Jyrki Nummi

Much Ado in Paradise: Kivi, Shakespeare, and Genesis

1. The Art of Biblical Allusions

Aleksis Kivi's one-act comedy *The Betrothal* (*Kihlaus*, 1866) is a small masterpiece in Finnish drama. As Kivi research has pointed out it is the tight structure, the living characters and the richness of motifs that give the play a charm that has not diminished in the 150 or so years it was first presented on stage.[1]

There is, however, one dimension that has been almost completely ignored in research: the intertextual stratification of the comic universe. As we are well aware, Shakespeare and the Bible are two important literary sources in Kivi's work.[2] These sources are intertwined in many curious ways, especially in Kivi's plays, in which the form and techniques come from Shakespeare, whose work Kivi knew thoroughly. The way Kivi uses the Bible is also largely based on his knowledge of Shakespeare. We know, however, that much of the rhetoric skill and brilliance with which Shakespeare handled the Bible comes from Marlowe. As James Sims has pointed out, in Marlowe's plays everything is seen "as though mirrored in a looking glass"; "all things are reversed and [- -], the apparent level of meaning turns out, upon close observation, to be accompanied by a subtler level which is often exactly its reverse" (Sims 1966, 15). In relation to the Bible three types of reversal appear in Marlowe: (i) the reversal of roles, (ii) the reversal of values, and (iii) the reversal of meaning (Sims 1966, 16).

Shakespeare modified and transformed these serious dramatic reversals of Scripture. Three devices may be distinguished in his comedies. He makes use of (i) *misuses and misunderstandings* of Scripture by comic characters that result in the enjoyment of the ludicrous; (ii) *biblical allusions* that provide insight into particular characters, revealing an additional dimension and leading to a serious appraisal of human nature and behaviour; (iii) *Biblical echoes* that make the audience conscious of the moral and spiritual order of the universe in which the action takes place (Sims 1966, 29). All these devices are met in Kivi's masterpieces, *The Heath Cobblers* (*Nummisuutarit*, 1864), T*he Betrothal* and *Seven Brothers* (*Seitsemän veljestä*, 1870).[3]

In this essay I wish to demonstrate the ways in which the Shakespearian means of referring to biblical subtexts are used in *The Betrothal*. I will begin by posing a hypothesis of a thematic complex in the play and link it to a generic family of religious drama. I will then proceed by tracking various markers that point to a specific biblical subtext beneath the textual surface and analyse their nature, function and position in the play. The objective is to determine the specific relation of the text to the underlying subtext.

2. Is God for the Dead or the Living?

The story of *The Betrothal* is short and solid. Abel (Aapeli), a tailor, has sent for his colleague Enoch (Eenokki) to discuss urgent matters. As Enoch enters the house, Joseph (Jooseppi), Abel's apprentice, tells him that Abel is about to marry Gentlemens' Eve (Herrojen Eeva), a servant in a nearby mansion, who has proposed to him. Enoch is surprised by the news and says that the marriage will not last. The couple enters the room, and Abel immediately starts to arrange the engagement ritual in which Enoch is to play the role of spokesman. The bride, however, refuses to sing a psalm and shows other signs of a change of heart. In a flash she whips up a quarrel by making tactless comments about the bridegroom's profession, lodgings and past. Enoch is appalled and brings forth rumours about Eve's sinful life with other gentlemen. Abel tries to turn the boat once more by explaining that Eve only wanted to test him. Abel then accidentally breaks the sugar bowl that Eve has brought with her, and this paves the way to the solution. Eve leaves the house and the three men are left by themselves to eat their supper. Abel is disheartened, but Enoch tries to comfort him. In the last scene these two tailors dance together to the accompaniment of Joseph's song.

In the end of *The Betrothal*, as the engagement is cancelled and Abel sinks into misery and depression, the conversation turns to future visions and the fundamental questions of life. After years of loneliness Abel bemoans the happiness he was so close to achieving:

> ABEL: I thought I was almost a married man, and now I am an old bachelor, whose life is the like of that of a drowsy cockroach in a crack of the masonry in the evening sun's dying glow. Oh, my brother, when I came with her and saw the toadstool by the horsepaddock, I thought to myself: When September comes and we go into the woods with sacks on our backs to pick mushrooms, then it'll be real nice. But now, now all hope has gone, and there's no comfort left. (Kivi 1866/1981, 23)[4]

Abel's dreamland is a classical *locus amoenus*: the peaceful September forest surrounds the pleasures of the pair of lovers, who although in their later years, as the autumnal season indicates, have found their happiness there. This earthly paradise, which even promises sexual happiness as the conventional symbolism of the mushrooms suggests, is lost forever, and there is a strong elegiac tone in Abel's mourning.

To comfort his friend Enoch promises Abel, whom he has just saved from disaster (threatening both the tailors' community and Enoch's position therein), that after death they will be given a wife in heaven as compensation for all they have missed out on in their earthly lives:

> ENOCH: Much comfort, my friend, much. *An old bachelor celebrates his wedding after he's dead, among the dancing stars. There he is given his bride, and the married ones must look on.* [- -] There's nothing to grieve over, nothing at

> all; when the others have their evening, we'll have a rosy dawn; cuckoos will sing, and finches twitter; the meadow of blessedness will be under our feet and above us the everlasting blue heaven, and angels playing music. (Kivi 1866/1981, 23; emphasis mine)

Enoch's remedy to Abel's loss is an alternative paradise, a conventional space for eternal life after death complete with inhabitants such as singing birds and musicplaying angels. If Abel's dream is somewhat idealistic, it is certainly not unreal; it features nothing beyond human possibilities. Enoch's image of paradise is, instead, infantile and sugary, something that today would be labelled religious kitsch.

In his classic study of Kivi's life and work (1915) Viljo Tarkiainen noted that the conversation between Abel and Enoch has a "reflection" in Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* (Tarkiainen 1915, 248, n. 2). In Act II, Scene 1 of the play, Leonato and Beatrice are having a conversation on her willingness or, rather, her aversion to marry. Beatrice makes clear that if she ever married, the man has to match her demands, "all the bearded men and their apes she will lead to into hell". Leonato catches the phrase and asks: "Well, then, go you into hell?" Beatrice returns a snappy answer:

> No; but to the gate; and there will the devil meet me, like an old cuckold, with horns on his head, and say 'Get you to heaven, Beatrice, get you to heaven; here's no place for you maids'; so deliver I up my apes, and away to Saint Peter for the heavens; he shows me where the bachelors sit, and there live we merry as the day is long. (*Much Ado* II: 1)[5]

Tarkiainen connects the idea of the bachelors' sitting place in heaven to the paradise *topos* in the end of the play. The observation, typically presented in a footnote, is certainly not without a merit, but as such it does not do much more than give us a clue. In subtextual analysis it serves as a starting point for a number of interesting questions.

The first question deals with a biblical paradox disguised in the play. As countless editors of Shakespeare's comedy have footnoted, Beatrice is referring to the closing statement of Christ's parable of the seven brothers in Mark: "For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven (Mark 12:25)." One point of Kivi's double reference is that the information in the biblical proverb is parallel and coherent to Beatrice's argumentation, but it is in complete contradiction to Enoch's ideas of heaven in *The Betrothal*.

The parable tells of a marital law according to which a man is obliged to marry his dead brother's wife and raise up his children, but it includes a much larger controversy over a theological problem. Moses had decreed that if a man dies and his wife has not had a son, his brother must marry the widow. In the twelfth book of Mark, the Sadducees take this law to its logical conclusion and ask Jesus if a woman has had seven husbands in this manner, which one will she be married to when they all are resurrected from the dead. With their jesting question the Sadducees mock Jesus' idea of

the resurrection of the dead and try to show that his doctrine has no biblical or logical foundation.[6]

In his answer Jesus remarks that his questioners do not understand the scriptures and underlines that after the resurrection no one will be married:

> "But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God said to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken." (Mark 12: 26–27)

From the Biblical point of view, Enoch makes a mistake similar to that of the Sadducees. He misunderstands God's relation to man, and, consequently, the ultimate difference between life and death. In Kivi's play the profound questions have not vanished, but the problem is not merely theological, it is also dramatic. The question is what Enoch's "mistake" has to do with the comic incidents of *The Betrothal*.

The second question concerns the comic theme of confused identities. Kivi's reference to *Much Ado about Nothing* forms a tiny link that immediately opens a larger textual sequence to be compared and reflected, not just these few lines, but the whole scene. Shortly after the above exchange, Leonato keeps insisting that Beatrice must marry: "I hope to see you one day fitted with a husband." Beatrice replies:

> Not till God make men of some other metal than earth. Would it not grieve a woman to overmastered with a piece of valiant dust? To make an account of her life to a clod of wayward marl? No, uncle, I'll none: Adam's sons are my brethren; and truly, I hold it a sin to match in my kindred. (*Much Ado* II: 1)[7]

The first argument seems to reveal that Beatrice has extremely high standards for men – the ordinary building materials are not good enough – but then it turns out that the problem is her particular relation to men. She regards them as her brothers, as Adam's sons Cain and Abel. Her argumentation links the scene to Kivi's play, in particular to the culmination of the debate between Eve and Abel, when she overtly rejects him and gives an sardonic evaluation of Abel's male fitness by regarding him as "the same urchin" ("sama nallikka") as in his childhood. In this way Beatrice brings forth two important intertwined questions on the age-old theme of comedy: what are the characters' real identities and their mutual relations to the *dramatis persona* in the play?

Let us examine how Kivi ties these problems to Genesis 2–3, the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, used as a subtext for *The Betrothal*. In addition to Edenic paradise, attention will be paid to allusions to two other biblical versions of Eden, the sensual paradise of the lovers in the Song of Songs and the apocalyptic paradise as it descends in the form of New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation.

3. Evoking Paradise

Generic Clues

One of the genuine properties of the classic is that its genre is hard to define.[8] This is the case with *The Betrothal*, too, and the difficulty in classifying it is, perhaps, one of the most attractive aspects of the play. At the outset the play resembles a romance, but soon turns to something quite the opposite, a comedy of romantic errors, where everything seems to be out of joint and upside down.

When *The Betrothal* was prepared for publication in the literary magazine *Kirjallinen Kuukauslehti* ('Literary Monthly') in 1866, Kivi wrote to B. F Godenhjelm, an acquaintance and a member of the editorial board of the magazine. The writer was worried about some spelling problems in the manuscript and wanted to ensure that they would be paid due attention in proof reading and printing, which included notable risks at the time, since no established standard for written Finnish existed. But there was something else, too, as Kivi writes:

> If you find any faults in the language, please, do correct them. I still want to remind you that this is a comedy [ilveily] and all provincialisms and such do not matter at all, indeed, they are substantial to the whole. (Kivi 1866/1951, 436; transl. mine)

This little note has been used to prove that the "fine clockwork, in which all the pieces go smoothly together", as Koskenniemi (1934/1954, 60) aptly characterises the elaborate structure of *The Betrothal*, is carefully planned to the tiniest detail. Although we do not need this kind of external proof any more, Koskenniemi's clockwork metaphor points out that Kivi's textual and rhetorical strategies were highly developed, far above any other literary activities in the Finnish language at the time. The author wanted to ensure that all the delicate generic clues to the reader and the audience were printed just the way he wanted. All Kivi's masterpieces show that he was extremely sensitive to generic problems.

In his classic study of Greek drama and its influence on Shakespeare, H. D. F. Kitto made an important distinction between religious and secular drama. He emphasised that in the religious drama of Aeschylus and Sophocles "the real focus is not the Tragic Hero but the divine background". Turning the substantial Romantic convention – the centrality of the hero – upside down led to an "essential question, whether the play exists on one or two levels, whether the real focus lies in one or more characters, or somewhere behind them." (Kitto 1964, 231.) The basic pattern in Kivi's dramatic work is the relation of the dramatic character to the divine world order. The general world order is always manifested in Kivis' plays as religious, divine (Kinnunen 1967, 274, 275).

The Betrothal could well be read as a comic version of a Middle-Age scriptural play or a mystery play, such as the twelfth-century French *Mystère d'Adam* by an unknown author and the *Drama de Primi Parentis Lapsu* ascribed to Ignatius Diaconus, which brought the story of Adam and Eve to the stage. The medieval tradition was later transformed to Renaissance drama, and the story was even cast in 1601 by Hugo Grotius in the form of a five-act classical tragedy in his Latin drama *Adamus Exul*.[9] These transformations in scale and size changed the whole shape and emphasis of the story. The change can be seen in *Paradise Lost* in which Milton brought the "dimensions and imaginative power of Homer and Virgil" to the Genesis narrative epic and "enlarged and enlivened the theme of forbidden knowledge from Genesis into a modern saga of self-discovery".[10] The dramatic and narrative tradition crystallised in Milton's epic may be the immediate source for Kivi who was always fond of mixing grave themes and light treatment.

Paths Leading to the Subtext

Paradise is a literary *topos* which Kivi encountered in all the great classics he used as a model for his own work, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and Milton.[11] Paradise is first mentioned in *The Betrothal* during the conversation between Joseph and Enoch as they reflect on Abel's behaviour and his decision to marry Eve. Joseph stresses that he did not advise Abel in his difficult decision "one way or the other". Enoch agrees and gives his reasons:

> Never, never dissuade any man from taking a woman on whom he has once cast his eyes; he'll take her all the same, and some day they'll whisper in her ear the advice you gave, and the jade will hardly forgive you, even in the meadows of Paradise. (K/B, 365/11)

Enoch's proverbial argumentation lays ground for the idea that there will be a problem in paradise, and the problem comes with a woman who does not seem willing to leave men in peace, not even in the meadows of paradise. The mention of the topic serves as a proactive hint to becoming troubles through a quasi-theological dilemma: God may forgive men their sins, but the woman will never do.

Ingrid Daemmrich mentions five different areas that mark the paradise motif in Western literature. These are emblematic names; author or narrator intrusions, often signalled by references to other texts; intertextual references; an overemphasis on seemingly insignificant details; and humour. Tracing the contribution of these "marks" illuminates how paradise was "reshaped into a literary construct". (Daemmrich 1990, 23–24.) The grouping is a more or less random list that could be compiled in any other way, but it contains valuable observations on the most frequently mentioned works, and as such these categories are informative.

I would like to narrow the focus of the analysis and proceed with a more systematic approach to the techniques Kivi used in dealing with the paradise motif. If we confine the paradise motif to texts in the Bible – that is, a finite piece of stable written language with structure and meaning – and approach it as a specific subtext in Kivi's play, attention should be paid to (i)the distinctiveness, (ii) the strength, (iii) the textual position, and (iv) the scope of the intertextual connection.

In the analysis of drama I would divide these devices into two major categories, as all of them function in a different way. On the level of (1) dialogue, these references are made in the ongoing dialogue (or monologues and asides) of the play. On the level of (2) story (characters and events), the reader or spectator must elucidate the connections from the staging, action and events on stage. Consequently, the biblical myth of Adam and Eve is evoked in *The Betrothal* on the following levels of the play:

1. Dialogue
    - motifs (words and phrases)
    - allusions and quotations (utterances and speech acts)
2. Story
    - biblical names (characters and roles)
    - biblical episode (action and events)

The motifs and allusions are set into the language of the dialogue between the characters. They are scattered from the beginning throughout the text, usually set far apart from each other. Their function is to suggest, not to fix or point out. This is one of the most important principles of Kivi's poetics. Motifs that refer to the *topos* of paradise are particularly "vague" signals. In isolation they may be read as mere words, phrases or clichés – as, indeed, they regularly are – but it is their combination in the overall dramatic situation that activates their cumulative significance.

The story functions on a principle of ambiguity, misdirection, and surprise. This strategy also plays a substantial role in Kivi's poetics. As he avoids clear references, he also tends to avoid building complete patterns. In constructing comic plots around the subtext he tends to favour surprises and sudden turns: usually the alluding and alluded texts are set apart by a comic inversion or a reversal, and the difference is made significant. I will go through these links to show how the two levels interact and the complexity grows.

4. The Rhetoric of Referring

The Allocation of Allusions and Quotations

The position of an intertextual link in the text may be decisive for its effect for the whole. The important allusions to Genesis in *The Betrothal* are retroactive: they appear in the end of the play, so that everything that has preceded it will be seen in a surprising light.

The first allusion is to be found in Abel's comment on the test he thinks Eve is setting him: "Look how the villain of a girl has wrung *the sweat from my brow* in this ordeal / Kas, pusersipa tyttö-kanalja hien otsalleni tällä koetuksellansa (K/B, 375/19)." "The sweat from my brow" alludes to the punishment God handed out to Abel in Genesis, because he had broken God's command: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground / Sinun otsas hiesä pitä sinun syömän leipäs (Gen. 3: 19)."[12] The allusion is simultaneously a strong link to the subtext and an ironic misinterpretation (in the light of Genesis) of one's own responsibility for one's deeds. In Genesis "the sweat of thy face" is God's way of punishing Adam for his disobedience; in *The Betrothal* Abel thinks that it is Eve, the villain of a girl, who is responsible for the sweat. The comic effect is produced by the fact that Abel does not understand the reference he is making.

The second allusion is made by Abel in his final resignation: "my heart is ready to break when I remember the deep-bosomed *maid that was given to me*, and was so soon taken away again *in the name of the Lord* / Mutta kovin musertuu sydämmeni, koska muistelen sitä korkeapovista impeä, joka mulle annettiin, mutta kohtaa taasen otettiin pois multa Herran nimeen" (B/K, 23/381). The mention of the maid given by God refers to Adam's comment on God's power to create a companion for him: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me (waimo, jongas annoit minulle)" (Gen. 3:12). The allusion reminds us that Eve is given to Abel as an opportunity to create a paradise *with* her. The following events show that Abel is not fit for the role that his dream-paradise requires. The allusions connect Abel to the role of Adam in Genesis 2–3. This way the story of *The Betrothal* is connected to the biblical paradise story, but it does not mean that they are similar or equivalent, quite the contrary. The interesting aspect of the relations is the differences between the texts and how they relate to the surprising turn of the storyline and to the unmasking of the characters.

Naming or calling with names is a frequent event in the quarrelsome dialogue of *The Betrothal*, and it is an important part of creation in Genesis 1–3. First it is God who gives names: he "*calls* the light Day, and the darkness [- -] Night" (Gen. 1: 5), and then he continues to name the various parts and formations of the world. In the second chapter the act of naming is taken by Adam who starts with the animals:

> And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.
> And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field [- -]. (Genesis 2: 19–20)

Adam turns to his companion whom God has created to keep him company, and because she is made of one of Adam's ribs, he names her according to her birth: "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." (Gen. 2: 23). It is only after their disobedience that Adam gives the woman a personal name: "And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living" (Gen. 3: 20).

In *The Betrothal* Eve gives names to Abel and Abel to Eve during their heated dispute. Even Enoch enters the naming game. In a well-known line Enoch tries to define Eve using different metaphors. Finally he gives up and refuses to try to understand "this animal" ("tämänlaista eläintä"):

> Oh woman, woman! You wonder of all creation's wonders! You eternal mess of golden sunshine and misty cloud, without head or tail to you! Is it any wonder that we men never learn to understand such a[n animal]? (K/B, 378/21)

The attempt to define woman is an allusion to the first chapters of Genesis. Enoch links Eve to "creation" and to the second basic division in the newly created world after the division of heaven and earth: the division of the light from the darkness ("golden sunshine and misty cloud"). Perhaps the most amusing part of the allusion is tied to the painful birth of human consciousness, in particular to gullible Adam's ability to understand female behaviour. This question is crucial in the play as it reveals much of the spirit of the play: "Person [Ihminen]," Abel asks Eve desperately, "why did you fool me to drive you with my horse here to my house?" Eve's answer comes from a master plotter: "Why did you let yourself fooled?" (K/B, 377/20).

There is also a quotation to the earthly, sensual version of paradise as Abel has thought of it.[13] This is an illuminating example of Kivi's habit of mixing subtetxts and producing comic misquotations. As Eve reminds Abel of the past incident, when she had given little Abel a good whipping, he feels hurt and angrily asks Eve to speak more about love:

> But what more do you know, Miss Helander, "whose cheeks are so red, and whose talk goes on greasily," as they sing in the[Song of Songs]? What more has [Miss Helander] to say? More, I say, more of that sort! (B, 14)

> Mutta mitä vielä tiedät, fröökinä Helander, jonka ”posket on niin punaiset
> ja puhe käy kuin rasva”, niin kuin lauletaan rakkauden-veisussa? Vai kuinka?
> Mitä sanoo fröökinä? Enemmin, enemmin sitä lajia. (K 373)

Somewhat surprisingly Saarimaa (1964, 120) identifies the quotation as a line from Lönnrot's *Kanteletar*, and indeed we can find it in the Preface of the 1840 edition. There is a longer poem (number 15) called "Poika ja tyttö" ("The boy and the Girl") that proceeds in dialogue. In one of the lines, the girl says:

> Tämän kylän nuoret tytöt kaunihisti kasvaa,
> *Huulet on kun hunaja ja suu kuin sula rasva* (Lönnrot 1840/1984, LVI)

> The girls in this village grow gracefully
> The lips are honey-like and the mouth is like oil. (Translation mine)

It is the second line that is quoted by Abel, according to Saarimaa. Indeed, there is a comic connection to a playful dialogue between lovers, a boy and a girl, which is comically reflected in the play. However, another dialogical subtext might be taken into consideration. Abel himself indicates the source, as he demands Eve to move to another kind of singing, "as they sing in the Song of Songs".

In the 1853 edition of the Finnish Bible, the Song of Songs is translated as *Korkia veisu*, and there is a longer description of the female partner in the long sensual dialogue between the lovers:

> Sinun huules ovat *niinkuin tulipunainen rihma*, ja *sinun puhees ovat suloiset*;
> sinun poskes ovat niinkuin granatin omenan lohko, sinun palmikkos välillä.
> (Korkia veisu 4:3, emphasis mine)

> Thy lips are *like* a thread of *scarlet*, and *thy speech is comely*, thy temples [*cheeks*]
> are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks. (Song 4:3, emphasis mine)

As we can see, these are the same elements as in Abel's quotation, and some of them are identical: the colour scarlet (punainen), and the cheeks (posket) the latter. The other elements are much more indefinite: "thy speech is comely (sinun puhees ovat suloiset)". I would suggest – and this is my point for Kivi's biblical allusions and quotations in general – that this is an example of mixed quotation: one line is from the *Kanteletar*, another from the Bible.[14] The point of mixing subtexts is to comment on a character who wish to pass for learned men, (Sepeteus in *The Heath Cobblers* and Aapo in *Seven Brothers*), or to characterise an ignorant and humorous person (Esko in *The Heath Cobblers*, Juhani and Timo in *Seven Brothers*).

How does the quotation relate to the play? Firstly, it produces a comic, contrastive parallel between the very different dialogues. There is the passionate and sensual lan-

guage of the young lovers of the Songs, there is the playful exchange between the young boy and girl of the *Kanteletar*, and there is the quarrelsome debate between a worldly lady and a foolish bachelor. More generally the reference serves as a generic signal: by naming the Song – itself a dialogue – Abel evokes a subtext and a possible generic model for the ongoing dialogue. The quotation reveals the erotic aspect of Abel's idea in the earthly paradise.

The Dispersed Motifs

Besides the allusions and quotations, there are "vague" paradisiacal motifs and set phrases which, although they do not link to any precise textual element in the subtext, evoke a number of decisive agents (God, snake), activities and behaviour (naming animals, undressing) and spatial identity (demarcation). Furthermore they are scattered all around the text and do not form any observable pattern.

First of all, there is an amusing sphere of names that the three central charac-ters use for each other: the names of birds, the most natural and frequent animals in paradise (See Daemmrich 1995, 90–91). The play is full of bird names and most of them are used for naming human beings. For instance, Enoch's depiction of the heavenly paradise is full of birds, and Abel uses them in some of his proverbs. However, Eve uses them to evaluate her male company. She calls Abel's house "an owl's nest (huhkaimen pesä)" (K/B, 367/12). But then she turns sour and begins to call Abel bird names. Abel is "a wagtail" (västäräkki) (K/B, 369/13), "a crow" (varis) (K/B, 371/15), a "chattering pie" (harakka), a "jay" (närhi) (K/B, 376/19).

The notion of *creeping* is mentioned once in a significant context. Eve begins to remember the mansion she has left: "What a difference! Hah! I moved out of a palace into a burrow, and like a fool I left my merry gentlemen and crept into the tailor's hovel. What a difference!" Creeping refers to the snake, Eve's companion and attribute, although the Bible mentions only "a creeping thing (kaikkinaiset matelewaiset)" (Gen.1:25), or "a thing that creepeth (kaikki, jotka maalla matelewat)" (Gen. 1:26).

The motif of nakedness is echoed in Eve's threat to take her clothes off: "If you do not pay for what you have broken [the sugar bowl], you are going to see me naked in a second here in front of you." (K, 378).[15] A typical shame-punishment ironically refers to Genesis, where both Adam and Eve see themselves naked only after they have eaten the forbidden fruit: "And the eyes of them both were opened and they knew that they were naked." (Gen. 3: 7) Playing with clothes – dressing and undressing, masking and unmasking – is an age-old comic convention related to laying identities bare. In Kivi's play Eve's threat is a playful reminder of the process that is taking place between the couple: the "lovers" are gradually getting to know each other.

One important sub-theme in the paradise *topos* is the bachelors' attempt to border their own life into an area where it is morally secured and justified. Abel's talk of going

to the woods and getting shot by the gentlemen does not only reflect his fear of hostilities by reckless men of gentry class; it is also a moral and religious attitude towards space as an orderly area of light versus an area of darkness, the basic spatial division of Genesis.

The mentioning of *God as the ultimate source of power and decision maker* occurs several times in set phrases, a typical device of characterisation in Kivi's drama.[16] In her letter to the bridegroom Eve writes: "Tailor Abel! I wish briefly to inform you that; *God willing*, I am ready at once to be your wife." (K/B, 363–364/9) Then, in his protatic narrative on Abel's musings about whether he should marry Eve or not, Joseph tells Enoch that he has withdrawn from any responsibility: "I didn't advise him one way or the other, but bade him leave all on *God's counsel board* (K/B, 365/10)." The idea of paradise is connected to the tailors' concept of space. There is, on the one hand, the safe, morally impeccable, well-ordered space of their own, and there is the wild, violent and morally corrupt world outside of it, exemplified by the gentlemen's mansion. The area of order is under the particular protection of God, and the exterior chaotic wilderness is the area of evil. This fundamentally religious division is also certainly psychologically and socially motivated, though the bachelors seem to be unaware of this.

The spatial division is reflected in Enoch and Abel's language. The motifs referring to the area outside God's presence and protection are most commonly expressed with the regular phrase-like attributes "godless" or "un-godly", but in a significant context. As Abel and Eve enter the tailors' house, the first thing Abel mentions is the "horrible tumbling game", which was played upon them by "those *ungodly* gentlemen". Later on Abel still remembers Eve's "*godless* proceedings" when she whipped him in his youth. Enoch accuses Eve of having lived "like a heathen, like a mahommedan" (K/B, 374/17).

The tailors, and probably the entire community, are appalled of the life led in the house of the gentlemen. This is mentioned many times during the dialogue between Eve and the tailors. After passing judgement on Eve's shameless life in the house of the gentlemen, Enoch declares that, "I'll take a firm hold of this life of yours, your ungodly life, if I don't see some amendment in you" (K/B, 374/19). After Eve has left Abel's house, Enoch returns, full of holy wrath, to the ways of the gentlemen and "their *godless* life with this girl" (K/B, 380/22). The idea of repeating phrasal expressions in the conversation is to build a boundary between the sphere of the right-minded, those under God's protection, and the sphere outside God's presence, the wilderness, the zone of evil. The emphasis on the borderline between God's provenance and the chaotic outside area is important to the tailors and their idea of moral order and the justification of their brotherly community.

5. A Twisted Story

Characters and Roles

The Betrothal is a brilliant example of Kivi's ability to modify a stock-character into a fresh and memorable person and still present him or her as a multi-layered construction. Abel, Enoch and Eve form a biblical triangle flavoured by Joseph. In this ensemble we can distinguish three layers of overlapping roles that each have a function of their own in the play. The roles may be presented on three separate levels of (i) the text (play), (ii) the genre and (iii) the subtext as follows:

Characters/ Roles	**Abel**	**Enoch**	**Eve**	**Joseph**
Text (*The Betrothal*)	tailor/bachelor	tailor/bachelor	house-maid	apprentice
Genre (Comedy)	senex amator	senex/dottore	meretrix/matrona	servus
Subtext (Genesis)	Adam/Abel	God/Hanoch	Adam's wife	Jacob's son

On a textual level the characters of *The Betrothal* are bucolic, rural types that fit naturally into the Finnish countryside setting. It is for this very reason that they seem so "real". However, neither the characters nor the cultural setting stem from this tradition. In early criticism and research the peasant comedies of Ludvig Holberg were often cited as Kivi's models.

On the level of genre the characters are modifications of traditional types from the ancient Roman comedy and Italian Renaissance comedy. Abel is *senex amator*, an old man foolishly in love with a (usually) young girl. We laugh at him, because he assumes the role of a young lover, in which he hopelessly fails, because he has not really fallen in love, a sudden revival of hormones has merely confused him; because he is so easily fooled; because he lacks all the charm and skill a genuine lover should have, and because he is no longer young and handsome – if, indeed, he ever was. Enoch is another *senex* in the typical role of the helpful friend. He is also an *advocat*, which in later *commedia dell'arte* became *dottore*, a self-important quasi-learned man, always ready to teach and guide. Eve is a wonderful mixture of *meretrix* and *virgo*, with the extra qualities of the *matrona*. Joseph plays the role of *servus* who nearly gets whipped by his master Abel at the end of the play. This is a funny reminder of an ancient "slapstick" convention that goes back to the days of the New Comedy of Plautus and Terence.

Finally, on the level of subtext, which is our chief interest, the characters' names refer to biblical figures and their respective roles. Kivi's Abel combines biblical aspects both of Adam and his son Abel. Both roles are repeatedly referred to in the course of the events. The duality and tension between the roles of the father and the son play a thematic role in the comedy. The name of Abel meaning "breath", "transitoriness" and

"vanity" is not mentioned in the Old Testament after Genesis. In Matthew (23:35) and Luke (11:50–51) he is called the first martyr and a Christ figure.

A less ambiguous role is that of Gentlemen's Eve as eternal Eve, as we have described her above. Eve, in Hebrew *havva* meaning "one who gives life", is the name Adam gave to Eve, his companion. Eve is also the mother of Cain, Abel, and Seth, the mother of all living things. Eve's original task, intended by God, was to help her husband and to become one flesh with him. In *The Betrothal* the relationships between the couple turns upside down: it is Eve who needs help, a hand and a servant to clear off the problems with the gentlemen, and Abel will do for these initial problems. Once he has completed his first job, Eve no longer needs him. Eve needs a man, but Abel does not fit the bill. Towards the end of the play Abel gradually begins to see his position: he considered himself a lover, a husband even; but he turns out to be a servant, a helping hand.

What is the role of Enoch in the biblical pattern of Abel and Eve? Enoch is, by name, the son of Cain, as we know from the story of Genesis (4:17). But Enoch is also an apocryphical prophet who was known to have special knowledge of the Kingdom of God. In his role as a preacher and a gatekeeper of morals Enoch behaves like a substitute for God. Enoch is also parallel to the biblical Hanoch, who was the father of Jeremy and Metusalah. Hanoch went with God, which means that his will was submitted to God's will. This is why he did not have to suffer death:

> Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. (Hebr. 11: 3–5)

From the perspective of the paradise *topos* in *The Betrothal*, it is revealing that both Abel and Enoch are mentioned together in the Bible as exemplary representatives of faith.

Joseph, the third member of the bachelor community, fulfils a more or less technical function, as he serves in the roles of protatic character who intimates preceding events to Enoch (and to the audience). But in addition, there is a very roundabout way of highlighting his biblical role, or rather his identity in Genesis. As we noted earlier, Joseph's role in the play is somewhat minimal. After the protatic narrative he moves to the background to stir a soup or a stew. There is, however, an occasional phrase he mentions at the end of the exposition scene as he comments upon Enoch's fears for the future: "Indeed, indeed, it'll be a different life in this house. / Kyllä, kyllä siitä nyt toinen elämä nousee tähän huoneeseen" (K/B, 366/11).[17] The phrase and the scene as a whole vaguely hint to Joseph's role as a seer in the Bible.

Joseph makes also another hint to the biblical world during the protatic nar-rative at the beginning of the play. As Abel is in the heat of painfully pondering whether to accept Eve's offer or not, he turns to his apprentice: "He read me the letter and asked my advice upon my conscience, just as we had been brothers" (K/B, 364/10).[18] Joseph the apprentice is alluding to his identity as the youngest brother of Jacob's son whose brotherly lot was far from pleasant. The theme of brotherhood, so substantial in Genesis as a whole, is embedded in the play in the spirit of comedy yet in a highly complicated manner.[19]

Strictly speaking, all the central characters come from different chapters of Genesis, and they form a continuum in the grand narrative sequence that begins the Bible: Eve from the second chapter, Abel from the fourth and Enoch from the fourth and fifth chapters. Joseph, who is simultaneously the protatic character and the spectators' substitute on stage, is the outsider in more than one sense. Thus, although the dramatic event presented in *The Betrothal* focuses on the episode in Eden, the thematic potentiality of the subtextual relationship is widened to encompass the whole Genesis.

All the characters in *The Betrothal* represent a separate aspect of the story of Genesis, the shape and the meaning of which is still unified. If the overriding concern of the first book of the Bible is "life-survival-offspring-fertility-continuity", as J. P Fokkelman (1987, 41) observes, the recurrent recording of genealogies in Genesis reflects the theme of family, continuity and regeneration in the accompanying narratives. This theme has a crucial bearing on *The Betrothal*.

The Reversal of the Plot

There is another distinction in the play that deviates from all the conventional turns of romantic comedy: every action or sequence is turned upside down, beginning with the letter of proposal that has been written by the would-be bride. Kivi's way of presenting the story that reflects *the underlying subtext* is an illustrative example of his reversive techniques: he starts with a parallel storyline and then at a decisive point (or a series of decisive points), turns his own story in the opposite direction.

The Betrothal follows the story of Adam and Eve up to the moment when Abel and Eve enter the hut. Abel has lived many years in solitude and feels the lack of companionship. Chance (God) creates an opportunity for him to take a wife, and Eve's letter functions as an offer to taste the "forbidden fruit": marriage. At the opening of the play, as Enoch arrives at Abel's house, he actually steps into the final phase of a longer story that is revealed during the course of the play. The apprentice Joseph immediately tells him (and the audience) of preceding events. It turns out that a letter of proposition from Eve has triggered the following action: Abel's restless night and his heroic quest to save Eve from the mansion. As the couple enters the house we hear from Abel of later adventures during his mock-heroic excursion. The story is, without the narrator's

understanding it, a comic version of the romantic abduction of an innocent maiden. Abel tells us that the gentlemen of the mansion had played a trick on the couple: a servant had set fire to the tail of Abel's horse, and the couple and their future life had been given a quick start.

Once the couple has entered Abel's house, Eve realises that she has made a grave mistake and begins to create a dispute that will give her an excuse to break up with Abel. The escalating quarrel is the juice of the comedy. Eve and Abel become psychologically "naked" as they see each other without masks and pretensions. The turning point is Eve's final realisation of Abel's character. Eve humiliates Abel by remembering his failure as a shepherd in his youth. In the following reminiscence Abel is transformed into a little boy chided by mother:

> Isn't it that same cupping-woman's Abel [- -] The same urchin, I believe, who one rainy day when out grazing his cow slipped it so neatly into my father's meadow and himself went off to sleep in the barn. But just then luck smartly guided my father's daughter to the meadow, and she took the stiffening out of your back. Do you remember that? (K/B, 373/17)

Abel remembers the incident well and tells her that he still has marks on his back from Eve's "godless success". What does this little conventional phrase mean? By whipping Abel for his failure as a shepherd Eve succeeds in achieving something outside God's plan, that is, in turning the man-woman relation with Abel into a mother–son relation. This is the "godless success" of Eve, the comic violation of the divine order and an ironic reminder of how far away the tailors are from the realities of marriage.

The biblical roles of Abel and Eve are clarified in the course of the dispute. The initial confusion of the comedy turns out to be (on a biblical level) the misunderstanding of their mutual relationship and their respective roles: this was not, after all, a love affair of true minds; rather, it was a mother–son relationship, as the names Eve and Abel indicate. The discrepancy between the episode of Abel and Eve and the biblical subtext is crystallised as their identities are revealed. Eve realises that Abel is still the "silly nincompoop" of their youth, Abel won't do for her as a husband. Abel does not understand this, and thus he remains in the role of the fool. The result is a comic reversal of paradise, or a "cancelled paradise": Abel is on the threshold of paradise as the projection collapses.

The role reversal and the figure ensembles in plot may be described as a comic process with the help of the following table:

Initial role structure	->	**Change in role structure**	->	**Revealed identities**	->	**Regained role strucure**
Enoch		Enoch (as God)		Eve (as mother)		Enoch
|				|		|
Abel		|		Abel (as son)		Abel
|				|		|
Joseph		Abel (Adam) – Eve (Eve)		Enoch (son of Cain)		Joseph
Protatsis		**Confusion**		**Anagnorisis**		**Festivity**

In the table we can see the development of the standard phases of comedy together with the changes in the role patterns. The play begins with a protatic situation referred to in the exposition. The status quo of the male community is shaken as Eve's letter to Abel is opened in the tailors' hut. The peace and quiet is broken at the moment Eve enters Abel's hut and a great confusion of roles ensues. The engagement turns into a bitter quarrel and the characters' real identities are revealed as the comic anagnorisis is obtained in the company. According to the law of comedy, there should be a festive party in the final act, the original *komos*, but what kind of festivity is the shadow party of the bachelors? Is it a party for the living or the dead?

6. The Two-Level World

The Betrothal is a comedy in which every comic convention is turned upside down; it is almost a negative photograph of the final scene of a happy family reunion. It is this very quality that has guaranteed the play its appealing charm and humour over the years. But there is something else that goes directly to the problem I started with: how can we determine the genre of the play?

I have attempted to demonstrate the relevance of the biblical subtext behind the play. The paradisiacal motifs and allusions, the characters and the story provide in *The Betrothal* the grounds for distinguishing two significant levels: the text and the subtext. The textual stratification of the world of the play reflects the structure of the universe as it was understood in the philosophy and the poetics of Romanticism: in the far-away distance or depth there is a half-observable structure of a higher and original organisation. This platonic view of the cosmos is reflected in the philosophy and aesthetics of the German Romantics, which is the ultimate source of Kivi's concept of spatiality. (See Nummi 2007.) In textual terms it reveals the principle of *palimpsest*, which was also the leading idea of intertextual relations in the poetics of Romanticism.

The first level is the world of human beings, the story acted on the stage with all its everyday surroundings, clothes, manners and modes. Elo (1950, 222–225) has read the play as a nuanced psychological play, in which all the characters are in a complex hierarchical relationship with each other. Kinnunen (1967, 167) has emphasised the cognitive and social aspects of the play. The deep source of comedy is the "ingenious combination" of two value systems that clash; the characters evaluate the incident in Abel's house on the basis of different set of values. Abel and Enoch think that everything in the human world is measured by moral evaluation. This fits quite well for them, for they are morally impeccable. Eve, on the other hand, makes her assessment of Abel as a man, and regards him worthless. The comedy arises because the tailors are unable to see the difference in the grounds for her evaluation.

The second level is the divine world beyond human life reflected in the biblical subtext. There is a common belief connected to the idea of the Garden of Eden that human beings were originally immortal, but lost their immortality because of their faults or because they fell. In *The Betrothal* the two bachelors believe that because they have not "fallen" in their earthly life, they are entitled to special treatment in the heavenly paradise where they will be able to marry a nice girl. They have a deep faith in the promises that have been made in the Book of Revelation:

> These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were redeemed from among the men, being first fruits to God and to the lamb.
> And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God. (Rev. 14: 4–5)

Abel naively thinks that good would prevail once he married and a woman entered the miniature world of the tailors. In biblical terms, Abel thinks that he can attain the earthly paradise where he and Eve live as man and wife, while still preserving the well-ordered community with Enoch as the leader and Joseph as the apprentice. The unity that has dominated the male community breaks down at the very moment the woman enters. The peaceful world of tailoring, "the dream-world, built upon conceit and inexperience" (Cowl 1926, 8), breaks into separateness, quarrel and disorder.

Adam's acceptance of Eve's proposal to eat the fruit of the tree of good and evil knowledge means to take full responsibility for one's life, to step outside the state of innocence into the real world, the sphere of experience. In Kivi's comedy Abel's decision to marry Eve means stepping out of the protected area of the male community, which nourishes each of its members and offers the warmth of friendship – but does not require a clear (sexual) identity, independence or individuality. This endeavour fails, and Abel does not achieve a new identity.

Abel's real identity is his role as the son of Eve and the shepherd who loved God more than life is pathetically revealed in this "hour of madness" when Eve demands that he pay for the broken sugar-bowl: "Sugar bowl? Has the end of the world come? *Are water and land, death and sparkling hell giving up their dead?* This is a day." (K/B, 377/20.) In all his anger Abel alludes to the Book of Revelation, the passage where the Last Judgement is depicted after the final loss of Satan:

> And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things that were written in the books.
> *The sea gave up the dead who were in it*, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. The Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.
> And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20: 13–15; emphasis mine)

Our analysis began with the question that was put to Jesus as to whether God is for the living or the dead. Jesus' answer was clear: God is for the living, not for the dead. Enoch's comforting promise to Abel is another illusion in which the poor men have decided to live for the rest of their lives. Are they living or are they dead?

Comedies end in the renewal of life; the engagement party of *The Betrothal* does not, because there is nothing that could support new life. In the mythical structure of comedy young conquers old, and there is a promise of regeneration and of a future. The party of the three bachelors is one of Kivi's most delicious dramatic inventions. It is comic in itself, but in its relation to comic genre it is, again, a dark inversion of the obligatory festive ending of a comedy, not a cheerful engagement party or wedding but a sorrowful inversion of it: two bachelors dancing and one crooning a song.

Notes

[1] See Krohn (1947, 112–113); Elo (1950, 220–226), Kinnunen (1967, 162–173); Koskimies (1974, 96–100).

[2] Cygnaeus was the first important critic of Kivi who, in his long review of *The Heath Cobblers* published in three editions of *Helsingfors Tidningar* (7.3., 27.3. and 11.4.1865), underlined the fact that Kivi's comedy did not belong to the French comic tradition of Beaumarchais (Cygnaeus' example) that leads to Molière. Instead, Kivi's concept of comedy is related to Shakespearean forms. Unfortunately, Cygnaeus does not support his argument with detailed textual examples but refers to abstract aesthetic principles, as this was the style of the day (see Cygnaeus 1865/1931, 58–78). After Cygnaeus there is only one separate study on Kivi and Shakespeare by Erich (1936); random observations on Shakespeare are to be found in Tarkianen (1915). Kivi's biblical sources have been an object of various studies starting with Saarimaa's early book on annotations to Kivi's work (1919/1964) and his article on Kivi's

biblical style (1942). New approaches and findings are to be found in Nummi (2002) and Sihvo (2002).

[3] For the intertextual strategies in *Seven Brothers*, see Nummi (2002, 63–64); in *The Heath Cobblers* see Nummi (forthcoming).

[4] I have used the English translation of *The Betrothal* by R. P. Cowl. The translation was published in 1926 in *The Dublin Magazine* October-December volume, and it was entitled *Eva*. I prefer the established title *The Betrothal*, because it corresponds the original Finnish title (*Kihlaus*). It is used, for example, by Douglas Robinson (1993) in the preface to his translation of two of Kivi's plays.

[5] Kivi's Shakespeare was the classic Swedish edition translated by Carl August Hagberg (1847–51). In the 1950 edition (the spelling is modernised) the lines go like this: "Nej, bara till he[l]vetets portar: där möter mig stanna med horn i pannan, som en gammal äkta man, och säger: 'Gå du till himmelen, Beatrice, gå du till himmelen; här är ingen plats för er, flickor.' Och så lämnar jag mina apor kvar och ger mig flux av till sankt Per vid himmelens port; han visar mig, var ungkarlarna sitta, och där leva vi lustigt så lång dagen är." (*Mycket väsen* II:1.)

[6] See, for example, Haapa (1969, 195–198) for a description and interpretation of the parable as a topic of the contemporary theological debate.

[7] "Nej, inte förr än vår Herre skapar karlarna av annat ämne än jord. Kan det inte förarga en kvinna att låta mästra sig utav ett stycke övermodigt stoft? Göra räkenskap för sitt görande och låtande inför en tvärvigg till jordklump? Nej, onkel, jag ingen ha. Adams söner äro mina bröder, och jag tycker, allvarsamt sagt, att det är syndigt att gifta mig så där inom förbjudna led." (*Mycket väsen* II:1.)

[8] In his biography Tarkiainen (1915, 247–248) defined the play as "an original country farce ("maalaispila"). In the spirit of Romantic drama theory, early research emphasised the centrality of character (see Kinnunen 1967, 291). It is true that Tarkiainen (1931, 189) later defines the play as a "comedy of character", but he adds, "- - full of ridiculousness expanded to a form of a burlesque". Koskenniemi (1934/1954, 67) hesitates with these generic labels, as he first calls it a "small comedy", a little later "almost" a tragedy or a *comédie larmoyante*, and finally a "tragicomedy". Kinnunen (1967, 166) refers to the compositional or structural qualities as he characterises the play as a "comedy of revelation and unmasking" ("paljastuskomedia").

[9] Evans (1968, 193 and 207).

[10] Shattuck (1996, 54).

[11] On the paradise motif, see Daemmrich (1990) for a systematic study of the *topos*; Armstrong (1969) for an analysis of the mythical sources in three Shakespeare plays, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *A Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*; Evans (1968) for the tradition of Genesis in narrative, drama and learned writing up to Milton; Marx (2000) for an excellent analysis of *The Tempest*.

[12] I refer to the 1852 edition of the Finnish Bible, which Kivi owned (see Huhtala 2007, 53).

[13] On the relationship between the Edenic paradise and the paradise of the Song, see Landy (1987, 314): "[T]he Song is a reflection on the story of the Garden of Eden, using the same images of garden and tree, substituting for the traumatic dissociation of man and animals their metaphoric integration. Through it we glimpse, belatedly, by the grace of poetry, the possibility of paradise."

[14] This is what Kivi does in the exemplary egg-story in the beginning of *Seven Brothers*, where

he combines the Bible and the *Kalevala* in one sentence (see Nummi 2003, 26).
[15] The translation is mine. The line is omitted in the English version, because the translator clearly worked from the edition "cleaned" by B. F. Godenhjelm.
[16] See Kuusi (1970) for a detailed analysis of set phrases in *Heath Cobblers*.
[17] It should be noted that "toinen elämä" in the Finnish original should be translated as "another life" in order to convey its precise religious meaning and the allusion to the idea of "new life".
[18] The last sentence in original Finnish makes the point the translation misses: "Katsokaas mikä veljellisyys!" (K, 364).
[19] Cf. Fokkelman (1987, 53): "the theme of brotherhood, a metonymy for the bond that links humanity, is handled with growing complexity from the beginning of Genesis to the end."

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