties, balding, pink-faced, stout. He was ex-army (Sergeant), and had always considered himself a decent, upstanding chap. Most importantly (prior to capture), he thought of himself as normal: steak and chips, wife, kids, golf, Tory. He also had a fondness for poetry. John Betjeman's *Collected Poems* provided him with stimulating company while incarcerated. As a Beefeater he had been part of the security detail around

HRH on state occasions, and it was to his utmost frustration that he could not throttle those voyeuristic bastards who tried to assault his dearly beloved monarch. He spent his days slumped in a corner of his cage, scowling. He wore a ruffled white collar, gabardine jacket embroidered with a gold geometric design, puffed sleeves, matching belt, red gabardine knickerbockers, long white stockings and slip-on shoes with big, gold buckles. The sign outside Mr Thistlewaite's cage read: "Typical, everyday Englishman."

And so it went on.

Plundered artefacts on display under bomb-proof glass cases, and the vigilant eyes of armed guards, included the entire British Crown Jewels, with the skull-crushing Imperial State Crown as its centrepiece, laden with 2,868 diamonds, 273 pearls, 17 sapphires, 11 emeralds and 5 rubies (Nos 33-84). The visitors oohed, aahed and sighed, but could not touch.

Among the many artefacts there was also the Domesday Book in its own glass cabinet (No 125), the original King James Bible in another (No 126), and the mace from the House of Commons (No 134). Set on a pair of plinths and cordoned off by red rope, were the statue of Eros from Piccadilly Circus (No 167) and the Prince Albert Memorial from Hyde Park (No 168).

The visitors also encountered three monuments that had been dismantled, transported thousands of miles, and reassembled. There was "a typical English pub" called Ye Olde Alehouse (No 275), which had thousand-year-old beams hanging low from its ceiling, and paintings of rolling green hills, buxom milkmaids, thatched cottages and grazing cows spread

all over its walls. The gargantuan stones of Stonehenge had been carted off and relocated onto the site (No 276), and there was the world's largest clock, Big Ben (No 277). At nearly 100 metres high this was an edifice so imposing that the visitors gasped and craned their necks to try and see it in its entirety. It still rang out on the hour every hour, its mighty bell resounding over the mountain and reaching, some imagined, as far as Shanghai.

Lesser objects included a display of bowler hats, walking sticks and judge's wigs and gowns. Video screens installed alongside the best-known works of the painter Turner showed extracts from period dramas starring the actresses Helena Bonham-Carter, Kate Winslet and Keira Knightly, as well as the television series *Last of the Summer Wine* and *Brideshead Revisited* (Nos 179-255).

Eventually the visitors came to a white, concrete, bunker-like building which blocked their route through the complex. They had no choice but to enter the ominous steel door of The British Surveillance Experience (No 362-662). Once inside they were made to walk through a long, narrow, dark, dank tunnel, every inch of its walls and ceiling crammed with sinister infra-red CCTV cameras which performed a silent, robotic ballet of spinning, swerving and dipping. Everyone fell silent and felt a chill as they hurried through the tunnel of unblinking, bloodshot eyes. Audio guides explained that at the time of The Great Expansion, the British had less public privacy than any almost any other country in the world, with over 4 million cameras. People could be recorded on up to 300 of them every day in towns and cities, or on the roads. Everywhere you went electronic eyes were upon you.

Outside again in the crisp April air, they walked towards a marble slab (No 663), which resembled a war memorial. Engraved onto it were the names of over 50 countries which had once been subsumed into the British Empire and stripped of their right to self-rule, beginning with Hong Kong. The sign underneath read: "Human right, no joke."

The final display of the Exhibition of Britain (No 666) presented a man formerly known as Anthony Blair, the ex-prime minister of Britain, now simply called Tony. He was having another one of his temper tantrums, jumping up and down on the pantomime head of the decidedly unattractive bulldog outfit he was forced to wear - the bulldog being the national animal of his country, rather as the giant panda was the national animal of the Republic. Security personnel would soon arrive and tell him to put it back on and start barking again, if he wanted any supper that night. His book of choice was *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie. The sign outside Tony's cage read: "War criminal against humanity and all round liar."

Upon exiting the pebble-dash walls of The Exhibition of Britain, most of the visitors felt that their knowledge of this alien country had been enriched and deepened, although few claimed to truly understand the strange ways of the Britishers. Their curiosity satiated, however, they were now ready to find out about the other nations exhibited in the heritage complex in what was, in essence, an economical and condensed mini world tour. For many visitors the next stop would be The Exhibition of America, where George, formerly known as President George Bush II, was made to dress up in a panda costume and chew on bamboo all day long. At the time of his capture he had requested the book *The Holy Bible* by

Jesus Christ, only to be told that it did not exist.

Beyond the labyrinth of zoos, cages, museums, monuments and monoliths, was a cage hidden away at the back of the complex that was rarely visited. There was little curiosity, or indeed patience, for the inhabitant of this small, iron-barred abode.

Inside the cage resided Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, spiritual and political leader of the country of Tibet. He was a man of advanced years, with little hair. He had pair of eye spectacles, burnt orange robes and the most radiant smile. Left alone these days, the Dalai Lama had a lot of time to think about how humankind could benefit from compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, contentment and self-discipline. Deprived of writing materials he composed books in his head these days. All human beings are the same, he believed. "We all want happiness and do not want suffering. We have to learn to live in harmony and peace with each other and with nature. It is not a dream, but a necessity. We are dependent on each other in so many ways, that we can no longer live in isolated communities and ignore what is happening outside those communities."

He thought of his people and their desire for freedom.

Ah, what did he know? He was a simple monk.

The sign outside his cage read:

"Enemy of the Republic."

# THE CURE A FOREST



original version by The Cure released in 1980 on the album, Seventeen Seconds.

cover version by Bats for Lashes released in 2009 on the flip side of the single, Daniel

## a forest from the album Seventeen Seconds

by **THE CURE**

come closer and see	and start to run	I'm running towards
see into the trees	into the trees	nothing
find the girl	into the trees	again and again and
while you can		again
come closer and see	into the trees	
see into the dark		
just follow your	suddenly I stop	
eyes	but i know it's too	
just follow your	late	
eyes	I'm lost in a	
	forest	
I hear her voice	all alone	
calling my name	The girl was never	
the sound is deep	there	
in the dark	it's always the	
I hear her voice	same	

# THE WALRUS

the walrus july/august 2010

Madeleine Thien's upcoming novel, *Dogs at the Perimeter*, will be published next spring.



© Daniel M German dm@turingmachine.

## su-na, bird

the last of our kind came into the city tonight

by madeleine thien

The last of our kind came into the city tonight. Flat-footed, paws curled into fists, snow on their fur, I saw them scrambling down the toboggan hills on their bottoms and their bellies.

We had divided Montreal into quadrants.

Su-na and I stayed here, testing the alleyways. Though we tipped bicycles and rolled the bins, no one shouted, no one came. The nighttime emptiness grew larger.

We began to walk proudly, holding our heads high. We chewed our way through Bernard and St-Urbain, flung stones at the lights. In the house where I was born, we clawed the wood back and wormed through a sunken window. Ice that had formed on my coat began to melt in the warmth, running down like bathwater. Shivering, I followed Su-na up to the last room. I ran my paws over everything, reckless now, bold, as if I were someone larger, Fat Lip or Hershey.

There was a great deal of paper. Su-na settled in a corner, covered herself in volumes and, fixated, began to shred them. This is why we used to tease her and call her Bird.

Against my face, the darkness was lustrous and cool. I went downstairs and sniffed the rooms, I climbed furniture, opened cupboard doors, turned the taps on, sampled the food in the fridge. I touched all the items in the closet. The disappeared people sat on the tip of my nose, as if all this time they had only been folded away. They perfumed down on me and I inhaled generations of fear, lust, sadness, dudgeon. I could hear Su-na sighing, ripping paper, mumbling to herself. I wrapped coloured cloths around my head and stumbled to the next room, where a television flickered. Images ran like moving clouds. Bombs, guns, running men, airplanes, ice. I touched the sharp pictures. The air in here tasted chalky and regretful.

Su-na emerged from her avalanche of paper and we climbed up through a window, swinging onto the roof. I was not unhappy. My many scarves, soft as water, trickled backwards in the wind. We looked down on the city, which had emptied so fast. The squirrels hurried by as if their lives depended on it, desperate to store all they could. But I could smell the future. The people were never coming back. We had inherited a crumbling borough that would inch by inch be nibbled down, laid to waste, devoured so that we too could raise our own paradise.

Not even children, Su-na said quietly.

Black crows trembled on the wires, fat and full of grace. I shouldn't like to know what they were snacking on.

Down below, our people were crowding the streets. Celebratory, desultory, disbelieving. I saw Mad Moo with loaves of bread in his arms, his girl trailing behind, wearing a bagel crown. Our people unjammed the locks of cars, ignited them and zigged

through the night. They climbed the viaducts and played like kit. Others, too, had ornamented themselves in cloth. Su-na said that one day the mountain itself would descend. It would unfold its evergreen body, sip the daylight dry, swell until it choked the streets.

But for now there was just Su-na and I, and the city that had been bequeathed to us. The powdery snow flickered down, wetting her eyes.

Don't get cold, she said.

She saw how I trembled. I stood on the very edge of the roof. More creatures were arriving now, crawling from their dens. From the canine quadrant, I heard a jubilant, confused barking. Up here, beneath the arched moon, felines swung their hips. I groomed Su-na, and my touch left eddies on her snowy coat. The others were obsolete now. Gone to sea, the floating cities or the stars. We would mourn them and then, tomorrow, and for all the days allotted us, we would build the city anew.

Hours passed. I thought daylight should have come by now. Our people could not sleep. Snow fell harder. The lamps burned out. How many weeks went by like this? Down below, the streets grew rougher and the borders of the quadrants began to crack. Our people cried like kit. They fell into a frozen somnolence. Su-na and I hid ourselves in the avalanche of paper, waiting to fly, to be transfigured, to climb as the obsolete had done, crater the moon, and wash the ice off.



## Q'S for GEORGE CLOONEY'S GOOD NIGHT/GOOD LUCK

View the film critically and take notes on the following:

- Specific lines (dialogue) that explore major themes/ideas in the film
- Symbolism (colour, artifacts)
- Juxtaposed imagery



# SHUTTER ISLAND

## FILM ANALYSIS



*"How is it possible that the truth never gets through to her."*

- Edward Daniels, Shutter Island (2009)

Watch the film critically and take note of the following:

- interesting/revealing dialogue (i.e. thematically important, metaphoric)
- metaphors + symbols (i.e. water, forest, the mind)
- archetypes/archetypal patterns\* (i.e. the shadow (the evil/feared), the other/the unusual)

\* an **archetype** is an original model of a person, ideal example, or a prototype upon which others are copied, patterned, or emulated; a symbol universally recognized by all. In **psychology**, an archetype is a model of a person, personality, or behavior. In **philosophy**, archetypes since Plato at least, refer to ideal forms of the perceived or sensible things or types.

- themes
- parallels/connection to other texts (i.e The Crucible)
- contemporary connections
- questions

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